DAVID BOHM

PROPRIOCEPTION OF THOUGHT

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DAVID BOHM DIALOGUES

FRIDAY EVENING

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David Bohm: This is the fourth year of these seminars, and this group is probably the largest we have had.

Sometimes I like to begin by having people ask questions so that we get some sense of what is on their minds before we start. It doesn't mean I will answer all the questions, although I'll keep them in mind and may answer some of them. The purpose is not necessarily to get an answer, but mainly for communication. Ten or fifteen minutes like this is what I suggest.

Questioner: Is there a difference between the brain and the mind? The brain is subject to all our chemical reactions and everything in our body. Is there something other than that?

Bohm: That's a difficult question. Some people believe that the brain is all there is, and others say there is something beyond – a mind which might not even be individual. Perhaps we will get to that, but it's interesting that there are people here who want to know about it.

Q: Fitting into that perhaps might be a rather vague question that I have about indicative thought and how that arises.

Bohm: Indicative thought. What would that be?

Q: I remember a talk that you gave many years ago about reflective thought and indicative thought. You said that indicative thought generally points out – it indicates to one – what not to do more than what to do.

Bohm: There is thought which reflects on things and thought which might point out or indicate something. During this seminar I will discuss questions of this kind which involve the general nature of thought, including especially what I call 'participatory' thought.

Q: Do you have a purpose for this seminar? Do you have a goal?

Bohm: I wouldn't say that I have a definite goal. Nevertheless, I would like to discuss some notions about thought. But as the years have gone on, we have developed more material on this subject than can be discussed in one seminar. So there has to be some selection.

In addition, I would like to communicate so that we could not merely discuss, but have what I call the spirit of a dialogue. A dialogue is something in which people participate and share, and in which they listen to each other and to everything without trying to come to a conclusion. Perhaps by our seeing the meaning of it all, truth will emerge unannounced – rather than saying that we are going to try to arrive at truth as our goal. So there is a kind of general vision in my mind, from which my intentions flow, but it is not all that well defined.

Q: What is the difference between thinking and thought?

Bohm: Yes. We will discuss that.

Q: What are the obstacles to dialogue?

Bohm: The obstacles to dialogue are people holding to fixed opinions and defending them, and also each person believing that he has the truth, and so forth. Those are some of the obstacles. We will go into that later on.

Q: Would you say that consciousness is a thing?

Bohm: I would say no. But that would be an interesting question. What does the word 'thing' mean?

Q: Well, as versus a process.

Bohm: Or is consciousness a process? That's not certain either. What is consciousness? That is your question really: what is meant by 'consciousness'?

Q: It seems that people approach it as if it is a thing. And if it's not a thing, then that approach would be incorrect.

Bohm: Is there such a 'thing' as consciousness? Some people want to say there isn't, for various reasons.

Q: Can we have a look at what is going on in the world – especially the

quick transformations between the two superpowers and our relationship to that?

Bohm: We will discuss that, too. I'm not sure how much we can say about this transformation in the superpowers right now, but there are several related questions that we might go into.

Q: Can we go into creativity?

Bohm: Perhaps we will look at that also.

We are getting at least some idea of the interests of people here. This is part of what I consider dialogue – for people to realize what is on each other's minds without coming to any conclusions or judgments.

Q: Do you think the questions that have been asked are really indicative of what people actually are thinking?

Bohm: I don't know for certain. But I think that they do indicate what is on people's minds, at least enough to ask a question.

Q: I just meant in terms of such a large group, to really say what's on a person's mind – if it involves some uncertainty, some question that they're not sure of, they may be less inclined to open it up.

Bohm: Many people may not be so sure of what is on their minds, and they don't want to talk about it. Those who are more sure may talk.

Q: Can we discuss what could be the factor or environment or conditions under which change or transformation takes place?

Bohm: We may get to that. I would change the question to: what are the factors *preventing* transformation? And when they are not present, then I suggest that there will be transformation.

Q: I'm interested in Gregory Bateson's work in communication. He used Russell's work in the theory of logical types. Russell decided that there was an order of orders, and that paradoxes were a confusion of logical type. Bateson took that and worked with it, and his last work before he died was an oscillation theory of communication in relationships. I was struck by the fact

that you have a very fascinating kind of arcane oscillation theory, and I wonder whether there is a relationship.

Bohm: I don't know if there is one. I've only studied Bateson in a very limited way, so I couldn't say. If you notice a relationship, you could bring it up. Also, what do you mean by 'arcane'? Do you mean 'hidden', or what?

Q: Difficult – for me.

Bohm: Yes. Anybody else?

Q: I had a question as a young child that was never answered, and I still wonder about it some decades later. Is there a difference in the way individuals experience thought, their own internal process? Do some people think in words and some people think in pictures, and some people have imagination and others have none? Does it differ from individual to individual, and does that have something to do with why people behave so differently?

Bohm: Is there a difference in the way people think? Well, perhaps not fundamentally, but there may be a difference in what people emphasize in their thinking. Some are more on one side, some are more on the other. Probably there is no absolute difference; but some people would think more in pictures, and some more in some other way. That may come up later.

Q: Is truth a process or is truth a fact?

Bohm: We will need to discuss the nature of truth. I don't think we can say that right now. It will come up.

Are there any more questions? We could have one or two more.

Q: Could we discuss the process of thought going into feeling and then back into thought, in the sense of getting rid of the bad thought of anger, fear – the emotion that runs in there?

Bohm: We will discuss the relationship of thought and feeling and all that.

Q: This brings a question for me. Is there a difference between emotion and feeling?

Bohm: That depends on how you use the language. We will discuss thought, emotion, feeling, physical sensations – various things that are related.

We are already getting a sort of outline of what we're going to do.

Q: Isn't any discussion at all essentially meaningless, because words themselves are a paradox? Words are essentially a symbol. A symbol for what? If you go into a word, you will find a paradox. That's fundamental. So in that sense, the words we use don't get anywhere.

Bohm: You say words are a paradox and communication breaks down. I suggest that there is a lot of paradox in language, but that communication may still be possible. You can't maintain that there is no communication at all, because then you couldn't even say this. In some sense you are trusting to words to tell me that words are paradoxical, and yet I know what you mean. We will discuss all this later on.

Q: But on a certain level – on a level in which we're operating?

Bohm: Paradox is a very subtle concept, and you are trusting words to communicate that. You are trusting words to communicate the notion of paradox, which is a very subtle thing. In other words, we can't just simply say that words don't do anything whatsoever – because when you say that, you are already trusting to words to say it. We have to say there is a lot of trouble with words, but it doesn't mean that they are absolutely totally impossible. They are somewhere in between. We admit that words are causing a lot of trouble in communication. But anybody who says *this* must have assumed that words can communicate something. It is the same as the question of cynicism – somebody cannot be cynical about everything, because if he tried to take such total cynicism seriously he would then have to be cynical about his own cynicism as well.

Q: I was wondering about any difference or uniqueness in masculine and feminine thinking processes.

Bohm: There is surely some difference, but the question is how fundamental it is. If you like, you could bring it up sometime.

Q: I'm interested in negation, and whether it has its own movement.

Bohm: What does that mean?

Q: Negation seems so dead. Does it have a movement? Are you alive when you are in negation?

Bohm: Surely negation is a part of the whole process, because if things are wrong and if you think things are wrong then you negate. You say that they are confused or wrong. Negation is part of the whole process of thought.

Q: I mean like electricity – negation and positives.

Bohm: They are both two sides of it. Negation is one side of thought. And assertion, positing, is the other – to posit and to negate. To posit means to put forth, and to negate means to oppose. Both are necessary as part of the movement of thought.

I think that we have most of the questions that people feel.

You may have gathered already that we are going to be discussing thought. I'm suggesting that thought is behind the major ills and difficulties of the human species. This may seem strange if you have never heard it before, because thought is considered by many to be the highest achievement of the human species. I'm not trying to say it has no value. It is a very important achievement. At the same time it is a tremendously dangerous thing, because it's like a double-edged sword.

We may realize that in many ways the world is in a critical situation, even though the nuclear problem seems to have receded to some extent. And, as somebody remarked, there are great changes going on in Eastern Europe – with certain dangers. But over the past several thousand years there has been a tremendous amount of chaos – wars, slavery, oppression, economic disorder, and all sorts of things. And it seems to have led to something new – that we are now in danger of destroying the whole planet.

Actually, we have been creating this danger for quite a while just by our ordinary everyday activities of life. These activities may well be more dangerous than the nuclear bombs and all the rest of it, because they are using up everything – destroying forests and agricultural land and jungle and changing

the climate. I don't want to detail it all. You must have read about it. Very severe changes could take place. Everybody agrees on that; the only question is *when*. Some experts say fifty years, some think it's a hundred or two hundred. But if we don't change this, it is fairly certain that a real disaster will occur of a magnitude we can hardly imagine. There isn't a lot of time.

You can say, "Well, we have all these ecological problems. What shall we do? Shall we save the whales? Shall we save the jungle? Shall we fight to do this, this, and this?" All those things are all right, but they will only slow it down.

You see, the ecology is really no problem. It got along for many millions of years until we came along. *We* are the problem. Why are we the problem? What is the source of it? I say the source of it is in the way we *think*. It is our thinking that has led us to believe that we could just exploit the earth indefinitely – as we believe we can have wars indefinitely and we can do all sorts of things indefinitely that we are used to doing. Now, this is all a certain way of thinking.

The first characteristic of this way of thinking is *fragmentation*, which means breaking things up or smashing things. It doesn't mean dividing things. You can divide between the sheep and the goats or useful plants and dangerous plants – anything like that – and this is quite all right. But if we divide between things that are united, then we try to smash them so that they agree with our division.

I say we have actually a tight connection between nations; it's not a loose connection. Everybody depends on everybody else economically, the ecology is all one, and so forth. Yet every nation says it is sovereign, which means it can do exactly what it likes. Nobody can tell it what to do. That has been a principle for a long long time, and people find it hard to change.

The Brazilians are cutting down their jungles – some of them – but they object to our talking about it. They say, "You northerners, who are prosperous, are producing a lot more carbon dioxide than we are. Why do you tell us what to do with our jungles, which are ours anyway?" And we would probably

answer back, "Who are you to tell us what to do with our industry?" We are pretending that we are all separate and can all do what we like. But it can't be done. The pretense that we are separate is a way of thinking.

Nations were invented by thought. Every nation was invented by somebody thinking, "We've got a nation." There are a lot of nations now that didn't exist a hundred years ago. People just declared, "We exist," and that's it. Then they say everything must be sacrificed for that nation – if necessary we must destroy the world for that nation, and all that sort of thing.

We have fragmentation all around – not only between nations but also between religions, between families, between ideologies, between different professions, and so on. Our thought breaks up everything that is really united. We have a fictitious way of thinking. And if we think in a fictitious way we are going to get into trouble. So why do we have this?

This fictitious way of thinking breaks things up wrongly and it unites them wrongly. It says a nation is united – it is all one. But it's not. Inside each nation is tremendous division. You can see it, obviously. People pretend there is unity where there is none, and they pretend there is division where there is none. And everybody sees it that way.

The question is: why are we doing it? It is because of our thinking. We are used to thinking that way. We have been thinking that way for ages, and it seems that people now defend that way of thinking. If you really questioned it, a lot of people could get annoyed. If you kept it up, they would finally say you're making trouble, or something similar. The fact is that the people who defend fragmentary thinking are making trouble. They are getting ready to destroy the whole planet – not merely the human race, but everything else – in order to go on with their habits of thought and all the other things they have become used to.

Now, as long as we have this division it is going to be extremely hard to make the extraordinary change that is needed to meet this ecological problem. We have got to change everything unimaginably radically. I don't want to go into all that; but, for one example, eventually we have to stop economic growth. We also have to stop population growth. How are we going to do it?

It is thought that is causing the trouble. It is the collective thought of the human race. It's not just individual – it is passed on.

The second point is that we get into trouble when we say thought is doing all this. People won't believe it. They will say, "Thought does nothing. It is just reflecting reality. It tells you the way things are, then *you* decide what to do." That's the common view. But of course, if you *present* reality in a certain way, that is going to influence what you are going to do. The FBI used to say, "We merely present information. It's up to whomever receives it to use it." But merely putting information in a certain form has a powerful effect. If we put it into the form that nations are all different and independent, we are going to behave accordingly.

Information is not just sitting there; it's very powerful. Thought in general is very powerful. It has produced this building. It has produced cities, farmland, industry, governments, religions, schools. It has produced technology and science. It has produced almost everything. It is almost impossible now to find a part of the world uninfluenced by thought; there's hardly a part so wild.

Thought doesn't want to acknowledge this. The whole process of thought – whatever it is – is set up to say, "I'm not doing it. I didn't do it. It's just *there.* There is an ecological problem, and I have got to think about it some more." So thought thinks about it, saying, "Well, we have to stop cutting down those trees. We've got to stop killing the whales, stop producing all that carbon dioxide – we've got to do all sorts of things." Then thought also says, "We have to have more fuel, we have to have a higher standard of living, we must produce more industry. We cannot possibly get rid of growth." So it is 'impossible'.

But it has to stop sometime. If the economy grows two and a half percent per year, it will grow ten times in a hundred years, ten thousand million times in a thousand years. It will really crush everything. At some time it has to stop. Nobody has ever thought about that – or very few have.

Thought says, "we've got to grow," and thought says, "we've got to get rid of the consequences of growth." It is incoherent; it says, "We've got to grow without these consequences." Now, some improvements of technology could

help that, but in the long run you can't win. If it's going to grow for a thousand years, you cannot imagine any technology which will overcome a growth of ten thousand million times. Even a hundred years is impossible. We might grow for a while, but we cannot just keep on growing.

So thought is constantly producing consequences and saying, "I didn't do it." And it says, "I've got to overcome the consequences." That is incoherent. It means you produce results that you don't intend and you don't want. You then start deceiving yourself in order to avoid facing the fact that you are doing so.

The third point is that thought has produced so many 'things' of all kinds that it would be very hard to change. We say, "All these industrial arrangements, all this trade, our cities, our electricity – it's all *there*. We can't change it. We've got to go on with it." That's typical of thought – that it is constantly producing consequences and saying it didn't do it. And then it says, "I can't change it. It's too difficult."

Now, what are we going to do with that? What we have to do is to start understanding thought better. We're saying that we have been *run* by the process of thought. We don't realize that thought – our whole tradition – requires attention. It has been going on for thousands of years; it didn't start yesterday. The Romans were destroying forests several thousand years ago. North Africa was the most fertile part of the world, and it was turned into a desert by cutting down all the trees. We can do it much faster now with chain saws; we can produce deserts at a greater rate.

Technology is not the answer, because technology will do whatever thought tells us that we want to do or that we have to do. If thought says, "We have to cut down trees, we've got to have more money, we must have more products," then we will use the technology – we will invent technology that does that. So science and technology cannot be the answer. Something more fundamental is needed. There is no technological fix to this. There has to be a change in thought. Now, that is not so easy.

Q: Do you mean a change in the *process* of thought?

Bohm: Yes. Somehow we have to change this process that is getting us in deeper all the time. All the means by which we try to solve these problems are making them worse. Suppose you say, "The problem is poverty." For a long time people felt the main problem was poverty. We said, "We will try to have industry to make people less poor." But it really hasn't gotten very far. Large parts of the world are even poorer than they were. Some parts are more wealthy, but if we keep on growing – making those people richer – we are going to have the ecological crisis.

You can't keep on making people richer indefinitely. The world won't support it. People hoped and believed that technology would grow so fast that they would find a way, but there is no evidence that they will. If you think of growing and growing and growing, eventually the growth must prevail – it must win over anything you can invent. And anyway, there will just be so many people in the world that there is no room for them.

How are you going to change all that – the customs by which population is determined, by which goals are determined? People say, "My goal in life is to make money, to get a home, to be comfortable, and so forth." For each individual it looks very reasonable. It is apparently perfectly reasonable, and yet it all adds up to trouble. People generally don't want to think about that though; they would rather not believe it.

So part of thought is self-deception, which says, "It's not so. Give another explanation." That is part of the process. Thought invents another explanation, which is more reassuring, in order to relieve the tension and pressure and discomfort of thinking that way. The question is: what is behind all this kind of thought?

Q: Well, thought must derive its power from someplace else.

Bohm: Does it? From where would it be derived?

Q: It must just come out of something other than itself. It could derive its power from the meaning.

Q: How about from instinctual needs? After all, as humans developed,

that was the first source. Thought didn't spring *sui generis*, it sprang from instinctual needs.

Bohm: Some came from the needs for security and comfort. One need was to take care of finding sources of food. But it is surely not our need to destroy ourselves. If people were looking at their real needs they would say, "Let's quickly change our thought." But as I have said, they deceive themselves about what they need, rather than face the issue. So there is something wrong – something incoherent in the process of thought if it does that. To be useful, thought should not be self-deceptive, and it should not engage in sustained incoherence. It might be incoherent from time to time, but at least it should not sustain incoherence – for example, by defending it.

Q: Psychologists say that's the only way human beings have survived – by defending incoherence, by defending against utilization of rationality.

Bohm: Maybe, but I think that they are not going to survive very much longer that way. Therefore, either we say the human race is very badly designed and will disappear, or we say that there is a mistake in thought that can be changed. Some people say, "The human race is a bad job – let's give it up." People like 'Earth First' say, "Well, the main thing is to see that some of nature is preserved so that something new can take our place." It's a very depressing point of view. Anyway, it is not even certain that this would work, because if we do go down we will probably create such chaos as to bring everything down. The best way to preserve nature is to solve our problems.

Q: Is the self-deception you're talking about something that's in the essential nature of thought or something that is learned?

Bohm: That is my question. First let's look at the question. In a dialogue we have to sort of weigh the question a little, ponder it a little, feel it out. Now, one view is that something is wrong with the human race. That's pretty hopeless. Right?

Q: That doesn't leave much room.

Bohm: It doesn't. You might hope that technology will develop so as to fix it for a while.

Q: What about the division that has occurred in humans? Some humans see these problems – the problems that are dividing us and causing these factions. For centuries some people have even addressed them. Then others come out and say, "No, you can't talk." Squash.

Bohm: Well, they are frightened. But thought creates fear. It's due to thought saying, "If you say those things, you're going to disturb all our comfortable arrangements, and we don't want that." In order to do that people must deceive themselves, because they will then say, "We are not going to look at this. We will assume that everything is going to be all right." So they defend themselves against evidence that something is wrong with their thought.

That is surely something wrong; it's not a good way to survive. When it comes to technical thought, people don't do it so much – if they did, the technology wouldn't work at all – but they do it to some extent. For example, people who run nuclear plants have been accused of covering up weaknesses in what they are doing – not merely covering them up, but believing their own coverup.

Q: Isn't that part of thought though – to make the choice? Then how do you choose rather than deceive?

Bohm: How will you make a choice if you're not clear? You see, it is necessary for thought to be coherent. Now, can you choose to be coherent when you are incoherent? Indeed, we don't know why we are incoherent. I mean, nobody really wants to be incoherent; at least I don't know of anybody. And yet we are.

Q: Are you saying that over time we have created a structure in thought that now makes it very possible to be self-deceptive and incoherent, and to have it seem to be quite reasonable – that we have created a kind of structuring of thought?

Bohm: Something like that has happened. For instance, the thought about religion is not coherent. People will usually not listen to each other seriously about differences of religion. No two religions – even religions that are very close, different branches of the same one – have ever really managed to talk, to have a dialogue in which they would really consider each other's assumptions in a fair and unbiased way.

Q: And even the religions themselves have come out of the previous incoherence of understanding.

Bohm: It is very hard to get coherent thought between religions, between nations, between ideologies, or, more generally, whenever anybody's self-interest is involved.

Q: Somehow we have identified ourselves more deeply with thought and the things we get out of it than with the obvious problems that thought is causing. We don't identify ourselves deeply with the earth as we do with our thought process.

Bohm: That's right. Actually, we identify ourselves with our self-interest.

Q: Which would be to keep our thought processes intact.

Bohm: Yes. Our self-interest is identified with keeping our customary habits and our arrangements unchanged – things that make us feel secure, or at least that satisfy us, and so on.

Q: Which would demand that we maintain this incoherence.

Bohm: And if it turns out that to do this involves contradiction and incoherence, then we cover it up. We deny that it is incoherent, and we give a false explanation making it look coherent.

Q: Why is it so important to be coherent?

Bohm: If you are incoherent, you produce unintended consequences that you don't really want. That is one sign of incoherence. Another is that you contradict yourself. A third is that you deceive yourself. What is the point of that kind of thought? We would be better off without it. You see, nobody

really intends to destroy the planet. They merely intend, for example, to get rich or something.

Q: Comfortable.

Bohm: Comfortable, rich, whatever it is. Now, I'm not blaming anybody; I am saying all of us are in it. We have not seen that this is dangerous, that it is incoherent. If our real intention had been to destroy the planet, we would have been coherent.

Q: Isn't part of the problem that we are so accustomed to being led that we don't know how to start on our own afresh, leading ourselves in the right direction?

Bohm: Yes, but who's leading whom?

Q: I'm living in a nation very comfortably, but I want to change my affiliation with the ignorance of the collective thinking. If I do see that thought is the culprit, suddenly I'm alone – stranded perhaps. Then a fear could come about, that isn't even necessarily the fear I see in understanding thought.

Bohm: It may still be involved in understanding. Fear and thought are closely connected. One of our assumptions is that thought is one thing and fear is another, pleasure is another, anger is another, and so on – all the emotions; and that the general tensions and stresses in the body are another; and that what is going on in society is something else again. That's fragmentation. Over thousands of years, thought has traditionally conditioned us to believe in that. Therefore, if you see fear you say, "Well, that's not thought." But I suggest it may still be thought. We have to go into that later.

Q: It seems that we have to have some faith that there's time left for us to do this changing in our thinking. I would translate what you mentioned before to be that thought is making us think that we are so important – above all the other species – that we'll be trying to solve these problems, but there won't be enough time. And everything will be gone – us and everything else.

Bohm: We don't know about that. Some people estimate it's a short time and some longer. We don't know.

Q: I guess I'm asking whether thought is making us think that we are the most important species.

Bohm: Yes, it's doing that, too. But in some sense we are, because we are able to destroy the whole thing. At least we are the key to it. In one sense we may not be, but in another sense we are the ones on which it all hinges. If we don't resolve it, the whole thing may come down.

Q: That's kind of a short term view isn't it – that the whole thing may come down? I mean, the earth's been around for four billion years.

Bohm: It may be revived again later. It will probably come back, and very probably in some other way.

Q: How can we use thought to get ourselves out of thought?

Bohm: We may have to. We are not trying to say that thought is entirely vicious or wrong. Thought is a mixture; it's in between. It is doing all these wrong things, and it is also capable of all sorts of other things. We may need something more than thought as well, but we may also have to have clear *thought about thought.* That's one of the things we are coming to. You see, we are thinking about all sorts of things; but we have never said that it is very important to think clearly about thought. This may be the first step.

Q: Isn't thought the product of memory? And isn't memory the result of millions of years of conditioning, like a program in a computer? On that basis, how is thought able to do anything but mix the furniture around – just change the elements of the memory?

Bohm: You can raise that question; it's an interesting one. But we are in danger of painting ourselves into a corner by saying thought is all bad. If you say thought is all bad, then we need something beside thought. How are you going to get it? Thought will never give it to you, and you will hope for a miracle.

Q: Is there anything else other than this conditioning?

Bohm: Suppose I say there is. That's still thought. I can say anything. I can say there is a great glorious thing which will solve all our problems, but that is still thought.

Q: That's the illusion.

Bohm: So we have to do something else.

Q: Isn't thought's only real problem the notion that there is *somebody* who is thinking?

Bohm: That is so. But that's quite hard to get at, because it seems so obvious that there is such a thinker. I hope we can get to that.

We raised the notion that thought is based on memory. That's an interesting point, which may be a clue. I want to distinguish between thinking and thought. I say 'thinking' is an active process which is actually going on. The syllable 'ing' suggests something active. And 'thought' is the past.

We suppose that we think, and that the thinking then vanishes. It is assumed that thinking tells you what is right – the way things really are. Then you decide what to do, and you do it. And then it's all gone. But in fact, I say *thinking* doesn't vanish. It becomes *thought,* and it goes onto a program. What you have been thinking goes onto a program – especially the conclusions and the assumptions and the general things like that.

If you have been thinking that people of a certain category are bad, it becomes a program and you see them as bad. You respond immediately. If you tell your children that, that's the way they are going to behave automatically. The memory springs into action like a computer program. You don't have time to see it happening, and you think that what you are responding to is just the reality and the truth.

Now, we need this sort of function of thought. For example, if you are going to drive a car, a lot of such thought enters in. You learn all sorts of things that you ought to be doing. That becomes part of your program, so you can respond immediately rather than having to think. If you took time to think, the response would be too late.

You need this possibility of making thought a program in all sorts of ways. Yet it is dangerous – because when you don't notice it, this program can spring into action and tell you, "These people are bad. I must kill such and such a person. Under such conditions I must kill, under such conditions I must do this, I must do that. I'm this sort of person, they're that sort of person. We'll never meet." And so on.

Thought can tell you all that as a program might do. And so you see it that way. It affects your perception. It affects your adrenaline. It affects your whole attitude. For instance, suppose you are in a dark place and people have said there are assailants in this neighborhood. If you see a shadow, your thought immediately makes you jump. If you didn't think there were any assailants you would not react in this way. If you look again and see it is a shadow, you think that there is no danger, so the reactions cease.

Thought – which is programmed from what people have said and from what you have thought, from what you have been thinking – thus acts immediately. It acts immediately in millions of ways. This has been going on collectively as well as individually for ages. And, as you have remarked, it's building up.

Q: It makes robots out of all of us, doesn't it?

Bohm: It tends to. It makes us at least have a lot of robotic characteristics.

Q: It's almost total, isn't it?

Bohm: Well, we have to be careful. If we don't know that it is true we have to be careful not to say it, because *that* thought itself can make robots out of us. That thought will say we are nothing but robots, and then we will be robots. We have to watch out. The very thought that we are using in this minute is crucial. It may be the thought which is doing the whole thing.

Q: All words are a limitation in a sense.

Bohm: If you say, "all words," we had better just keep silent. And then when we keep silent, we don't solve the problem either. That's the way of using language which makes trouble. The word 'all' must be used very carefully, because it is one of the most powerful programming words there

is. Like, "*All* of those people are that way. It's 'forever' – they'll be that way forever." And that sort of thing. That has a tremendously powerful programming effect. So this means we must watch our language. There are times when we should use the word 'all', but we have to be careful. It can be a very powerful programming word.

We're saying you have thinking and thought. Thinking is a bit more active, because when you are thinking you can sometimes detect incoherence – you can detect there is something wrong with what you are thinking. But *thought* acts like a program, and works so fast you can't do that. Then how *do* you detect incoherence? You get a feeling – a sense something is wrong. And you require *sensitivity* to that.

That sensitivity is crucial. We won't have time to go into it this evening, but I think society systematically destroys sensitivity in order to avoid being upset. It would rather people not notice incoherence, because then they don't upset the apple cart too much. Therefore, we have learned to cover it up.

Let's say that we have this sensitivity which is very subtle, which can show us incoherence in our thought and action. It can show us that we say one thing and do another, and so forth. But usually we don't want to be sensitive to that.

We have thinking and thought. Besides that, we have feeling or emotion – whatever you want to call it. Now, feeling has the suffix 'ing', which suggests something that is always active and primary and real. But that's not true. Unfortunately, the English language is deficient in this regard. It has introduced the distinction of thinking and thought, but it has not made a corresponding distinction among feelings. I will do it for the moment now.

I say there are feelings and 'felts'. Feelings you had in the past have gone into the memory and become programs. You can remember feelings you have had – feelings of traumatic events, feelings of pleasure, nostalgia, and so on. That has a powerful effect. You find it hard to distinguish them from some genuine feeling. Let's say you get a genuine feeling of relationship. Or in the jungle somebody might have a feeling of danger, and he has to think, "what does it mean?" Perhaps he sees a snake. What does it mean? If he says, "it's

not a poisonous snake," the feeling of danger goes away. If it is a poisonous snake he had better move.

There is a natural relation of feeling and thinking. Feeling sort of picks up the perception first; then the question arises, "what does it mean?" And thinking begins to supply that. If it's working right, then thinking will show whether the feeling is appropriate or not. But it may not be working right, because we can get felts, and there is no easy way to deal with those. For example, if you had a lot of traumatic experience with certain things when you were a child, every time something similar comes up you get a very strong and disturbing felt. You can't deal with it because it is in the memory, and yet it springs up so rapidly and vigorously that it seems to be a feeling. Natural intelligence might reach a genuine feeling, but how is it going to reach the memory, the program from which a felt comes? It generally doesn't know that there is one there. And even if it does, it doesn't know where the program is. Thus you don't really change the felt. You are stuck with it.

The key point here is that the failure to understand this sort of thing is a crucial difficulty in the whole process of thought. Or to put it differently, what thought thinks about itself is very important, because it conditions and programs itself in a wrong way. The thing we have to look at is the way in which thought programs itself to go wrong. It has programmed itself to go wrong as a result of a long history.

So we have thinking and thought, feeling and felt. And the question is: how are we going to get at it? I say that it's something very subtle.

There are things which are obvious and things which are *subtle.* The word 'subtle' means 'highly refined', 'rarefied', 'elusive', 'delicate', 'undefinable'. I can't really define 'subtle', since it means 'undefinable'. But its root is interesting – *sub tex*, which means 'finely woven'. In other words, you could say the mind makes more and more finely woven nets in which to catch subtler and subtler things.

Ordinary thought is not very subtle. Its net is very coarse, and a lot of things slip right through. Some of the questions we have been discussing slip right through. Now, what do we mean by 'subtlety'? You will not be able to

sense anything subtle without sensitivity – as subtlety is elusive, undefinable, delicate. That calls for sensitivity.

As I said, the society doesn't want too much sensitivity. I'll give you an example. We knew a girl who was going to school. A teacher was doing all sorts of incoherent things, crazy things. She said this, this, and this. It all didn't make any sense and the girl was very disturbed. The mother finally said, "In this house, the teacher is always right." It didn't mean she believed the teacher was right. She meant there's no point in your raising these issues; you are wasting your energy.

This illustrates that the whole society finally teaches the child that there is no point in being sensitive to all that incoherence, because you get nowhere. Therefore, the child learns a more general lesson – not merely about this and that incoherence, but about *all* incoherence – saying, "Don't notice these things. Don't pay too much attention. Don't take them too seriously because you'll get in trouble and you'll get nowhere."

In order to stabilize themselves, most societies – not only this society, almost all that we know of over history – have systematically destroyed the sensitivity which is necessary for subtle intelligence. The kind of thought we've been talking about is not very subtle. It's pretty crude and gross. And we need subtlety and we need sensitivity. Now, can we have a formula for becoming sensitive? What would you say?

Q: It has to be a whole way of life.

Bohm: Right. Your whole life is involved, not just this or that.

Q: Not to be brutalized to begin with.

Bohm: But if you are, what are you going to do? Most of us are.

We have got to change. At least, maybe we can. If we assume that we can't, then that finishes it. You see, thought is very powerful. By saying, "This is impossible," it blocks. So it's a wrong tactic or a wrong strategy to start with the assumption that what we want to do is impossible. It doesn't prove that it *is* possible, but at least we have to leave it open.

Q: Could you talk a little bit more about what you mean by 'sensitivity'?

Bohm: Yes. It's hard to explain, but suppose we take the case of the girl with the teacher who is doing all sorts of things that don't make sense. They are disturbing her. Now, what is happening? How is she feeling?

There are some feelings that come up when something happens that doesn't make sense. Suppose you are coming into a room and you say, "There's something wrong in this room. I can't say exactly what." You sense it. You begin to ask what it could be, and what it means, and so on. Then maybe you find it.

Q: I suggest that you wouldn't do that – that you would sense the feeling and not have to put it into content, because as soon as you put it into content it's locked. And that's where we get caught in thought, or we get caught in the content. We don't have any space behind it. That becomes the reality, which obviously cannot be. There is an interpretation.

Bohm: But sometimes we must. Say you have a machine and it's not quite working. You sense something is wrong here. It doesn't seem quite right. Or you have a problem in mathematics. You sense there is a contradiction somewhere and you can't tell where. There are times when you want to find out what it is. There may be other times when it's not necessary.

Q: What you are suggesting is to play with it. You're not coming to a conclusion.

Bohm: That's right, you're not.

Q: When you find a machine that isn't working you have to look at it. You have to take it apart. So you are actually working back and forth with that feeling and then with thought. If you come into a room and you say, "Gee, I feel something funny here. I bet it's because..." Then I'm finished.

Bohm: No, don't do that.

Q: That's where sensitivity comes in. You don't come to a conclusion or have a content. You play with it; you just let it ride.

Bohm: Yes, don't come to a conclusion. We will discuss this more later. The idea is you hold back for a little while; it is necessary to suspend the action.

This suspension is crucial to sensitivity. I don't decide, I don't say this or that. I'm looking and I'm trying to find out.

Q: And thought will come up or thinking will be happening, and perhaps that can be trusted or perhaps not. But you keep that open and let the next thing come along, and see if that validates the thought that came up. It's a whole process like that.

Bohm: Thought can work together with sensitivity. So that begins to show that thought isn't always the villain. It *has* gone wrong – badly wrong – in the whole of history, but it needn't be the villain.

You see, we need this sensitivity, which is the beginning of something beyond thought. In other words, thought and what is beyond thought do not necessarily just stand on two sides of the fence, saying, "Here is the fence. Thought is here and non-thought is over there." But in a certain way they meet.

It may be that by following this we will get beyond thought in some fundamental way. Our minds are open. We don't know. I don't say, "I'm going to tell you. I know and you don't know. I'm going to tell you, and when you leave here you will also know."

Q: Are you saying sensitivity is other than thought?

Bohm: It's not other. It is *beyond.* It is a bit beyond thought as a program. The word 'thought' basically means the program. When sensitivity enters, then thought itself begins to have new possibilities.

Q: It's usually thought that destroys sensitivity.

Bohm: A certain kind of thought – that thought which is trying to defend something very precious, saying, "This must not be touched." That kind of thought.

Q: As you said about walking into a room and getting a feeling that something is wrong – if you say, "It's just my imagination," then you have immediately used thought as a response.

Bohm: Well, you may not want to be bothered. You might say, "It would be too much trouble to go into all this." There are all sorts of reasons which thought could give why you shouldn't be sensitive. On the other hand, thought can make you sensitive in a wrong way, by making you very touchy. It's a very subtle question.

This comes back to the fact that we have to get into something subtle, which again requires another level of sensitivity.

Q: Is sensitivity a potential faculty that has the quality of freshness – something present, spontaneous, awakened? That may be what distinguishes sensitivity from the frozen, programmed thought. Of course, sensitivity uses relative thought; but it seems to me that it has a freshness. It's almost something that springs out and has an aliveness.

Bohm: It is much more alive. It is tentative. It's undefined, it's subtle. The word 'subtle' means 'undefinable', 'elusive', 'delicate'. All those words could be applied to sensitivity.

Q: So does it keep all the senses alert?

Bohm: Yes. And that's a good point. We ordinarily think of the senses as one thing and sensitivity as another. But I would say that without sensitivity, the senses cannot give you much information of value. You will merely pick up what you are used to. Therefore, you could now say the senses are an extension of sensitivity in certain directions, but the fundamental quality is sensitivity – which may be in the mind as well as in the senses.

Q: Could you say it's a kind of looking before you leap?

Bohm: Sometimes it is. Primarily, though, it's a kind of being *open*. I think it is natural, but it is being destroyed by thought – which says that you shouldn't be sensitive, you should be well determined for certain purposes.

Q: Could it be that sensitivity is related more to the *perception* which is devoid of the memory bank of thought, and once thought acts on that perception it alters it?

Bohm: Sensitivity is the first step toward perception. It's the beginning of picking up new information, which is not in the categories of thought. But at the same time it is sensitive to thought, too.

In a way, what destroys sensitivity is what I would call a generalized sort of *violence.* I will just say a few things about violence now, and I think you can see that it brings it all together. Perhaps we will come back to it in our next meetings.

According to the dictionary, the word 'violence' means 'the undue use of force'. In other words, it doesn't mean you should never use force to push something around – but rather, not to use it in a wrong place. It is also related to the word 'violate'. You are violating the right order, and so on.

The basic point to keep in mind here is that a person's actions are generally determined by thought, especially his incoherent actions. However bad these may be, they will be determined by some kind of thought. And at some stage we may respond with force. We thus respond to thought with force, as if we could obliterate it or push it aside or change it. Now, that force may be relatively subtle. It may be just mental force, rather than physical force. But it does not properly meet the thought itself – its content. Do you see what I mean?

For example, somebody is doing something that frustrates you very much. It blocks what you want to do. And you make a picture of him as that person who is always doing that. You say he needs to be pushed aside or hit, or something sharp should be said to him.

As I've just said, violence can also be an undue use of mental force. The word 'convince' means 'to win'. The word 'persuade' is based on 'suave' and 'sweet'. It means to win by sweet talk. But that is also a form of violence. It does not meet the actual issue. Persuasion and conviction can be regarded as subtle forms of violence.

In fact, what is ultimately called for is simply that these various thoughts must meet, and we must see whether they are coherent or not and what their value really is.

If you don't like what the other side is doing – say the communists or the capitalists, or in religion – you form an image of them as wicked and you say, "They are always that way. They only understand force." That's typical of what people frequently say. Of course, nobody 'understands' force. If somebody responds to you with force, it will create the sense that you have been violently treated. Also, if people don't listen to you, you will feel that is a form of violence. In both cases, you may think that a violent response is what is called for.

It is a complex problem, because you may see somebody else's violence and say that it is *his* violence. But it is really yours as well, because you cannot see his violence except in terms of your own – your own tendency to use undue force inwardly or outwardly.

Suppose you are watching a television program with a violent content. There is nothing going on there at all except spots of light, but you can *feel* the violence in the program. Where is it actually coming from? It is coming from your own violence.

Each person has been programmed to violence over the ages. And everybody has plenty of violent programs in him. There is no difficulty in finding a violent program to project into the television image, or to project into the memory image of somebody else. The point is that if you see violence, you see it through your own. Then you think, "That's terrible. It's disturbing." So you deny that it is yours and say, "It's that person's," and you feel better. But the violent movement involving undue use of force is still in there, and will come out in another way in distorting your thought.

As I've already said, we may also have a thought which says that I am justified in responding to violence with violence. I respond to friendship with friendship and to violence with violence. That is a commonly accepted thought. But that thought cannot actually work overall in the long run. It must lead to sure destruction. It destroys all sides, because once you respond with violence you are turning your own system into chaos, and everything you do goes wrong – has no meaning.

This is a very subtle point. It requires a lot of sensitivity to see it. But of course, violence is constantly destroying that sensitivity. Your violent reaction is smashing you up inside so that you are not sensitive. You're not only not sensitive to that, you are not sensitive to almost anything else, and you do all sorts of things wrong. So you could see that one of the basic difficulties with thought is violence.

The other side of violence is *fear.* When you think you've got a lot of force, you probably won't hesitate to be violent – to use force to overcome. But when you don't think you have that force, then you're afraid and you try to retreat. The point is that fear and violence are closely connected – not only in the ways I've just described, but also because you can project your own violence onto the other person and you become afraid of it. Therefore, the two go together. They are just two sides of that one process.

You can see that physical violence is a tremendous problem, but mental violence is a much more serious problem. You can see violence in the way people insist on their view and simply dismiss anything else. That will provoke further violence.

I saw a program about the Northern and Southern Irish and all of the violence going on there. There was an election in Southern Ireland as to whether they should have a very limited form of divorce, and that idea was rejected totally. The program showed people being interviewed. They had absolute conviction; they simply dismissed any other point. Now, one fellow pointed out that that was a tremendous blow against the unity with the North that the South wanted – that the minute the Protestants in the North would see the results of the election they would say, "Well, we could never unite with them. They simply dismiss anything. Even on this little issue they won't move."

So the violence in thought is fundamentally the root of all that violence with guns. And I'm saying that thought, which does not understand what it is doing, tends to fall into violence. In the primitive times this happened much less frequently. People were further apart, living in small groups. And it didn't matter so much anyway, because the weapons they had were not so dangerous.

We now have very dangerous weapons. Also, if we are violent we're not going to be able to get together to meet this ecological crisis and all sorts of things we have to do together.

I'm suggesting that it would be worth looking into being sensitive to violence – your own violence, that of other people – in all its forms, because violence is basically the movement which destroys sensitivity. We could say that if we are insensitive, then we have to be sensitive to what is destroying sensitivity. That would be the only way out. We could say *that*, rather than condemning violence, or saying we mustn't be violent, or justifying violence. People often deal with violence by saying, "If he treats me violently then I'm justified," or else, "I must turn the other cheek," or "I must do this or that."

But none of that gets to the root, which is that thought is the source of violence. These are all attempts typical of thought – to produce a problem, and then to produce some means of overcoming the problem that it is constantly producing. It's like hitting yourself on the head with a hammer with the right hand and trying to stop it with the left. You continue the kind of thought that makes violence, and then you say we ought not to be violent. That just simply muddles it up. It's another kind of violence. Thought turns violently against itself. Violence turns against itself, but remains violence as it does so.

It's worth thinking about that. It is a way of looking and being sensitive – not merely thinking – which gives some insight if you pursue it. You can see that a tremendous amount of the confusion in your own thought is a kind of violence, with which thought is attacking those parts of itself that it doesn't like.

We are going to have to go into what you will do if you find yourself full of things you don't like. We have to go into all that. Violence will do no good. Ignoring it will do no good. So we have got to have an approach which can get into it; and I think that there *is* such an approach. That means going further into thought and how it goes, and so on.

Q: Is this violence sort of rooted in the need of thought to feel it is always correct or right?

Bohm: That's part of its root. Also the need to feel secure, to be sure.

Q: It has to believe these coarse generalizations.

Bohm: It's really one of those nets that is very coarse. The violent nets are extremely coarse, not subtle.

Q: It feels so speedy because it labels things quickly.

Bohm: Yes, very very fast – very fast emotional reactions. Some months ago there was an article in *The New York Times* saying that there are two ways that an emotion can be dealt with. One way is that the whole system – the brain, including the intellect – can sort of evaluate the emotion and see whether it makes sense or not. But there's another faster way, which apparently was useful in primitive times – that in situations of danger there can be a very fast turning on of the emotion, very powerfully. And the memory of certain dangers can do that. The memory of our whole conditioning does it too. So we have to say that this generally adds to violence, that it is part of the movement of violence.

Q: Maybe this is my own conclusion and it's not true, but I sense that the physical fear is far less than our psychological fears.

Bohm: We could say that there would be reasonable physical fears that wouldn't confuse or disorganize us. In a primitive situation, the fear might get you to run from an animal you can't handle. And after you have run away, the fear stops. Or if the animal catches you, then it eats you and the fear stops anyway. The fear doesn't go on forever.

On the other hand, our present fears about thought do go on forever. A person is afraid: "Will I hold my job, will the boss like me?" Or whatever. Now, that can go on forever, and it starts to degenerate the brain. The physical fear may be a reaction to a perceived danger, but the psychological fear is something much more subtle and complex, which we have to get into.

Q: The development of thought has increased our psychological fear.

Bohm: Yes. Generally speaking, the more thought develops, the more we have to be afraid of – both real and imaginary. We've produced all kinds of dangers – like the nuclear danger and the ecological danger – due to the way

we think. They are real dangers, but produced by confused thinking, by incoherent thinking.

Q: Isn't sensitivity different from the program? Sensitivity happens in the moment – in the now. The now is a perception, and it's real. Fear could be a program, because the word 'fear' makes you fearful. And also fear might cause a pain in the body. You think it's fear because you're accustomed to having a feeling when the word 'fear' is expressed. And the body always reacts in the same way – it reacts to a program. But if you look at it in the now, something happens; you see that the pain is different. Because, as I understand what you said, the now is beyond the brain or it is out of time.

Bohm: That may well be so. But we could get into it in a wrong way, in the sense that that could become another pattern of programming. In other words, whatever you say – whether it's true or false – can go onto the program and become a source of imagination. We have to be careful to go slowly, to see this danger, to see how we can proceed without getting into such a situation, and actually to come into contact with this process of thought in its deceptive movement sufficiently that we don't fall into that trap. So even something which is very true when just stated can become a trap if it goes on the program.

I'm saying the first step is not truth, but whether we can see the ***meaning*** of what's going on. If we don't see this meaning clearly, then we will never have a mind which can come to truth. We need to see the meaning of this thought process, to which we now give a wrong meaning.

Q: Then can we never have truth?

Bohm: No, we won't *have* truth. But let's say are we going to come to truth, to be *in* truth. We'll need to discuss this whole question of truth, because I think that is part of the confusion of thought – that thought has very confused incoherent notions of truth, which go onto the program and trap us. Once you say something is true, this gives it tremendous power. If the program says this is truth, it takes right over. The surest way to make the program take over is just to put something down and say, "That's true."

Q: It's no longer true.

Q: And another problem is that we never can get any consensus on the meaning of meaning, of any specific meaning.

Bohm: We'll go into that, too. That's where the dialogue comes in – to raise the question of whether we can share meaning. I don't know if we can do it all in this short period. We have to get our meaning clear and coherent, both individually and collectively. As I said, two more days is a rather short period to do all this, but we will try to do something. I mean, we'll have to make a selection; we can't cover the whole thing in all detail.

Q: Are we born with that tendency of thought to be deceptive?

Bohm: We're born with the possibility that it may go wrong.

Q: Is there a difference between conditioning and learning? You seemed to have used those things interchangeably. Are we born with it, or is this process something we learned?

Bohm: We have learned it, but it's now part of our culture. So it is transmitted very quickly.

Q: There's something about human learning that is picking it up, though. It's not just passive.

Bohm: Yes, we've learned something which is destructive. And it has become part of our culture.

Q: Is it that we are programming things that we need not program? We need to program things such as to draw back and not step on a rattlesnake. Or maybe more commonly now, to step out of the way of a truck coming down the road. That's a part of the programming we need.

Bohm: Yes, the child must be taught that.

Q: But the other kinds of programming?

Bohm: Then we have to ask how we draw the line, and we have to go into that. We will not be able to draw the line intelligently unless we see what is

wrong with the other kind. If you merely say, "That's the bad kind of program, this is the good kind," then that's the same story again. "Do all the good things and keep away from the bad things." That's what they tell you. That sort of advice simply muddles it up, because then what are the good things and what are the bad things? There is something specifically incoherent about the way this program works, which we have to get into.

Q: Does thought and thinking end at death?

Bohm: Well, I assume it does. Why?

Q: If thought and thinking end at death, and there is a consciousness or a survival of something – consciousness or intelligence – there is an implication that there's another intelligence operating even as we think.

Bohm: It may well be. I'm not denying that. I'm saying it may be, and maybe we'll come to it. But I think we cannot begin with the assumption, because that is again the way the program functions. If we assume it, then we will create the impression that it is there when it is not actually working. The assumption is the trap.

Q: When you mentioned sensitivity, there is an assumption that there is something other than thinking that's operating.

Bohm: You can look at it as an assumption that is very provisional, that we are going to explore sensitively. In other words, I'm not going to take this as saying, "This is the truth." But I'm saying we all know sensitivity – a little bit about it. And it does imply something beyond; we don't know what.

It is a proposal, therefore, rather than an assumption. I would rather use the word 'proposal'. We want to explore this proposal sensitively. Do you see what I'm driving at? It is there to be looked at and explored. We cannot say this is the truth, that there really is an intelligence, that we really *know* there is an intelligence beyond thought. If I began with that, then we would have the wrong beginning.

Q: So are we proposing that the ultimate violence, and the cause of all the violence in the world, is this destruction of our sensitivity?

Bohm: That's the proposal, which we have to explore with sensitivity. And in that case, we are going to bring in the very sensitivity that we're going to be learning about.

Q: We have to be sensitive about this activity.

Bohm: Yes, and about our way of exploring it.

Q: It feels as if we have to tiptoe.

Bohm: It is a matter of not rushing to conclusions, and also of being open. The sensitivity might include sensitivity of the body. I mean, how does thought affect the feelings in the body? How does it affect the solar plexus and the neck and stomach? How does it produce tensions in the abdominal walls?

You see, all of these things are part of the meaning of 'thought', which we must go into. In other words, sensitivity means we don't restrict it and say, "This is thought and that is something else." One flows into the other. Thought has produced this whole world, and we have to see that whole process. We are not going to make a sharp boundary between thought and everything else. If you do make that boundary, that blocks sensitivity.

Q: The tendency to put everything in conclusions blocks sensitivity. And there is a tendency to put everything in conclusions.

Bohm: That's right.

Q: It's as though that closes every door.

Bohm: Yes. Now, can you see that this tendency to put too much into conclusions is a form of violence?

Q: Yes.

Bohm: It is violating the right order. It is trying by some forceful means to close the issue when it's not closed. 'Conclusion' means closing it, and there is a place where you *can* close it. But you are trying to close what cannot properly be closed. And that is violence. You are using force, a kind of very forceful thought.

Q: When you asked that question about conclusions being a form of violence, and I was too quick to say, "yes," that would be another violence. You said, "Can you see that that creates a violence?" And then I said, "yes." In a sense that's cutting off. If it's just an answer, then I stop looking.

Bohm: If you have looked and have felt that it is a kind of violence, and then say, "yes," then it means something. You would say, "I see that it is a kind of violence." That would be the fact.

Q: Yes, that would be so. But then it may tend to stop one from looking.

Bohm: Not if you are just saying, "I have seen that it is a form of violence." And you can now go further. You say, "What does it mean? What does it imply? Can I go further? That's a very interesting point, isn't it – that merely making a conclusion can be a form of violence. Maybe there could be other things we accept so readily which are also violent."

Q: Are we saying that a positive assertion is just as much of a violence – a closure – as a negative assertion?

Bohm: It *can* be. But not every positive assertion is a violent kind of closure.

Q: I was wondering if that could be seen, because I can see my violence and then stop seeing it because I have formed a conclusion.

Bohm: Because in this way you have settled it. But we are saying that it isn't really settled. Thus, as we have seen, one's own conclusions are quite often a form of violence, and that doesn't settle anything. To see this is really the beginning of an enquiry. One is then saying: "I've been constantly concluding and so has everybody else. And we all thought we were just doing nice, logical thought. But it turns out that very frequently we were engaging in subtle violence. All this evidently requires further observation."

Q: That means that all of a sudden, the thought that was doing the conclusions can have a glimpse of what it is doing.

Bohm: Maybe you can even glimpse it while you are doing it. Now, to get a sense of what's *making* you do it would go further. But that's another question. What *makes* one engage in such incoherent activity? What is the impulse? Perhaps we should try to go into that a little later.

Q: Are we starting to see sensitivity as a kind of openness, or as an opening kind of process?

Bohm: Yes.

Q: How about the person who says without discrimination, "I have an open mind; I listen to everything because I don't want to come to closure – there are no conclusions."

Bohm: That fellow has come to a conclusion already. He has said that that is what he is. He has defined himself as the one who is always listening, and never concluding. Now, clearly you must sometimes come to a conclusion. If you say, "I *never* come to a conclusion," you are still violent, because you are violently opposed to coming to conclusions. The point is that one has to be open to coming to conclusions where necessary. You couldn't live without sometimes coming to a conclusion. That requires subtlety – not just making a sharp boundary and saying it's this or that.

Q: Making the statement that I am always open is also a conclusion, isn't it?

Bohm: Yes, that is a conclusion. And it's a violent kind of conclusion. If you say you have got to be open always, then you're enforcing something. You are using a kind of moral force. As I've said earlier, you can use moral force as well as physical force, or mental force, or other kinds of force of very powerful expression.

Q: If one wanted to get carried away, one could say the statement 'I am' is a kind of a conclusion.

Bohm: Well, maybe it is. But if we feel that way, then we must enquire and ask what we are doing. What does it really mean?

Q: I don't see anything necessarily wrong with coming to a conclusion, relatively speaking. It's just sort of a stepping-stone, and then from there you move on. But if you just stop there, that's where it's dangerous.

Bohm: Yes, if you stop permanently. You may have to stop for a while, or even for quite a while. There's no limit to how long. For instance, people concluded that gold has such and such a specific gravity, and they expected to hold that indefinitely. But of course it wasn't entirely true, because isotopes of gold were eventually discovered which have another specific gravity. So the conclusion had to change, though it held for a long time.

We will call a halt now and start tomorrow morning.

SATURDAY MORNING

Bohm: We began to discuss thought last night – the way thought has been going. Shall we see if there are some questions this morning, and then go on from there?

Q: We were saying that if there is any kind of resistance, it is a form of violence.

Bohm: Well, I say *resistance to thought* is violence. To resist thought is an inappropriate use of force, an undue use. We need to see what thought means, and be sensitive as to whether it is coherent or not. The difficulty is that we often don't realize that the whole of thought goes into feeling – or what I call 'felt'. It goes into the state of the body. It can be projected into somebody else as an image, or into the whole society. In this way most of our social problems arise in thought. We then try to use force to solve these problems, and they never get solved. Now, that is the general idea.

Q: When you say, "use force," do you mean the force of thought?

Bohm: We use physical force in many cases. We use mental force. We use moral force. We try to get across a strong feeling emotionally, a sense of overwhelmingness. One person may put on an emotional display of force. Another person may use intellectual force to overwhelm somebody with arguments. There are various ways which do not meet the thought, but simply bring in some kind of force to push it aside or dismiss it. And that leaves the problem untouched. For instance, people may feel that you haven't listened to them, and that gives rise to their violence. Or else they accept it, but they still feel frustrated and they take it out on somebody else. Often people feel very frustrated in society. But they will not make a violent reaction if they don't think they can use force. Still, the disposition to such a reaction is there, so they may try to find somebody else on whom to use force – somebody weaker.

Q: It becomes a spiral cycle.

Bohm: Yes. And it is a very common thing. People may take it out on children, or on people who are not as strong as they are, and so on. That is, whenever you use force to meet a problem arising in thought, you have not really solved it. You have created more problems, though the force may at first seem to succeed.

Q: Is fear related to this force?

Bohm: There will be fear. If you don't have the power to exert force, then you will feel fear. If you feel frustrated and would like to use force but are not confident of success in using it, then you will feel fear. Also, you may project into the other person your own violence and be afraid of it.

Q: You say, "your own violence." You were talking about the analogy of the television screen and the flickering lights, and that there is no violence in there. That's clearly an example of where the violence in me is projected on itself. Can you say more about this violence in me?

Bohm: Whenever you think of somebody who has been frustrating you or doing you wrong, you may think of an image of him and you project all the bad things into the image and you begin to think, "I've got to use force against him." Or if you can't actually use force against him, then you keep the image in yourself and you start attacking that image. But then you are attacking yourself, and you get trouble with your organs – your heart or your stomach, or whatever.

Q: The way you described it, it sounds as if we have stored violence from ancient, ancient times – like computer programs on a disk.

Bohm: It has been building up through ancient times – perhaps from the beginning of civilization. Generally the evidence is that there has always been *some* violence. But in the simple hunter-gatherer groups there wasn't a lot, because there were only about twenty to forty people living together and they all knew each other. They shared everything, and there wasn't much occasion for violence except from other groups. But as we build big societies, people don't know each other and they have to establish authority through fear.

We built it up. And now many more people are breaking down mentally – again, a sign of greater stress.

The very existence of society is maintained by a kind of violence. People didn't find any other way to build society. They may say they all agreed to the order of it, but the very fact that there are police and jails and such shows that behind it is a kind of violence. There was no need for that in groups of twenty to forty. But as wealth was built up, somebody had to own it. As society was built up, somebody had to run it. It had to be organized, and all this had to be protected with police and armies. Moreover, there had to be *rules* which were very rigid, and all that. These too implied a kind of violence, especially since cruel punishments were often instituted for not obeying the rules.

Then, when people got metal weapons, they discovered that a few people could conquer a lot of other people. They could plunder them and exact tribute from them, and they could make them slaves. Doing all this, they didn't have to work. The technology had brought in a lot of hard, dull, dreary work, but the conquerors didn't have to do it. Slavery was extreme violence, and also violence to the mind, for they had to say that it was right to make slaves of those people. It was the natural condition that they must be slaves; it was inevitable, morally right, and so on. They made all sorts of arguments, saying, "Those people deserve to be slaves. They are inferior. They lost the war." And then what usually happened was that after a little while, new people came along with better weapons and horses and took over, and the ones who had been the conquerors became the slaves. And so it went on and on.

All this built up great violence. And that general pattern has not changed. It has sometimes become better and sometimes worse, but basically the authority of society has always had violence behind it. Since primitive times, we have never managed to make a society which didn't have violence as the ultimate sanction behind its order – nor without violence between social groups, between nations, and the rest.

So we have not solved the problem that violence arises primarily in thought. But people tend to think that it arises because of instincts of aggression, which complicates things again. There is no evidence that the instincts for

aggression were extremely powerful in very early primitive times, that the basic relationships involved violence of one kind or another, such as people competing with each other and that sort of thing. We now have this constant frustration and constant fear, and using violence to get ahead. The human nervous system was not really built for that. We had a million years more or less without that, and then five thousand years with it.

Therefore, I think it is worth considering violence as one of the basic things that has gone wrong with thought, in the sense that thought itself has introduced violence. This is because thought has not managed to solve the problem of how to bring about orderly human relationships in a large society purely on the basis of mutual understanding and friendship, and so forth. Whereas, in the small primitive groups, they could have quarrels and they might sometimes separate, but that was the basic way it held together.

Q: Would you say that rules and laws are an expression of the violence?

Bohm: They are very often such an expression. Some rules are necessary; but, as I have already suggested, very rigid inhuman rules were developed which had to induce fear. They couldn't get people to follow these rules without fear. They had to bring in fear, and that would bring in violence. In fact, it was only the threat of violence that would ultimately sustain the fear. And society has not managed to function without that. If not fear of the police or the king, there would be fear of God.

Q: Can we have structure without violence?

Bohm: That is what we are exploring. I'm saying we have to have that if we are going to survive. I think it is possible myself, but we must explore it.

Q: It seems as if once there is any kind of set structure, it will violate something.

Bohm: Not if we see the *necessity* of it. People can agree, for instance, that they are going to meet at a certain time. We agreed to meet this morning. If we don't agree to meet together, it won't work. That is not necessarily a form of violence. We all saw the necessity of doing it. People then have to be

sensitive and ready to do it, to put that first. But they may instead put some other interest first; we don't get it straight. Now, in the present general atmosphere in which everything is stabilized by the ultimate threat of violence, it is hard to imagine how things could go otherwise. But I think they could. We want to explore that, though.

Q: There is tremendous structure in nature, in the human body. And that's not violent.

Q: The human body, though, is a very violent affair. It is constant warfare. Even to consume anything, it first has to be completely destroyed by the digestive system. So it is all violence.

Bohm: Well, it's not clear whether *that* is violence. We described violence as the undue use of force. Digestion is at least conducive to survival. But the kind of force we are talking about, by which society maintains itself, is going to end up in a great deal of unhappiness and destruction. You see, I think that if we had small groups of twenty to forty people we could live fairly peaceably.

Q: Could we any more? I mean, there's the violence in families, and all that.

Bohm: No, not now. But I'm saying that it would be possible if people could go back to those early conditions where, for instance, they didn't have complicated ways of getting food for everybody. People went out and spent fifteen to twenty hours a week gathering food or hunting, and they would prepare food in common. If there was plenty of food around, then it was fairly easy. Of course, sometimes there was starvation and they had trouble; it wasn't always perfect.

I'm going to suggest that we should focus on *violence as originating in thought.* Part of the reason we haven't been dealing with violence properly is that people have said that it is either due to natural instincts like aggression, or that it is somehow built into people. They have given what I think are wrong explanations of the origin of violence, and therefore we are not dealing with it properly.

Q: Could we say that there is no violence outside of thought, that the action which takes place outside of thought is something else? It may destroy, but it's not violence.

Bohm: Natural destruction I would not call violence. If there is an earthquake – or floods, windstorms, whatever – it is not violence. Those may look violent, and poetically we could call them violence, but it's not the same thing.

There is an inherent incoherence in the violence which arises in thought – the violence which does not really attain its objective and eventually creates tremendous disorder, unhappiness, destruction, and all sorts of things.

What we want to focus on is that the kind of violence we are talking about originates in thought, and people have not paid much attention to that. They have not really thought about it that way. They might deal with violence by trying to punish it, or by trying to motivate people into not being violent, or by saying that it is immoral to be violent, or by opposing it in other ways. None of that will work, though, because those imply the wrong notion of what is the cause of violence.

Therefore, we really have to get into *thought.* And the violence of thought is very subtle. It's not just physical violence or emotional violence; it is very subtle violence in the way people think – such as the way they exclude or reject each other in certain ways just by thinking.

Q: Isn't the violence that arises in our thoughts a response to the conflicts that we feel within ourselves because of conditioning? I was thinking of the girl you talked about last night who thought her teacher's behavior was bizarre. Her parents gave her a response that wanted her to discount her own senses and to deny that she was experiencing weirdness from her teacher. That would give her a conflict between believing her own observations, or just following along with the dictates of the authorities to ignore that weirdness and go on anyway. When you have so much of that while you are growing up, you are in constant conflict with yourself and many times respond by being violent to yourself. It's self-destructive behavior, and then you project that in your outside relationships.

Bohm: That's true. That is the further unfolding of violence. And it all originates in thought. The teacher was doing what she was doing because she also had been conditioned to think in a certain way – that certain things were right, or that something was the right way.

Q: Do we begin by understanding that the concept is there? I mean, sometimes we think it's a normal state to feel pulled this way and feel pulled that way and then to respond with craziness because of it. If you could understand the conflict and resolve it peacefully within yourself, you wouldn't need to be violent toward yourself. And you would begin to unlearn the violent responses.

Bohm: But the conflict is due to your way of thinking. You have two thoughts – one of them being that what the teacher is doing doesn't make sense, and the other that you must keep quiet. This produces two different impulses, which are fighting each other. Perhaps you can clear it up and say, "Okay, I know I can't change the teacher but I'm not going to get into a fight in myself." If you can carry it that far, okay.

I am interested in something deeper, however, which is the whole process of thought as it produces violence and conflict all through society and over the ages. The girl and her teacher are only an example, and we won't solve this thing by looking at particular examples. Maybe that person would feel a little better, but it still would be going on all over. The whole process in general – this vast thing – will still be flowing. So we have to look at the thing more deeply, more generally. In order to do that, we have to understand something of the nature of thought. Over the past few thousand years, we have in general paid very little attention to that in our culture.

Now, I think we have to ask the question: what do we mean by thought? What is it? We have already said it is the response of memory. There is thinking and there is thought. Having put down a program, memory responds with feelings or with actions or with words. If somebody asks you your name, you respond right away; it's on your memory. For a more difficult question you have to search the memory, or you ask somebody else, or you look it up in a book, or whatever. If it is still more difficult, then you can't solve it right away.

You begin to say, "It's a problem. I must think about it." And in a problem you set a goal. You say, "I want to do something and I don't know how to do it." For example, I may have to get somewhere and I haven't got the means and I try to discover the means.

In a problem, your thinking is generally directed toward a goal which is already preselected. That is, your thought has told you that your difficulty could be solved if you could get X, and you only have to find X. But then, that is still caught in thought. That kind of thinking is somewhat more active than just automatic thought, but it may be that the goal you have set to solve the problem is irrelevant – or even part of the difficulty. In other words, the automatic acceptance of the problem may itself *be* the main problem. Therefore, we have to say we can't accept the goals which are in our problems, because they presuppose the things that are wrong.

But there is a deeper question involved. You have to *question the whole of thought,* which means slowing it down. If you question things, thought starts to slow down. You can make the analogy of a wheel. When it is going very fast you can't see the spokes. As it slows down you see how it works, how the gears work. You could say the wheels of the mind are slowed down so that you can see how they are going, how they are generating these difficulties. That would be one view.

Ordinarily our minds go very fast. Memory responds very very fast, and sometimes even faster with emotions. You can't really see what it is. It goes so fast that you take it for independent reality. This is one of the difficulties – that thought does something and then says, "This result was not produced by thought. It is just independent reality, and I've got to think about it." But as you think about it, you keep it going. And while you keep it going, you are trying to solve it. We went into that.

Q: When you say, "slow it down," what is doing the slowing down?

Bohm: Just raising the question will slow it down. If you are very sure of yourself your mind goes very fast. If you begin to feel, "I'm not quite sure; it's not clear," then it begins to slow down. The thoughts begin to slow down. However, in some other sense the mind may be speeding up.

Thus your attention may be speeding up while your thoughts slow down. You are more attentive, more aware. When your thoughts are going very fast, you are not very aware.

Q: Are you saying then that that is a relative thing? To *you* they're slowing down. Are we talking about time now?

Bohm: You are not getting as many thoughts so fast. As an illustration, suppose you are in a panic. Your thoughts come in one after another. They are too fast. If you could slow them down, you might get out of it, because you could see what is going on. No matter what it is, when thought – the program – is working very fast, you can't see that it is a program, but you see it as 'reality' itself. And therefore, you are trying to solve this *apparent* reality which is really a program. You should be removing that program, but instead you keep it going and try to deal with its results. That has been most of the history of humanity.

Q: And what is it that's looking at the program?

Bohm: We will raise that question later. That is a very subtle question, and I think that if we get into it too fast it won't be clear. We have to get some idea of the nature of thought before we could properly raise the question, because we have to ask what it means to *perceive*, and so on.

Now, there is a difference between thought and perception. For instance, if we see with the senses what is in the room, that gives information that does not come only from the memory. Our consciousness is generally the fusion of both kinds of information – information from the senses and information from the memory, from the past. I recognize this as a table. That requires the two kinds of information together. It could be recognized as a flat bit of wood with perpendicular sticks. It could potentially be a piece of firewood. There are all sorts of ways of seeing it. But the memory tells you this is a table, and you know immediately that you can put something on it. That is the *fusion* of the senses and the past.

But we also have perception through the mind. We discussed that yesterday. We can *sense* when thought is not working right, when it is

incoherent. And we can sense that things are related or unrelated. We sense relationship or non-relationship, separation, union, and so on. There are various things we can sense, which are not sensed directly through the eyes and ears and nose and touch. And that also enters into everything you perceive. What you perceive is the fusion of all that.

We could call this what is *present* in consciousness or awareness. 'Present' has the root *pre essent,* meaning 'in front of'. That is a kind of metaphor. It is sort of in front of you – it is *presented.* This whole net result of thought, sense perception, and perception through the mind is presented to consciousness – fused into one picture, or one experience. And that experience may contain a lot of incorrect features, both because you could make a mistake in perception and also because the past comes in with some wrong inferences. It might tell you that tables of this kind can always be trusted, but they might not be. Or you walk on the floor and you are confident that it will support you; it is the past that tells you that. But if there were an earthquake, that might not be valid. Therefore, it is not *always.*

Still, in daily life you need that confidence to be able to depend on things. They should be presented to you as being really there, though they may not be. If they are *not* there, you should be able to discover that with your senses and with the sensitivity of the mind, and then change your thoughts. That would be the normal right way to do it. If your thoughts get stuck, however, you cannot change them. If you identify with your thoughts, thus implying that you can't change them, then you get into incoherence. So that is part of the general picture.

Now, I suggest that it is useful to think not only of what is presented, but also of the word 'immediate'. There is that which is *immediate,* which we can't really describe. Then thought *mediates,* it comes in between. It takes *time* for thought to work, for thinking to work. It mediates, and then that thought comes out in the immediate again; you *immediately* sense this is a table without having to think. All the thinking you did before does that.

Is that clear? Do you see that *thinking mediates perception, and then reenters the immediate* – or at least we may call it the 'relatively immediate'?

Q: Would you go over that again?

Bohm: Yes. Somebody told me about a case of a person who had been born blind. He had an operation to see, but then he didn't actually 'see' a great deal. He had to get a lot of experience and memories and skills in order to see. For example, he did not understand depth. If he saw a set of stairs, he did not see them as going up. It took him years to see that. So in the beginning it was easier for him to close his eyes and go by touch.

Q: On the other hand, he might have seen in a way that we don't see, because we've stored so much in our brain that we don't see things.

Bohm: He may have, but he couldn't get around.

There was another case of a man who was born blind. After surgery to give him sight, they asked him what he saw. He said, "Oh, I sense an experience taking place on my skin." He felt it on his retina. He actually *saw directly,* and then he had to learn to project it 'out there'. There was another case of a blind man who was in some institution. They had uppercase letters embossed on the doors, and he knew them by touch. The minute he could see and saw them in a journal, he recognized uppercase letters, because the touch and sight get connected. But he couldn't recognize lowercase letters.

So all that has to be *learned,* and stored up in *skill* and *memory.* The same is true of learning how to hear. You have to learn how to hear, learn that what you hear and what you see have the same source. If you look at somebody, you say the person that you hear is the same as the person that you see, which is something we learn tacitly when we are very young. And I imagine that a blind man who gets sight might have to learn that also. What we see is tremendously affected by what we have learned and how we think about it and by what people tell us. In fact, all of that is necessary if we are going to be able to get around, because we can't stop to think about everything. It can go wrong, but then we have ways of correcting it if it is not quite right.

As we have said, thought mediates; it comes between 'you' and the perception. You might say that when that man who had been blind experienced something on his retina, that experience was very immediate. Then he began

to think about what it means; and perhaps he learned gradually to mediate it, and then to sense immediately that it means something 'out there'. Not that he had to think, "I experience something here, but it means something out there." Rather, he *experienced* something *out there.* Do you see the difference?

That is what we have learned all our lives – and we do have to learn it. But that can also go wrong, because we may not realize it is happening. We may learn, for example, that a certain person is an enemy, and we then experience that. We learn many things of that nature. We could learn that we are weak and they are strong. The child learns all that sort of thing and he experiences himself accordingly – as weak, or whatever.

Q: Even about the tangible things like the room – in some sense aren't we wrong from the very beginning, in the sense that the experience seems absolute? In other words, our feeling of it is not a relative room; it is an absolutely real room to us.

Bohm: We do experience it as really being there in an absolute sense. And I think that in this there is danger of slipping over. It is not a serious error at that point, because usually you can tell fairly quickly from your senses when you have gone wrong about the room. But as we move into more subtle questions, it slips into something very serious. When we come to ourselves and our country and our society it is not so easy.

We experience our society in this absolute way, too. But in fact, where is society? It's nowhere. There is no society really. It is just a set of institutions and rules, and so on, by which people have agreed to work together and live together – though they are largely unconscious of this most of the time. However, it is only thought that makes it so. For instance, General Motors is a company which everybody agrees exists and does all sorts of things. But if people forgot about the concept of General Motors, then it would not exist as such. All the factories and the machinery would make no difference. The same is true with any government or organization, and the like. The whole thing exists in thought. It is in the collective thought; it is not just the thought of one person.

You see, thought has produced a great deal of what is here. What is here *does* have some independent existence – thought did not produce the mountains, though it may have affected them. But thought *did* produce the society. However, we seldom treat society that way; we treat it as *just there*. That is what thought is constantly doing – doing things and then saying, "There it is." Thought keeps something going and then says, "What can I do about it?"

I am saying that there is the immediate, *mediated* by thought. That mediation becomes at least *relatively* immediate, even though it may not be the almost pure immediate that the blind man saw. Now, that is the first point.

The second point about thought is that it is an *abstraction*. The word 'abstract' means to take away, like 'extract'. The opposite of the abstract is the concrete. Thought takes away certain parts from the concrete whole, and considers them mentally. It doesn't really take them away – it takes them away in the mind, in the image. And that is useful, because you can then focus on things that might be important. There is too much in the concrete to think about it all. But when you focus on what you think is important, you can then do reasoning. If it is simple, you can reason about it; if it has everything in it, you can't. Therefore you must abstract. And thought is inherently abstract.

Some thoughts are more abstract than others. We could take the thought of the chair, the thought of the table, the thought of various other things, and then a more general abstract thought would be the thought of furniture. 'Furniture' is somewhat more abstract than chairs and tables. But even chairs and tables are an abstraction. We said you can look at this chair as a piece of metal, or all sorts of ways.

The point is that thought is *inherently* abstract, and abstraction is very powerful. For example, the notion of economic growth is an abstraction. Nowhere in the concrete will you see economic growth. In the concrete, you *can* see particular *things* growing. But we also talk about *economic* growth, and where will you see that? It is seen only by thought. Still, the very notion of such 'growth' has affected our society profoundly. This abstract notion has produced all sorts of concrete effects. And more generally, even though thought is abstract, it often has concrete results of great importance.

So what is the concrete? We have to understand the difference of the abstract and the concrete if we are going to understand what thought is doing. The word 'concrete' has a nice derivation. It's based on *con crescent,* which means 'grown together'. To see the difference between abstract and concrete, imagine a jungle where everything is all grown together; it is all one whole. And you have to abstract from that whole what the edible plants are, what the dangers are, and things like that. If you and I went into the jungle we couldn't do it. We wouldn't survive. Those who have lived there all their lives make those abstractions easily, and they *can* survive.

Now, I'm going to suggest an extension of the meaning of the word 'concrete'. I think to be free, to be creative, we cannot always stick to all the customary habitual meanings of words; because if we do that, we will never get out of a certain limited area. Meanings are constantly being extended. Even in physics, physicists extended the meaning of the word 'energy' to a certain technical meaning, quite different from the meaning it has in ordinary life.

Ordinarily we think of concrete as something very solid. There are concrete objects such as blocks of concrete. Actually it is the cement that makes it concrete. There are sand and pebbles, and the cement holds it all into a block of concrete. We tend to think the block is the main point about concreteness. But the main point about concreteness is the 'cement' that makes it all one.

In the case of concrete blocks, it is Portland cement that makes a block. But what holds us? What holds society together? What holds people together? What is the *concrete reality* of society? Where is the 'block'? It is something very subtle. It is the exchange, the *sharing of meaning.* If people don't share similar meaning, society falls apart.

So the concrete reality of society is very subtle. If we focus on the solid block we won't find it. The buildings and the factories and so forth are not the concrete reality of society. We have just seen that. They are the pebbles and the sand. It falls apart without the glue or the cement, or whatever you want to call it. The point is that the sharing of meaning is what holds society together – if indeed it does hold together. If the meanings are incoherent, society will break up.

Q: Is that the same as saying that the glue of society is the abstract?

Bohm: No. The glue is the concrete. And for society this 'glue' is very subtle. We can't put our fingers on it.

We can hold a block of concrete in our hands; that's what is called 'manifest'. In Latin, 'manifest' means literally 'what you could hold in your hand'. But the thing that holds society together *isn't* manifest. You can't put it in your hand. The things you can put in your hand will not hold society together.

We have raised the question: what is the nature of this subtle concrete, glue, cement? I say it is the sharing of meaning. I am saying that the concrete basis of society is that meaning – whatever meaning is.

Now, meaning is not just abstract. You see, behind the abstraction is something concrete – the concrete reality of the very thought process itself – or more generally, of the overall mind process. And underlying this is meaning. In an elementary case it is thought which has a certain meaning, words which have a certain meaning; but there may be more subtle meanings.

Q: For an individual, the concrete reality is the meaning. For instance, with a table the meaning is in a sense what the table *is* – what it represents to him.

Bohm: Yes. And also the meaning of the whole room is what holds it all together as a room. The meaning of your life is what would hold it together. If it lacks that meaning, then you feel it is falling apart. If society lacks a common meaning, or the culture lacks it, it won't hold.

Culture is the *shared meaning*. And meaning includes not only *significance*, but also *value* and *purpose*. According to the dictionary, these are the three meanings of the word 'meaning'. I am saying that common significance, value, and purpose will hold the society together. If society does not share those, it is incoherent and it goes apart. And now we have a lot of subgroups in our society which don't share meanings, and so it actually starts to fall apart.

Q: This almost sounds too mechanical – that these things can hold society together. It sounds as though they couldn't really.

Bohm: Why not?

Q: Well, it would seem like the thing that would hold the society together wouldn't be a 'thing'.

Bohm: But meaning is not a *thing*. You can't point to the meaning. It is very subtle.

Q: Then you say 'shared values'?

Bohm: That is one of the *aspects* of meaning. If we want to say what the meaning itself is – the concrete reality of the meaning – we can't get hold of it. But we can experience it in various forms – like the significance, the value, and the purpose. If we share meanings, then we will have a common purpose and a common value, which certainly will help hold us together. We have to go more deeply into what that means.

Q: Is the difference between significance, value, and purpose important for this discussion? And if so, could you expand on that?

Bohm: There is not a fundamental difference. They are really different aspects of the same thing. 'Significance' has the word 'sign' in it, indicating that it sort of points to something: 'What is the significance of what we are talking about? What is the significance of what we are doing?' That is one idea of meaning.

Value is something which is part of it. If something is very significant, you may sense it as having a high value. The word 'value' has a root which is interesting – the same root as 'valor' and 'valiant'. It means 'strong'. You might suppose that in early times, when people sensed something of high value they didn't have a word for it, although it moved them strongly. Later they found a word for it and said it has high value. And then later the word itself may convey that.

If something is significant it may have a high value. And if it has a high value, you may have or you may develop a strong purpose or intention to get it, or to sustain it, or something. Things that do not have high value will not generate any very strong purpose. You would say, "It's not interesting. It doesn't mean much to me."

"It means a lot to me" means it has a high value. And "I mean to do it" is the same as to say, "It's my purpose." You can see that the word 'meaning' has those three meanings. And I don't think it is an accident; I think they are very deeply related.

Q: What about the sense I sometimes have that we pretend to share meaning? Is that because 'getting along' is a higher value? Oftentimes I feel we just pretend to share.

Bohm: We may pretend to share, which means it won't work. But if we feel that it is very important for us not to fall apart, we had better actually share, rather than just pretend to do so.

Q: So the higher value is to hold this thing together at any cost.

Bohm: To do so at *any* cost won't really work, because it will then be a kind of violence – trying to impose some sharing which is not there. If it isn't working, we are inclined to use force. When the right way is not working, then we fall back to force.

Q: Are you saying that this shared meaning is incoherent?

Bohm: It can become incoherent.

Q: And one of the shared meanings we have is that we all believe in violence.

Bohm: Yes, we share that. However, the kind of meaning that we have shared is not going to bring about coherence. Sharing incoherence does not bring coherence. It's a kind of paradox.

Q: And violence is the way in which we try to enforce this incoherence and maintain it.

Bohm: Yes. So what we share is not the right thing to share. True sharing must be coherent.

Q: You used the words 'right thing' and 'right way' several times now. That confuses me, because I've always assumed that the right way is a relative term in every culture. How does one decide what is the right way?

Bohm: Well, it would be a further assumption that the relativity of rightness in every culture is *always* the case. Maybe it's *often* the case.

Q: When is it not the case?

Bohm: Just simply right now in what you said. That is, you questioned something I said. In doing so, you were implying that your question was a right question, and that this was not relative to the culture. Now, what was the meaning of your question?

Q: That I don't understand your use of the term 'right' at this point in discussing significance and value.

Bohm: Are you suggesting that my use of the term 'right' is not right?

Q: I'm suggesting that I don't understand your use of it, and I would like you to clarify it.

Bohm: Do you sense something wrong with the way I'm using it? In other words, does it jar you in some way?

Q: Yes, because you've been talking about openness. And then you used the word 'right', and that seems not to be congruent.

Bohm: Then we'll use another word. But, you see, I wanted to bring in another issue at the same time. I only meant by the word 'right' exactly what you meant by the word 'openness', because you are using the word 'openness' in the sense that that is what would be the right way. I don't think we can entirely get out of needing the meaning that I wanted to indicate by the word 'right'.

That's one of those paradoxes of language – that when we try to say something is *always* the case, we get into problems of coherence. We have to leave it open a little bit. Now, we brought in openness. And even openness could get to be wrong. So this requires sensitivity.

I can say, "Okay, you can object to my use of the word 'right'." But you must realize that at least implicitly you still have that same problem. We all have the problem that we have to be sensitive to the use of language; that when we get into the use of absolutes, we get into difficulties. But if we say, "Never use absolutes," we are in total difficulty. So our language itself has

paradoxical features which we really have to think about. We have to take our language with a grain of salt, as they say, or maybe two.

Q: I guess I was basically pressing you for the root of valuation.

Bohm: I think values arise deeply as a perception – a sense that this *means* something to me. That is, meaning is perceived fundamentally. It is a perception through the mind, which uses the senses and thought and everything. Meaning is very close to the foundation of the mind. And somehow we can perceive meaning. We can also take meaning from the past – from thought. And we can bring the two together.

Now, we have to have coherent meaning. Coherent thought is only a part of the question of coherent meaning, because from the meaning we act. And the meaning determines our whole being – as things mean something different, we change. So if our meaning is incoherent, then we are incoherent in our being. We will be engaged in conflict, and so on.

The language itself has a certain possibility for incoherence, which is part of the reason why the human species is in trouble. People have tried do the right thing 'just so', but have gotten caught in this idea of the *absolute* and have done the wrong thing. There is a kind of paradox here that requires some sensitivity. We want to see if we can find a coherent way of approaching the question, of exploring it.

But where were we? We were saying that the whole process of mind and body did not work properly when it became incoherent. On the other hand, we must be careful not to dismiss incoherence altogether, because sooner or later we are bound to become incoherent. The question is only: what is our attitude toward incoherence? If we defend ourselves against acknowledging that we are incoherent, then this causes trouble. If we acknowledge it, however, then incoherence is part of learning. We learn that we are incoherent, and then we learn something else. And we don't reach absolute coherence; we are constantly moving.

We have a question of language there, which we will have to come to as well. Part of the problem of thought has been that it has developed the notion

of absolute – it had to – and yet that notion of absolute has a paradox in it which has not been resolved. Or it may be intrinsic for all we know.

Let us come back to the question of the concrete – the concrete process of meaning. What is it? It is entirely subtle, elusive – we can't put our finger on it. We can't say where it starts from; it may have countless sources. But it is there.

You can get a clue to this by considering what Polanyi has called 'tacit knowledge'. When, for example, you ride a bicycle, you have countless little movements by which you keep it in balance. You can't describe them; if you tried to describe them you would fall. You simply do it. You turn in the direction in which you fall. There is a formula you can calculate from physics that the angle of tilt and the angle of turn must be related by some formula – that one is the square of the other. You satisfy this formula if you are riding the bicycle properly, but you are not thinking about it while you ride. You don't use it to ride the bicycle. I think we all realize that we do almost everything by this sort of tacit knowledge.

Now I ask the question: how do you think? I want to think, I have a problem to solve. Will you give me directions how to think? What shall I do? What can I do?

In thinking, you use tacit knowledge of how to think. I'm claiming that it is even more subtle than riding the bicycle. This tacit process is what happens when you are thinking. If you are doing it properly, your thoughts will follow a logical order, just as your bicycle will satisfy the formula. But if you try to *impose* a logical order, that is not the right way to think.

However, many people do believe that the right way to think is to impose a logical order. And in fact, people in Artificial Intelligence think that they can cover the whole of thinking just by working it out on some kind of computer program – a very complex, almost infinite program. But I suggest that thinking is a subtle movement. And *meaning* – whatever *it* is – is even more subtle. But this *total movement of unlimited subtlety* is the concrete reality of the process. In this total movement, the function of the *concrete process of thinking* is to produce *abstractions,* as the function of a factory is to produce products.

Q: We normally think of meaning as something produced by thought. Are you suggesting otherwise?

Bohm: Yes. Meaning can be produced from thought, but more generally it isn't. Thought contributes; but as I have already indicated, even thought is a concrete and basically tacit process which we cannot get hold of. We know that thought will have electric currents. People have made measurements showing that whenever one thinks, there are chemical changes and the blood moves in the brain. But that isn't the whole. That is not even the essential point.

Q: If we rode bicycles the way we thought, apparently we would be crashing all over the place. But it seems as though we think that our tacit knowledge about thinking is correct. There are apparently some very serious mistakes in our tacit knowledge about thinking. We don't seem to know that, or to be aware of it. As we are thinking and talking, we assume that it is correct.

Bohm: Yes. I think that is one of the basic mistakes which has developed with the human race. People began by just thinking – as you breathe, you think. Then people began to develop thoughts about how they think. These thoughts were often incorrect and led to confusion, to incoherence, because the thought about your thinking can affect your thinking.

Q: Can you give an example?

Bohm: For instance, people say, "You should be a right-thinking person who agrees with your community, with all the people around you." They are saying that the community expects you to be the right sort of person who has the right opinions, correct opinions. And they have to impose them: "If you are not right, we've got to impose it, we've got to use force." That is going to affect thinking profoundly. It will induce a lot of fear and conflict. Or if you think, "I must think logically by following the rules," then ***that*** can easily get in your way.

Q: Is what they call 'positive thinking' something that gets in the way?

If you say something that negates, right away there are people – especially now with the New Age – who tell you, "Watch your negativity. You don't have positive thinking." But does that positive thinking get in the way as well?

Bohm: All those things get in the way. If somebody says, "Engage solely in positive thinking," that is a rule which may get in the way of this tacit process which really does it right, does it coherently.

Somebody tells you, "Think only positively." Somebody else says, "No, think negatively. You must watch out for all the mistakes." But you really need to do both. Or somebody else says, "Pull yourself together. Cheer up." They are all affecting your thinking. You may have a lot of thoughts that are pulling you apart and depressing you, and you may not be really facing them. Then people tell you to think certain positive thoughts to overcome those depressing thoughts, but this may not make much sense. And the human race is full of such traditional ways by which thought thinks about how it should work.

Q: Aren't most organized religions essentially based on that?

Bohm: Yes. Fear of God, obedience to God – "Think God. Put God first." The suggestion is that there are various ways of thinking by which you will bring the rest into harmony.

Q: The IBM machine used to have a sign that just said, "Think."

Bohm: Think. Well, that's all right, but the question is: what does it mean? The word 'think' has all these meanings that have been developed.

We should have a break now.

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Bohm: We have begun to discuss something of the nature of thought – how it operates, and so on. We might consider one or two more questions before we go further into that topic.

Q: Is it fair to say that the number of different languages spoken in the world is a reflection of the incoherence?

Bohm: Not necessarily, not as long as people can understand each other. That there are so many languages makes a problem in understanding, but they can be translated to a large extent.

The incoherence comes deeper than that. It comes because thought does not know what it is doing. Thought does something and then says it didn't do it. And then it tries to change it while it keeps on doing it. That is a conflict. *That* is the *basic* incoherence. It becomes especially serious when we have the thought about the self. It is very serious also in the thought about society. We will come to that more later on.

Q: Is thought grounded in opinions?

Bohm: But opinions are no ground. An opinion is basically an assumption. And thought evidently depends on a lot of assumptions. Usually it is an assumption which people defend because they identify with it. They shouldn't but they do.

A doctor may have an opinion and yet may seek a second opinion. That means he has made a certain assumption about the cause of the trouble and he is not sure about it. Another doctor may have another assumption.

However, when people have opinions, they most often are not doing it that way. They are not saying, "I would like to hear your opinion because I'm not sure of my own." Usually, when they exchange opinions they are trying to defend them. That is because they are identified with their assumptions. They are defending the assumptions as if they are defending themselves.

Thought *must* work through assumptions. But the assumptions should be open to question if necessary. When there is evidence either from the senses or from sensitivity that the assumptions are limited, then we have to question them. But if you are identifying with them, you won't. You may have the assumption that your religion is right. People generally defend that assumption. They defend that opinion; they don't say, "Well, I would like to have a second opinion about religion." They don't do that. But that would be the right way to go about it.

Q: Are you saying opinions are a type of thought?

Bohm: They are a part of thought. They are assumptions which very often people defend against evidence that they are wrong.

Q: Do meanings determine assumptions?

Bohm: They work together. Assumption affects the meaning. What makes you assume something? It depends on everything. Finally you say, "Well, okay, I'll assume this." Now, for practical purposes it is necessary to assume all sorts of things; we used the example that we assume the floor will support us, and so forth. But if we defended that assumption when it wasn't supporting us, then that would be incoherent.

Q: Then it becomes belief, doesn't it?

Bohm: Yes. Usually you defend your beliefs. A belief is generally a very strongly held opinion. The word 'belief' has the root 'lief', the Anglo-Saxon root meaning 'love'. What is 'believed' is 'beloved'. And so it is defended.

Q: When you mentioned that violence originates in thought, what about early man in line with Darwinian evolution, the aggressiveness in the earliest evolution?

Bohm: There is a lot of controversy about how aggressive people were. First of all, there has been a tendency to exaggerate that a great deal in our culture – saying that since we are pretty aggressive, early people must have been more so because civilization makes us better. But it may be the other way around. For instance, some anthropologists say that they don't find a lot of very old bones broken in a way which would suggest aggression. Also, people lived in small groups. And when there weren't too many of them, the aggression may have been much less.

Aggression tends to increase with increase of population, with pressure against each other, and with organization of society – one society against another. There may be some aggression there naturally, but thought builds it up tremendously, because it shows reasons why it is right to use force.

Q: The aggression of the society also creates a certain kind of thought and it keeps going around and around.

Bohm: It goes back and forth. And aggression is a form of violence. It is an attempt to get what you want by force in a situation where force is not called for.

Q: Is aggression really an expression of intense fear?

Bohm: It could be fear. Violence can come out of fear, it can come out of greed. It could come out of all sorts of things – such as the conviction of the importance of believing in your god, which has some kind of fear behind it. But it is all tied up with thought.

That is one point – that thought *maintains* all these things. I'll give an example, and we'll come back to it later. Let's take anger, which gives rise to aggression and violence. Now, in a certain situation there may be a spontaneous burst of anger. With young children such a reaction quickly fades unless there is thought. But suppose that you have been waiting several hours for somebody. He hasn't shown up and you get very angry. You say, "Why is he doing this to me? What right has he got. What does he mean by doing this?" The more you *think*, the angrier you get. Then he comes and says, "The train was delayed." And your anger goes, if you accept his statement.

This shows that thought plays a key part in sustaining anger and violence and aggression. As long as you think the train was delayed, you have no reason to be angry with him. He did his best; he treated you right. He didn't arrive late because he was just ignoring you and had something better to do. But if you don't believe his excuse, you become even angrier. Later, after it has simmered down somewhat, you may begin to think about it again and say, "What does he mean by keeping me waiting? He never treats me right. He never pays any attention to me. He's always doing that. He's always putting himself first and not regarding me as important."

You can see that thought is thus able to build up anger and aggression. For instance, the thought may be that I have been badly treated, and that force is called for to get revenge. This will create violence. There is a common thought, saying that I return friendship for friendship and violence for violence. So if I feel I've been treated violently, I will say, "That's a good reason for me to be violent." Another case of aggression would be to say, "He's got something that I want, so let me go in there and take it." That thought creates violence or aggression.

Q: And if you do something different – they give me violence but I give back friendship – you haven't necessarily broken the system. You've still reacted internally because you haven't seen through violence.

Bohm: That's right. You haven't seen through violence. We have to get to that. Perhaps we will come to it later. But you have to be free of this *tacit process – this concrete reality of the process of violence* – not these abstractions. It's at the level of abstraction to say, "He gave me violence and I'll give him friendship." That is only an abstraction. It is not getting at the concrete reality of that violence process.

Q: If we have a large hurricane and hundreds of people die, there is a very different reaction than if some person causes the death of hundreds of people. In fact, the result is the same – people died. Yet there is a different reaction. Is that because there is no intent?

Bohm: Yes. Natural disaster is not by intention. But if somebody treats you badly, you say, "He's ignored me. He hasn't paid any attention to me. He's rejected me." There are all sorts of thoughts which build up violence.

Q: Why don't we do that to the hurricane?

Bohm: Well, if we believed that the hurricane was due to gods we would do it. We would say, "These gods. We worshipped them, we sacrificed to them. We did everything for them. And look at the way they treat us." In fact, there *are* some peoples who do treat their gods that way. If their gods won't produce the right results, they change them.

Q: It seems that in natural destruction there is a feeling, which has probably come from the very beginning of having a brain, that accepts that such things happen. And so there isn't that incoherence. When a volcano blows up I can't say, "Well, gee, why is this terrible thing happening?" It's been happening since there was a brain.

Bohm: But people have said, "I believe in God. I have been good all my life. I've done all the right things. And look what happened to me."

Q: They are imposing an incoherence on nature.

Bohm: They feel God has forsaken them.

Q: That's the incoherence?

Bohm: Yes. And then they can get a bit angry about it.

Q: When a bunch of people comes rushing in and kills a whole village of people, it always seems to strike you as something sort of bizarre – if you're not involved in the politics of it. Natural disasters don't cause this feeling of rage.

Bohm: It is the same as the situation with the train. If you see a valid reason for the delay, you don't get angry. If you say, "Well, the reason for this hurricane is some force beyond anything that anybody can do something about," then there is no point in being angry about it. But if *somebody* did it, then I could say I've got a valid reason to get angry.

Q: People do get angry about hurricanes, though, if someone close in that family dies. Or if you get an illness, there is often an anger: "Why did *I* get this illness?"

Bohm: That is because they are personalizing it tacitly. That is part of the residue of the early background, where people said it was the gods who sent this. Very often we have many levels of thought working. Old kinds of thought are still working while the new ones are put on top.

Q: In an odd way, getting angry at other people for what they have done is as ridiculous as getting angry at the storm.

Bohm: That is just the point we want to come to. If you can see that – *really* see it in the concrete process – then that's it.

Q: Some of the anger we feel at other people whose actions hurt us is a process of ascribing motives to them. The person may just be congenitally unable to be punctual, not because he means something unkind or because he is attempting to be inconsiderate and dismiss you. But we say, "That so and so. Look what he's doing to me." And we are ascribing these ill motives that really don't exist in the person.

Bohm: Or he may actually have them. Some people really are inconsiderate, and say, "I don't care about other people. I'll get there when I feel like." If you get angry at that, that is just as foolish as getting angry at the fellow who is congenitally unable to be punctual.

If you know that fellow is unable to be punctual you say, "Okay, that's not important. I know that fellow cannot be punctual. It doesn't bother me. But here's a fellow I know *could* be punctual, and he isn't." What does that mean? You see, the way you think determines it all. As Shakespeare said, "Nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so."

Q: Last night you were mentioning the fact that there is a parallel to watching violence on television, and that we would not respond to that violence unless there was violence inside us.

Bohm: Well, clearly we have all experienced violence. But even if we had never seen violence, the mere structure of thought which is implied by the program will create violence in us. It is implicit that you pick up what is going on with the way these people are thinking and feeling, and so on. And therefore if you watch that sort of thing for a while, you can build up violence programs.

Q: Does the converse of that also hold? The groups that want to change the face of television because it has too much violence – is that a response?

Bohm: It would help if they did, because this violence does build up the violence program. But that response won't get to the root. It's still superficial; it won't really solve the problem.

The point then is that *thinking* 'makes it so'. If you think that there is a good reason for something, you won't get violent, you won't get angry – no matter how bad it is.

Q: I wonder whether you can avoid having violence arise, even if you do understand how the thought process works. Like watching television – I don't know if I could avoid having a violent response in my body. But I would not be caught by it. I would not act from it. My further thoughts would not be perpetuated by that violence, even though I might still have a reaction.

Bohm: You would see that it has no meaning. What is important is that when you *don't* see that, you take it to heart. You say it has a lot of meaning, and it affects you.

Q: Are we going to stop violence in reactions to things per se?

Bohm: I think we would be wrong to try to stop violence, because that would be another form of violence. What we have to do is to perceive the meaning of violence as it comes – to see that it is the undue use of force. You may react with an undue force; but then you see it, and see that it is not a proper use of force, and therefore it goes.

In the example we used about the person who was late, you could say, "I thought that he was just ignoring me but I see that the train was late." So you had all sorts of violence in you, and then it went. Now, that is not the answer. I'm not saying this is the right way, but it does show that the way you think about things is crucial.

Q: Doesn't what you are suggesting imply that by doing this, the impulse of violence will disappear? I'm wondering if the response in the organism will still occur, even if I've seen the process.

Bohm: Well, there may be a tendency in the organism to resort to force too easily, if you want to put it that way, perhaps due to the entire past history. But then we would see it. We are not trying to get rid of violence, nor to *do* anything. What we want is to *learn the whole process.* That is crucial. Now, as a byproduct of that, probably violence will go down. But if we do it for the

purpose of getting rid of violence, then we are still doing the same thing that we want to be rid of.

Q: Isn't that happening even in the process of talking about it? It's like saying, "Well, I've been praying to God forever and nothing's happening. That doesn't work. I'll try something else."

And sitting here, sometimes I feel part of me stops following along because there is a threat to the organism. There is some kind of blockage or tuning out that won't stay with the process of the thought here.

Bohm: What is this block, what is the threat?

Q: From what I hear you saying, the threat may be that we actually do create our own reality by thinking. And that may be threatening to us. Something in us says, "Oh, my God. I'm really responsible for what's out there."

Bohm: There *is* a threat of that kind. And there may be a threat that the whole structure which we have created is liable to collapse.

Q: Or I'll lose myself, or something.

Bohm: Yes. There may be various fears arising of that nature. So we have to say, "Okay. That's part of the whole process."

Q: I'd like to pay more attention to that process because I kind of feel it and I need to go slower.

Yesterday you were talking about sensitivity. That doesn't just happen because you suggest, "Well, we need to be sensitive." I mean, I'm *not* sensitive. Sometimes I just need to stop in this process.

Bohm: Can you say something about that?

Q: I think what I'm feeling is wanting to have an 'answer'. There's a problem here. It's in thinking, it's in thought. And I'm getting nervous.

Bohm: You are anxious, nervous. That means you sense some danger. Now, what could be the danger?

Q: There may be something unfamiliar. I don't know.

Bohm: But you feel that it is dangerous.

Q: It also has a sense of excitement to it, so it kind of goes back and forth.

Q: Is that tacit knowledge? You have a sense of something – projections of something that is unfamiliar to you. And then you give it the sign of danger.

Bohm: That could be part of tacit knowledge. We have tacit knowledge of how to project felts – past feelings of fear and anxiety and danger. We don't quite see how we are doing it. But we *learn* that, as well as learning things that are useful.

Q: Then there is a self-image implicit in all this, a 'being' that is vulnerable. And that's what is vulnerable, what can be hurt by this man who ignores us.

Bohm: Yes, there is the self-image. And we have to come to why that seems to be so extremely important.

So we might discuss *hurt.* It seems there are various kinds of hurts. Of course, you feel pain if you hurt your body. That isn't the kind we are talking about though, because usually you can make a rational response to that one way or another. But if somebody says something or does something or ignores you or whatever, then you *feel* hurt.

Just as you project your own violence into another person, where does the pain that you feel come from? It must come from *you.*

There is memory of pain. Somehow a thought releases that memory of pain. We don't see it happening, but it does. One of the troubles is that it is too fast. Then when it comes you say, "I have been hurt." And then the notion comes automatically: "I must protect myself against that. I shouldn't be hurt again." In the case of physical hurt, that is a reasonable conclusion. But if you are *hurting yourself,* there is something wrong with that. You are violently hurting yourself in some way, and saying you have to protect yourself from that by keeping away from any situation that might set going the reaction in which you hurt yourself. In doing this, however, you might be keeping away from things that are really important to you.

Q: I think it's often the case that you stop before you've had a chance to see the whole situation, and sometimes it just falls away. It just isn't there any more.

Bohm: But before that happens, the whole train of thought which justifies it generally starts. It 'makes it so'.

Q: Then I think we have to stay with that.

Bohm: That is difficult, because whenever there is something painful the whole movement of instinct is to do anything to reduce the pain. Now, that makes sense physically.

Q: But it doesn't make sense if you're interested in this particular thing.

Bohm: It doesn't make sense here, because if you are producing the pain, then you are tangling yourself up by moving in such a way as to get rid of what you are yourself producing. You produce it on the one side and try to move to get rid of it on the other, by involving a lot of other things which are wrong, which you don't want to do. You might say, "I won't ever go into that kind of relationship again." But maybe that would block you. And therefore, you are hindering yourself in all sorts of ways to avoid this hurt which you are producing yourself. It would make more sense to say, "Let me stop hurting myself" – if you could.

Q: That's one of the keys that makes us not be free – trying to hide from, trying to avoid these hurts. And therefore we don't do things.

Bohm: Yes. We avoid all kinds of things that we really want to do.

Q: I don't understand why the rejection of emotional hurt is less valid than the rejection of physical pain; or at least the recognition and attempt to ameliorate it is less valid emotionally – unless you are absolutely disregarding the idea of ego and original hurt and rejection.

Bohm: I'm saying all that is part of the program which doesn't make sense. If we cannot get past that, then I don't think we are ever going to get it straight. You see, we are controlling our thoughts by trying to satisfy the demands of the program at all costs, no matter how irrational our behavior is.

Q: What do you put in the place of ego?

Bohm: Nothing. We have to end the dominance of that thing. What will act in its place would be the natural sensitivity and intelligence. The ego program is one of the main things that blocks the natural sensitivity and intelligence. Your intelligence would say, "Okay, I've been hurt this time. But there's no reason why I should be hurt next time. They're all different people. They're not my father and mother any more. Anyway, I now understand the whole process much better." Your intelligence might tell you that, but the program just insists that it is the same as before.

Q: Isn't it the intelligence that has built up that particular program?

Bohm: No. It is the *un*intelligence. It is the automatic response. It is insensitivity and violence, and so on.

Let's take a child who has been hurt by parents or friends or whatever. He doesn't understand what is going on. They have done something which he doesn't understand. He has gotten into this business of feeling memory-induced pain about it, and it is so painful that he doesn't want to feel it any more. He may try to forget it altogether, but it is still there. That is unconsciously affecting everything he does and making it incoherent. And as long as that little nucleus in the program is there, he is dominated by that.

The point is: could we get free of that program? If you had such a program on a computer you would say, "Let's get it out." If you have a virus in a computer which keeps on producing all sorts of silly actions, you say, "Well, we've got to get free of that." Now, here we have a kind of a virus on the program which says, "This is first priority stuff. Everything else must take second priority, no matter how irrational the result may be." If we could somehow remove that – I am not saying how or anything at this moment – then there would be no problem.

Q: Isn't that the Buddhist ideal – annihilation of ego?

Bohm: It doesn't mean that we are going to annihilate the ego. Rather, I am saying there is a program which contains all sorts of irrational features. If you say the ego is so valuable that no matter how irrational it is we have got

to do what it requires, then that implies, "Everything else must adapt to that." That means the end of the human race, as we can see.

So it's not that we annihilate it, but we should acknowledge that while it is an actual phenomenon or appearance, it has no ground. It is actually just a bunch of programs interacting. The Buddhists have explored the idea that the ego has no *ground*. That is essentially what they are saying. They are saying it is 'conditioned' – all things mutually condition each other in their coming into being – and therefore whatever it is is not *that* important. That doesn't mean you get rid of it altogether, because you will probably still have some sense of ego. It's a question of the degree of importance it is given. If the ego has first priority over everything, this is going to wreck the whole system.

Q: What is important then? That's the crucial question.

Bohm: We are going to have to say we can't state exactly what is important, however we *can* say something about what is *not*. Thus, we are saying that programs are not important, that there are other things that are. Life is more important than a program. That is one thing I would say. But most people believe the other way around.

Your nation says, "Fight." It says you have to fight and get killed. You have got to have the nuclear bombs drop on you if that's what they decide. They say that nation is more important than life. If nation is a program, that cannot be so. Or if religion is a program, it couldn't be so. But people have died and have destroyed vast numbers of other people for religion.

Q: Would you perceive the Tibetan approach that was suggested here – the intellectual notion of the annihilation of the ego – as a program that would get in the way of watching the process?

Bohm: I don't like the use of the word 'annihilation'. It has a kind of connotation of violence which disturbs me; I feel it is not quite the way we should go. I think we should say that we are going to be sensitive to this ego and see how it really works, so perhaps some of the programs will go.

Q: You're saying be sensitive to the process, as opposed to a definition of the process – which is what annihilation of the ego is an attempt to do. Are you suggesting to 'keep your eye on the process'?

Bohm: I'm suggesting we begin. I'm not trying to go that far immediately. I'm suggesting that we can go through a series of stages and look at it, and say that at this stage we can see that the ego has various programs in it. It may have some useful features too, so we won't make up our minds about it. People have to remember who they are, and where they belong, and things like that. If we annihilated the ego altogether, I don't think we could survive. But a lot of programs have accumulated inside that ego, giving it tremendous importance which gets in the way of everything else. And they are all *thoughts*.

Q: Isn't ego itself a creation of Western psychology? It's a thought in itself. The Buddhists would say that ego is an illusion, and they are certainly not saying that you go around annihilating illusions. So in some sense what I hear happening here now is that there is a defending of a thought called 'ego'.

Bohm: Or 'me'. Or 'us' against 'them'.

Q: There is some deep-seated tacit thought that everybody keeps referring back to, and saying they can't understand what all this means in relationship to the thought that they haven't yet understood.

Bohm: Well, we are going to come to the question of what is the self. I'm not sure 'ego' is the best word; it has been introduced by late Western philosophy and psychology. There are simpler words like 'I', 'myself' – 'me, myself, and I' and 'you and us and them'. That is the area we have to get into.

When we talk of 'ego', we begin to make an object of it, rather than a process. If you talk of the ego *process*, that would be all right. But then, the very word 'ego' tends to make you think otherwise. So there is a kind of process which we have to get into.

That process has taken on tremendous importance. You think it is a very high priority affair if that 'me' has not been treated properly. It has high value, high priority. Everything else must take second place. Now, we have to get into that. Why should that be, and what is it that might change that,

and so on – if we indeed want it to change. And we have to agree to look into it. Do you want it to change? Everybody may not.

Let's get back to the question of hurt – that *we hurt ourselves*. That's the thing to keep in mind. We don't know exactly how or why we do it, but maybe we can get some insight into that. If we weren't hurting ourselves, then we wouldn't have to get into all this unnecessary trouble about hurt.

The pain surely comes from *yourself*, from memory. Now, physical pain may be a warning that something is wrong – you have a toothache or your muscle hurts. Something is wrong; you should attend to it. If the analogy were right, you would say, "Mental pain means something is wrong inside. I should attend to it." But I want to suggest that that's a wrong picture. That's not the correct picture. We are hurting ourselves. We are not seeing what is going on. Children say, "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names can never hurt me." That is a correct perception of the truth, as it were, but people can't do it. Why not? That's what we have to get into.

We should say a little more about the nature of thought before we go into all that, because it's a question of thought that is doing it. We said that thought includes feelings, felts of various kinds, muscular tensions, and all that. It all comes from the memory, from the program.

Q: Don't you think that thought really wants to perpetuate its existence? And that's why it wants to keep releasing the memory of the psychological hurt?

Bohm: That may be partly behind it. But why couldn't it perpetuate its existence without hurting itself? Why couldn't it just follow what the children's rhyme says – that names could never hurt me? Names are just words. Why should they hurt me?

Q: Isn't it because we are always building up a positive self-image?

Bohm: Then I ask the question: why do people take images so seriously? An image is nothing, so why should we defend it?

Q: In fact, we would perpetuate ourselves more readily if we didn't do this.

Bohm: That's true. I mean, this is the thing that may destroy us altogether.

Q: It's a kind of a curious point. It is not self protection.

Bohm: No. We think it is self protection, but it's not. We are confused about what is going on – incoherent and confused. This is the basic point – thought is incoherent and confused, and does not know what it is doing.

Q: Even if we figure out what is going on and get it straight, it doesn't seem to make any difference.

Bohm: It makes *some* difference, but it won't stop. Therefore we have to go into it. There is more to it than just making a map of it. In thought we can make a map of what is going on, which will be helpful. And we then have to find the *concrete reality* of the territory – which is that process that we cannot put our hands on.

Q: We have trusted the dictatorship of thought, and we are that thought, suppressing the natural laws of our organs and our bodies.

Bohm: Well, we *are* all that. But we don't know *why* we are doing this crazy thing, you see. We might say, "Okay, we are that. Let's stop." That would be the sensible thing. But then people find they can't stop.

We do not see the whole result of thought. Part of it we don't acknowledge to be thought. Also, by now we have created such a tangle of things on which our life seems to depend that we are afraid to question it. To stop economic growth, for example, would involve such a change of millions of things that it would be a tremendous wrench.

Q: In thought?

Bohm: In thought, yes. If it weren't for thought, it might be fairly easy.

Q: Even all this explanation seems very complicated and tangled, and I wonder if it might be more understood if it were seen physically, graphically.

Bohm: How would you do it?

Q: I don't know – draw it on a board or something.

Bohm: There might be visual aids to all this. That would be an interesting thing to explore. But that would still be another kind of thought. It's a more graphic thought, but what you draw on the board is still thought.

Q: Aren't we using thought to unravel this?

Bohm: We are, yes. Are you saying that you could see it better visually than by words?

Q: To see it visually would help me.

Q: You get it very clearly if you're in an airplane. You see no boundaries to countries; you fly over the borders. And yet the army will draft you, and you will go and offer yourself to be killed.

Bohm: And now you even have pictures of the whole earth taken from the moon. People say that's very impressive. But it doesn't change all these other things – the enmity of the Arabs and the Jews, and things like that. Those people know about the pictures from the moon. So there is something more involved, which is: how are we going to engage this reality, this concrete reality of the process?

Q: It comes with the way children are brought up.

Bohm: That is how it comes. But unless the older people change, *that* won't change. The children are not strong enough to change the parents, so the parents have got to change.

Q: Does our motive behind this have anything to do with it? I sense that most of us have a motive for being here, which is to be rid of unhappiness or desperation. Does that have anything to do with it?

Bohm: That may have. That's a natural motive, but we may find that it gets in the way.

Q: Does that get in our way?

Bohm: It can. We will discuss that, because that is more of the same kind of thought – projecting a psychological goal, when we don't understand what we are doing in the first place. It's another kind of violence. Thought is

producing this whole story, and then it projects a goal of something better, while it keeps the whole story going. It doesn't make sense.

Q: No matter where we're situated in thought, we are going to be situated in the wrong place. So we might as well start with it.

Bohm: In another sense, it *is* in the right place, because it's where the trouble is. It is not like the story of the fellow who was looking for the key where the light was, rather than where he lost it. We lost it there in thought, so that is where we have to find it.

Q: That kind of discounts the idea of contemplation which has come up through Western philosophy, and the Eastern ideas of meditation and literally stopping the thought process. Perhaps it's a combination of both thinking and stopping thinking, not just thinking.

Bohm: We have to think, and we have to see what thinking is.

Q: Maybe we see what thinking is by stopping thinking.

Bohm: If you *can*. The point is that there are two sides. You can look at it individually or collectively. We are thinking collectively and individually. You could as an individual contemplate and stop thinking – up to a point anyway; I'm not sure how far it would go.

But you would find that as we start to talk together again, the same problems would arise. In the East, people still can't avoid the kind of problems that arise when they *think*, when they have to talk together, and so on. They still get into all these problems. The East never solved that. Basically, the life in the East is just about as incoherent as it is in the West. It has some difference in details.

You see, we really have to pay attention to thought. And paying attention to thought implies being beyond thought in some sense – we are *in* thought, and also *beyond* it. Do you see what I'm driving at there?

Attention goes beyond thought. Awareness and attention go beyond thought. And maybe we should finish on this note – that there are two things besides sensitivity that we could say go beyond thought. Actually, sensitivity

could basically be generalized as awareness. 'Aware' means to be watchful – 'wary'. It doesn't mean only to be conscious and think – cognizant. So there is awareness, which includes thought and more than thought. And then there is attention, in which we bring this thing to a whole, as it were.

And this attention surely goes beyond thought. It may have any number of forms which go beyond the program. When we see something new, we must pay attention in a new way, and not just by the program. Very often people pay attention through the program. If you know somebody very well and you pass that person in the street, you say, "I saw him." But if you are asked what he was wearing, you probably won't know. You recognize a few small points and say, "That is he." So the attention was controlled by the program.

But attention could change in any number of ways. When you see something new, you have to get out of the ordinary pattern of attention. I think that in this way and in other ways attention goes beyond thought. And as I said, awareness and sensitivity also go beyond thought. We have to have *all* that present in connection with thought, because thought is where the problem is. I'm suggesting as an approach that we get into being aware of thought, paying attention to thought, and also thinking about thought – forming a map of thought. Then the question is how we get beyond that map, which would require something beyond thought as well. But really, the division between thought and 'beyond thought' is another one of those boundaries that thought produces.

Q: It might help if we realize that we always are beyond thought.

Bohm: I'm trying to say that thought itself is beyond thought, because thought is a tacit process that you cannot describe. You don't grasp that process in thought. When you are thinking, the actual process is beyond thought. But the abstractions which it produces are what we call 'thought'.

Q: Is thought like a computer? And we need to be able to use the computer – to use it, but not to be trapped in the computer?

Bohm: Yes, that's true. And one of the assumptions which thought often makes is that thought covers everything, there is nothing else. Then that helps to trap you.

Now, there *is* something beyond, but thought does one of two things. Either it assumes that there is nothing beyond, or it assumes that some of the things which it has produced in the imagination are beyond. These are the two difficulties you get into. Therefore, you need to be sensitive to see that there *is* something beyond thought, and that the fanciful imagination is not one of those things. But often the imagination looks very real and seems to be beyond thought.

Q: Do you mean something beyond thought, not a 'reality' made by thought?

Bohm: Yes. Thought makes, as we said, a certain reality, which we can see all around us and inside of us and between us. What underlies that 'reality' is beyond thought. And a certain abstraction is involved in looking at it the way thought looks at it, as we have pointed out.

I am saying that the underlying ground, whatever it is, is beyond thought, and yet it *includes* thought. Thought is *part* of that ground. If you said that thought is one thing and the ground is another, thus putting a boundary between them, then that ground would not be the whole. So we have to say that, in some sense, there is a *whole* which includes thought – the concrete and real process of thought – that we can neither get hold of in our hands, nor by thought.

Q: It would also have to include the ineffable that we can't get hold of.

Bohm: Yes, that's right. The ineffable is just what you cannot name or think.

Perhaps we will leave it at that for now.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Bohm: We could begin by considering a few questions, and then go on.

Q: The thoughts that we have are going around all people. But perhaps some people have different biological or genetic factors that would condition them in different ways from others. Some people are more violent, some behave differently in other ways. Apparently they are in a similar environment, but they still tend to respond in a different way.

Bohm: Yes, everybody will respond somewhat differently according to his constitution, his background, his conditioning, and what his memories are. One person may have a certain memory which means that a particular situation represents a danger. Another person has no such memory and he is much calmer in that situation. Or one person may be more excitable than another.

There are always these differences; but when we get to the depths, the fundamental process is similar. Everybody can understand the other person's process if he will be attentive and sensitive and if he doesn't reject it. Everybody can understand the other person's felts and thoughts and physical tensions; they are implicitly communicated both in the verbal language and in the body language. But our general tendency is to make an *image* and project it all back to the other person, to say, "That's just the way he is. He's always doing that." And saying, "I don't have it." But in fact, we each do have it. It is happening in everybody when it is happening in anybody.

That is most evident with fear. In a large group of people, fear is very contagious. Anger, violence – they are all contagious. The process of thought/felt is communicated rather like a virus. Actually, a virus is also a communication of information to make something happen in your body.

Q: Do some people have a tendency to catch the virus more easily than others?

Bohm: Yes. And that is true physically as well. Some people provide a better nutrient environment for the virus than others. That's the difference.

But if their immune systems could be built up, then they would be a less favorable medium.

Q: Is there no genetic inheritance contributing toward the violence?

Bohm: There may be a minor factor. It's hard to trace what inheritance would favor violence and what would not. But the basic factor common to all people is this *thought process,* which so easily falls into violence. There may be some tendency to respond with force, rather than *holding* or *suspending.* Perhaps everybody has it. It might begin physically by responding with a bit of excess force. If something is in your way, you give it too much of a push. You may break it. That tendency can be either built up or brought down, according to the whole experience and the culture and everything.

I want to emphasize again that with violence, anger, fear – with all those things – there can be what I have called 'suspending'. If we suspend anger, then we can see that anger has certain thoughts and assumptions that keep it going. If you accept those assumptions, you will go on being angry. Or you could say, "I shouldn't be angry. I'm not angry, really." Then you would lose awareness of being angry while you remain angry. That would be suppressing awareness. You would still be violent. What is called for is not suppressing the awareness of anger, nor suppressing nor carrying out its manifestations; but rather, suspending them in the middle at sort of an unstable point – as on a knife edge – so that you can look at the whole process. That is what is called for.

The human race doesn't do a great deal of suspension of this sort. I think that it is a natural potential, but that we have not developed in such a way as to favor it very much. Our development has been more towards a kind of immediate impulsive response that is favorable to violence.

For example, you may often be in a situation where you think that a violent reaction is going to pay. Or you might say, "Society says one ought not be violent. I will try not to be violent." But meanwhile you continue the thoughts that are making you violent. Either way you don't get anywhere. Violence thus

constantly tends to grow. It goes into the program, into the memory. The more you are violent, the more you leave a program for violence, and then it becomes more and more automatic. I think that this is a major factor.

As I said, there is also a hereditary factor, which is that we may have some tendency to respond with force where we should suspend. But even in the jungle, force is not automatically called for all the time. In fact, mostly suspension is what is called for; force only occasionally. To survive there, you really would have to learn suspension.

Society is where people are inclined to lose track of that, where they inflame each other with violent words, and so forth. For instance, if a primitive tribe is going to have a war, they first have a long dance where they work themselves up. They couldn't get around to killing people in cold blood, so they have to arouse themselves with a big dance, and also with all sorts of shouts and phrases saying how brave and noble they are and how bad the other side is. Then eventually they get into a state where they can do it. I was told that among the North American Indians, a lot of the raids and such were largely for the sake of demonstrating bravery and showing what a great person one was. It didn't really come out of violent feelings so much, although violence was developed as they did it. But then as civilization develops, it gets to be more serious. The stakes get higher.

Q: We are constantly being whipped into a kind of pre-frenzy state. Advertising is always trying to make everything saleable. The whole system is sort of designed to keep us keyed up.

Bohm: Yes. In fact, the system can only work by growing and by keeping us keyed up. If we stopped being keyed up the economy might collapse, and we would all suffer.

Q: We keep talking about everything being organized around thought; saying that feelings, responses, emotions, are all organized around thought – that thought seems to be the center of it. Is it that way because of what we have become, or is that a natural state?

Bohm: Thought affects us very much. By the word 'thought' I mean the overall response of memory – the program. The experience of memory has certain intellectual conclusions in thought. One of the most powerful is the thought of *necessity*. Necessity means literally that something *has* to be that way; it cannot be otherwise. And the Latin root of the word, *necesse*, means 'don't yield'. So intellectually, necessity says, "it has got to be that way – it can't be otherwise." And emotionally and physically it says, "hold – don't yield." The two go together.

The concept of necessity is not merely an intellectual notion. It is one of the most powerful things there are, because through necessity you will overcome all the instincts. It will even drive you against the instinct for survival. For example, during the first World War there was one Christmas where all the soldiers on the two sides decided to fraternize and get together to have a celebration. And they enjoyed themselves. Then the next day they went back to war. Why did they return to fighting? They said, "It's necessary. We have got to do it." It was thought that drove them back. The thought that they had to go back to fighting was much more powerful; not only more powerful than their instincts of self-preservation, but more powerful than their immediate feelings – which were true feelings, and which said, "There's no reason for us to be fighting. We really are good friends. We are all the same, we shouldn't be having a war at all." Their instinct told them that, and their true feelings told them that. But thought said, "You have got to do it."

Q: When there is a feeling in the body – like in the stomach – or a feeling that comes from memory, do you call that 'thought', too?

Bohm: Yes. There is no real distinction. Everything that goes into the memory goes into the same hopper. They are associated.

Q: Is having a tight stomach in a tense situation a kind of thought?

Bohm: That is thought. It is on the program in the memory that a particular sort of situation is bad, that in the past you have become tense in such a situation. And the reaction produces certain thoughts, a certain sense

of necessity, certain perceptions, certain felts. Then it all comes out together. It jumps up together as a package.

Q: But we have a tendency to think of thought as just the mental part.

Bohm: That's right. That is part of the mistake of our culture.

Q: Do you mean that an ulcer is a kind of thought?

Bohm: It is part of the thought pattern, yes. You may even say, "I can't stomach that person."

Q: "I feel it in my guts."

Bohm: Or you might say, "Whenever I get into that situation I take it to heart. I'm downhearted, and my spirits droop." Now, the word 'spirit' has the same root as 'breath' and 'wind'. You say, "My spirits droop," and your breath falters – you are not breathing properly anymore. It's part of the expression of the whole thing. In the memory it is all tied together; so when that happens, the stomach gets constricted, the heart is no longer working right, the breath isn't right. Some people would say that comparing spirit to wind or breath is a metaphor. But that is not just a metaphor.

In the more primitive times there was what we call 'participatory thought', which I would like to discuss. The people felt that everything was participating, that the spirit was all one. There was a film about Eskimos who were hunting seal. It showed that they did not think of seals as individual animals. Their whole culture said, "There is only one seal – the spirit of the seal. It manifests everywhere." And they would pray that it should manifest to them so they wouldn't starve. Nowadays we might say that's a silly way to look at it – it's obviously many different seals. But that is a different way of thought. To them it looked that way, and to us it looks this way.

I can illustrate it to you. Suppose, for instance, we are talking together. I see you and I hear you, which are very different experiences. But my experience is that the person I see *is* the person that I hear. They are one and the same. It is a way of thought that puts them together. Likewise you could say, "The breath that is going on in me is the spirit which is the Great Spirit or

the universal spirit. And the heart, the lungs, the stomach are participating in the whole thing." That would be very similar to the way they thought.

Participatory thought is a different way; and that is the way we were for more or less a million years. In the last five thousand years we have turned it around, and our present language says, "That's all nonsense. We won't pay any attention to that at all." Then when physical symptoms come, we say they are psychosomatic, which means that the psyche has somehow affected the soma. But that is not clear, because the psyche and the soma were never separate.

So that way of participatory thought survives in us; in fact, it is going on in us all the time. And yet our language doesn't acknowledge it. Therefore we meet it as something other than thought. We say, "That is nothing but a stomach symptom. It's an ulcer."

Q: Have we fragmented this thought off from the rest of our organism?

Bohm: Yes. We have said that thought is just the intellect. At most, we will bring in the emotions. It's much harder to realize that it is also the stomach and the heart and the lungs and the solar plexus and everything. Yet people say, "You give me a pain in the neck." You see, that is part of this basic way of thought.

Q: Then thought is an expression of a sensation?

Bohm: It is the response of memory in *any* form, which has *meaning.* Thoughts are all connected, because they associate. All sorts of thoughts associate. Once they get thrown into this computer disk, as it were, they are all associated and they all tend to spring up together, especially if their association is established.

Q: If my arm twitches every once in a while because I cut a nerve years ago, is that a kind of thought?

Bohm: It is a kind of very crude memory, yes. But I would say it is connected to the memories which are all tied up together in the way I suggested.

The set of the body is part of memory. The body can take a certain attitude or a stance as a result of having thought in a certain way for a long time. It becomes fixed there. That means that it is expressing or participating. The body is participating in the thought. And then that stance also affects the mental process.

Q: Usually I think that there is thought, and then everything related to it. But you are saying that it's not that way at all, that the name for all of these relationships is 'thought'.

Bohm: You have to give it one name, or else you if you give it many names you are going to break it up. I suggest the best name to give it is 'thought'.

Q: Does 'thought' include the unconscious?

Bohm: The unconscious. The implicit – most of that is unconscious. We are not conscious of the working of the autonomic nervous system, nor the heart, the stomach, the lungs. All that is part of our thought. We *could* become conscious of it, but generally we are not. In fact, our whole society has developed in such a way as to make us unconscious of it. The language implies that none of that is happening at all – and if it does happen it's a physical problem.

Q: Do you have another name for the one portion of this big thought, the part that does what we usually call 'thinking'?

Bohm: Yes. The intellect. There is the intelligence, which is something more directly and immediately active, while 'intellect' is the past participle. At this rate, intellect is what *has been* active and what has gone onto the program, into memory. But this can still be active again as a sort of reflexive response of memory.

Q: Intellect is that reflexively active mental part of this big thought?

Bohm: Yes. And the emotions are another part – the feelings. The body is another part. And so on. I think you will find that this way of using language helps you to look more clearly, because once you set up a word, then your attention tends to go according to the way you set up that word. If

thought only means the intellect to me, I will be looking only at the intellect. We have various words: 'thought', 'feeling', 'body', and so forth. But if we want to look at it all, it is rather clumsy to say, "Look at thought, feeling, body, and so forth."

I suggest, then, that we let 'thought' mean all of that, because it is inseparable. It's like saying, "The person I hear is the person I see and the person I touch. It's all one." It is one process with one content, which is manifested or experienced or sensed in different ways. So perhaps we can agree to refer to 'thought' in a similar way.

Q: Are there any vestiges of participatory thought that we use?

Bohm: Yes. Let's discuss this.

There are several kinds of thought. We have what we call 'literal thought'. That's the kind we largely favor nowadays. It aims at being a reflection or a representation of reality as it is. It claims just to tell you the way things are. And we tend to say that that's the best kind of thought. Then we have poetic thought – metaphor and so on – which used to be more highly valued. This is not literal at all, but it has some sort of value. Then we have what we call hortatory thought, which tells you what to do. This is very participatory. It says things such as, "Cheer up! Be good!" 'Hortatory' has the same root as 'exhort'. That is clearly participatory, because it is aimed at doing something. But that is a very limited kind of participatory thought. The notion of participatory thought goes much further than this.

In very early times there was a great deal of participatory thought. They probably knew about literal thought and used it in practical activities, but at the same time the things that deeply mattered to them mostly involved participatory thought. Tribes would have a totem and say, "The tribe and the totem – we are identical." Now you might ask, "How can you say we are identical to that thing over there? It makes no sense to us." But they are saying that there is mutual participation, that they participate together in something common. Just as I say that the person I hear is the person I see, so they say the totem is the tribe. You contact the tribe through the totem or through the person, or through the people.

It is very interesting to put yourself in that place, to try to think that way. I suggest that we are constantly doing participatory thought anyway, and that this has never gone. An example would be that when my country is attacked, *I* am attacked. There we are doing exactly that kind of thought. We say, "I am my country. When you cross our boundary, you have hit *me.*" Then someone could say, "That's nonsense. The boundary is way over there and you are here. How can you say that?" Then we try to explain it by saying, "My country is really there. It's literal." But if you try to find it, it is not there. The unity that you talk about is not there. But we are ready to lay our lives on the line for that.

Q: We might explain that by saying that it gives us a sense of security.

Bohm: But we could explain the tribal situation the same way, saying, "Okay, it's nice to be all together with this totem. And we're all together in the Great Spirit. The Great Spirit manifests in everything." And that gives us a wonderful sense of security too – perhaps even better.

We do a great deal of that kind of thought, but we claim we are not doing it. Literal thought claims we are not doing that at all. You see, it is incoherent. Explicitly, we have given supreme value to literal thought, while in fact we are also tacitly giving supreme value to participatory thought. It's all very muddled.

Participatory thought somehow went into the shade; it got eclipsed in some way, but it remained underground. Literal thought took over in conscious awareness, and made technology possible. In many ways it was a tremendous advantage to do that.

Participatory thought had a lot of good points – everybody shared. 'Participation' means sharing. It means 'partaking of' – like sharing food – and 'taking part in'. In other words, we all partook of the whole Great Spirit, and everything in the tribe. Also, everybody took part in maintaining it.

That sounds very good, and in many ways it was very good. But it had some negative features, too. It sometimes went wrong. For example, cannibalism is a form of participation. They said, "By eating you, I partake of your virtues." So it could go wrong. At least, we don't approve of cannibalism today.

Magic is also a form of participation. Magic is saying basically, "My thought and that object, or whatever, are participating together – they are basically one. By thinking, I can change that or that can change me." Some people still believe that magic will actually work. They believe that it is real. There is white magic, grey magic, black magic. And there are people who try to do some very bad things through black magic. You see, this notion of participatory thought is not necessarily a formula for perfect happiness.

Now, these notions of participation – such as magic – seem fanciful, at least to many of us. By removing the notion of participation and making everything literal and separate, we were able to develop modern science and technology, which obviously had a lot of advantages, as well as dangers. But the deeper difficulty is that we never really became free of participatory thought. It is still there underground, giving rise to confusion. And literal thought itself is what is behind the trouble, because literal thought is claiming just to tell you the way things are, and thus implying that it is not participating, when in fact it is doing so a great deal.

Actually, *all* thought is participatory, because every thought affects the way you see things and feel things, and so on. It affects consciousness. We discussed that this morning. We talked about that fellow who was blind from birth and didn't see very much immediately after his operation. He had to do a lot of thinking before he could see.

Every thought affects consciousness, and therefore affects what is going to happen. It affects the whole system. Consciousness could be compared to a kind of act, or a show. And the whole system is taking cues from that show as to what to do. Literal thought affects that, but says it doesn't do so. It says, "I do nothing. I only tell you the way things really are." That is basically the kind of error I have been talking about all along – that thought does things, and claims it is not doing them.

Q: Could we use an example like religion, which is a whole participatory belief system, but says it's using a literal idea that there is a god?

Bohm: Religion generally combines openly participatory elements, and some elements that are supposed to be just informative but are also

participatory, as you said. It has rituals and all sorts of things like that, which are overtly participatory. You are taking part and partaking of God – of whatever the spirit is supposed to be.

Q: I wonder if we really grasp the difference between the literal and the participatory.

Bohm: Well, let's take science, for example. Science would aim to try to tell you literally the way things are. But in fact, the very progress of science shows that it can't be done. Quantum theory says that, in a very accurate treatment, there is finally an indivisible connection between any one part of the universe and another. Therefore, when you try to make a measurement or an observation, you participate in the thing that you are trying to measure. So you are not measuring.

Q: Then while we have a society that claims to be highly literal, is there no such thing?

Bohm: Ultimately there isn't. But there is in a certain relative sense.

Q: In a rather small sense.

Bohm: To us it may seem small when we look at it in this broad manner. However, it looks very big in society, because most everything that has gone on in society has come from that.

Q: Laws are literal kind of things.

Bohm: But in fact, they are very participatory.

Q: In this last point that you made regarding what science has moved to in quantum – wouldn't that then necessitate saying that thought is participatory?

Bohm: It does. But you don't even need to refer to science to see that.

Q: I understand. But what if a scientist were in fact to lay that out to you?

Bohm: Then somebody could object, saying, "This is just the temporary situation in science today. Maybe tomorrow we will discover something else. So you can't count on it." But we can say that, at least as far as we know from science, it is participatory.

Q: Can we say that literal thought seems objective, but it isn't? It actually is subjective, which is what is participatory?

Bohm: Yes, it may be *relatively* objective in some sense – that this table is here, for example. In a large object, like this table, the effect of thought is very tiny. But in the atom the effect of thought is very big. In the mind it may be very big. In society it is very big. In the ecology it has become very big. Overall, thought has a very big effect.

If you give people a questionnaire, the way you put the question determines not only the answer, but also it may affect the way people behave. That is rather similar to quantum mechanics.

So we have to say that thought is participatory. Everything participates in everything – that is the lesson of modern physics. But thought is especially participatory, because very tiny thoughts can have tremendous consequences.

Q: When you say everything participates in everything else, do you mean that literally and not metaphorically?

Bohm: Yes. I'm not against literal thought. If we try to be absolute about this, we are going to get into a paradox. We have to move between literal thought and participatory thought. We can't stay in one or the other. We may be more in one and less in the other, but we are always somewhere in between. We can't get along without literal thought, without the concept of literal thought, but we must not take it absolutely literally. There is a paradox in attempting to put it in words.

Q: Then the only difficulty would be to take literal thought literally.

Bohm: If we take participatory thought too literally, that will also be wrong, because literal thought is needed as well. We can't even *say* all this without some literal thought. But then that literal thought is participating; by saying *this*, things have changed. If people would take this into account and take it seriously, things would change very radically. So that mere statement from literal thought changes everything.

All literal thought is participatory. In other words, we have to say that there is a particular kind of participatory thought called 'literal thought'.

But we have mistakenly said that there are *two* kinds of thought. That is fragmentation. Literal thought is a particular kind of participatory thought that tries to reflect things. It tries to be in correspondence with reality, to make a sort of picture or representation.

Q: When it comes to technological things, it isn't so out of kilter. But when it comes to psychological things, it goes wrong. Like, if you participate in your society and then literally kill someone, you have made a big mistake in the process.

Bohm: Well, society is highly participatory, because it exists only through thought.

Q: It shares.

Bohm: Yes, sharing of thought.

Q: Is consciousness a kind of participatory process?

Bohm: Yes. It is all participatory. Whatever thought is in consciousness, the whole system – the body, the nervous system, everything – participates.

Q: If you take this participatory thought literally, you're liable to be out on a limb psychologically. I'm reminded of people in the Middle East who have strongly held beliefs to the point where they kill. The consciousness of the group has been participatory, but literally they are shooting each other.

Bohm: They believe in the literal truth of their thoughts.

Q: But that's participatory .

Bohm: The stronger they believe it to be literal, the more it is participatory.

Q: Then are you suggesting that literal thought may be necessary up to a point, but we cannot take it seriously or believe in it a hundred percent?

Bohm: Yes. Literal thought is really a kind of participatory thought, no matter what happens. But a certain kind of thought may be relatively non-participatory in certain areas, and that kind of thought may provide a reflection of reality or a correspondence with reality.

Q: Would you use that Arab-Israeli metaphor to describe what is participatory and what is literal in the conflict as it exists?

Bohm: The Arabs and Jews have certain ideas about each other, which they think are literally true. One of those ideas that each one has is that the other side only understands force, and that this justifies violence. So each one forms an image of the other, and they believe that the image is just the way the other is. They feel this image is only telling them the way the Arabs or the Jews are, but in fact it is making a key contribution to the whole situation.

Q: That whole group of people is participating in one big long gigantic image.

Bohm: Yes. And the two images call each other up. The two kinds of nationalism sustain each other. Before the first World War there was no Arab nation. There was only a lot of different kinds of people speaking different kinds of Arabic, who could hardly understand each other. I think the British invented Arab nationalism – for one thing, there was Lawrence of Arabia – and it took hold and caught on. Then there was the invention of Zionism, which was Jewish nationalism. When the Jews started settling in the Middle East, it created some conflict, and the Arabs tried to respond with Arab nationalism. But the more Arab nationalism there was, the more Jewish nationalism it called for, and vice versa.

So they built each other up by thought. But it was very participatory. It created the very thing which they were thinking about. And that is true of every nation. Every nation was created by participatory thought.

Q: We think the nation is literal.

Bohm: Yes. We think that the nation is literally there, independent of thought.

Q: Yet its existence depends upon participatory thought.

Bohm: In fact, the thought in which we identify ourselves with the nation is the survival of that primitive participatory thought. The Eskimos

said all the seals are one. Analogously, we feel that all the people in this nation are one; if one is attacked, all are attacked. It is the same thought.

Q: If that were to end, would it mean the end of nations?

Bohm: Nations wouldn't be taken so seriously. They might be convenient units, or they might have some culture in common. There could be various ways in which you would continue something like that. But it wouldn't be given such supreme importance. That alone would release a lot of money – say a thousand billion dollars a year from armaments alone.

Q: Many of the ecological problems we have are forcing us in that direction. They run counter to all this nationalism that we deal with. Unless we overcome that literal sense of nationalism, we are going to have ecological disaster.

Bohm: That is true. That is one of the most important points. We have the danger of ecological disaster, which is real. Nevertheless, in one article I read, President Bush was trying to say that the ecological danger is just an opinion which scientists have, and that they don't agree about it. But the authors of the article wouldn't concur. They said that everybody agrees that if we go on as we are now doing there is going to be a disaster; the only difference of opinion is *when*.

It is only a question of when. Some experts say fifty years, some say a hundred years. But nobody doubts that we are eventually going to have a disaster if, for instance, we keep on producing carbon dioxide at this rate.

The fact is that we have to get together. We have to get together to deal with that disaster *before* it comes. By the time it comes, it will be too late. Nations will fight to get whatever resources are left. So when the disaster comes, it will not bring people together; it will drive them apart.

The ecological danger is only one example. There are countless others. Thus, there is trade. The economy is simply so interdependent that it calls for ending the fiction that nations are all independent and sovereign. There is clearly *some* move in that direction, but it is very slow compared with what is needed.

Q: What is there in what you are saying that does not make it just intellectual? We did define 'intellectual' before as part of the program. And I could imagine people asking whether you are just being intellectual about it.

Bohm: But you also have to be careful not to eliminate the intellect. The intellect is needed. If we gave up the intellect the whole thing would collapse. So you can't say, "Never be intellectual." Then what would you do? Another person could say, "Never be emotional." That wouldn't be right either.

The human race tends to divide into two groups. One says, "We're intellectual. We don't trust the emotions; we trust the intellect." The other says, "We don't trust the intellect; we trust the emotions." But it doesn't work either way. You won't get out of the muddle by saying, "Don't be intellectual," nor by saying, "Don't be emotional."

We do have to make a clear intellectual analysis of the situation. That provides a map. And then we have to go from the map to whatever the reality is. Now, that is very subtle – that reality. We discussed it this morning, saying reality involves that subtle concrete process of the mind.

Q: Are you suggesting that in making our clear intellectual map, it's very possible that we might get sucked into the movement?

Bohm: We must watch that, yes.

Q: As soon as my mind moves in this familiar literal way, I'm in a certain mode. And somehow or other it seems I have to pop out of that before this can bear any fruit.

Bohm: On the other hand, if we said, "Let's have an emotional response and all have love," you would be sucked into the same thing. So we need to get beyond that division. Without emotion you won't do it. Without intellect you won't do it. But something beyond is needed.

Q: As we sit and start talking, we think we understand what is going on. We are in a certain intellectual mode. And in some sense, that certainty of what is taking place here has to shift, in order for us to be available to the intelligence which isn't intellect.

Bohm: Well, we can question it. What are we doing? We have made a 'map'; we haven't grasped the whole thing. We have not grasped the actual concrete process that the map is about. We haven't grasped the concrete process in its actuality. That means we have to suspend something in our thought process. I suggest that we have to suspend *certainty*.

Q: Is it certainty that needs to be suspended?

Bohm: Well, something has to be suspended. What would you say?

Q: It seems that even when people who have heard what you are saying come together, there is a division. It feels like the division of nations. It's a sense that we already know what it is, but each of us seems to have a different sense of knowing, a different sense of certainty.

Bohm: Yes.

Q: But there must be something we don't know.

Bohm: There are two questions there. The difference of our senses, which I suggest we will have to resolve through dialogue. And in that, or even without that, we have also to realize that we have not grasped the actuality very well – that there is another step somewhere missing.

Q: It seems I was separating the intellect from intelligence; when in fact I'm hearing that intelligence must incorporate intellect, because without it you can't see.

Bohm: That's right. You can't talk, you can't get together.

Q: There are references here to actuality and reality. I would like to explore that a little bit, if I may. My understanding is that literal thought assumes there is some objective reality independent of the thinker, of the observer, and that this is a useful kind of thought in most of science, at least until you get down to quantum physics. You measure things, and the assumption is that everyone who measures that same thing will get the same measurement, the same results.

But it's not so useful when you get away from the hard sciences and talk

about social sciences and history, because when somebody observes what is going on in history, the very act of observing sometimes influences or changes it. In those areas, it seems impossible to get hold of an objective reality 'out there'. Is this perhaps an example of participatory thought?

Bohm: Yes. Society is not an objective reality – period. It is a reality created by all the people through their consciousness. It has some objective features that you could point to once they do it, particularly because there are so many taking part; it is statistical. The same thing happens in physics – if you try to measure one atom exactly you can't do it; it participates. If you take a whole statistical array of atoms, you can get an average that is objective. It comes out the same no matter who does it, or when. The average comes out, but the individual does not.

In society you can get average behaviors, which are often predictable. But they are not very significant, compared with the thing that really moves us and makes the thing happen. Individually and collectively – together – we have a consciousness which creates this society, and sustains it with thought, intellect, feeling, and so on.

Q: To carry a point that was made one step further, can we say that the perception, and then the writing of history itself, *creates* history? It generates new ways of thinking that form how we act, and so in that way it is extremely participatory.

Bohm: Yes, it affects how history develops.

Q: And if you go beyond history to something like religion, it becomes even more so – the farther you get away from the hard sciences.

Bohm: Yes. Thought is highly participatory in those areas, and therefore this division of subject and object is no longer a key point. Now, that is what we will have to come to. When we want to understand the self, this intention is commonly based on the division of subject and object. But we are getting into an area where that division is not very coherent.

Q: Even the most literal science is highly participatory; because the

society decides what to measure, and how to measure it, and what is valuable, and what to pursue. So the whole thing is already swimming in this sea of participatory consciousness.

Bohm: It is highly participatory.

Q: The bias is so much on the side of objectivity, so much on the hard science, that it gets transferred over into, say, something like journalism. There is a myth of *objective* journalism, which doesn't in fact exist at all.

Bohm: We tend to identify objectivity with truth. They are not the same. Later we will have to come to what is really meant by 'truth'. Objectivity is a limited concept. It has its place, but some of the most important things to us cannot be handled that way.

Q: The evening news is supposedly reporting objective reality. But in fact, it's selectively eliminating most of reality.

Bohm: Well, there is no way out of that. Whenever you report, you must select. You can't report everything. *Everything* is the whole concrete reality, and that is just what the intellect cannot handle. Each thought is an abstraction. Whatever you report is an abstraction. You point your camera here and not there; that's an abstraction. It takes in this and not that. You may hope you have made an intelligent selection of what is relevant, and to some extent it may correspond in some way to some kind of reality; but when it comes to the social meaning of that reality, that is very subjective. You are not really interested just in the fact that this incident happened and that incident happened, but in what it all means.

Q: And that's just what the media doesn't want to get involved in. It just wants to show the event, and not get into the meaning.

Bohm: But the event always has a meaning implicitly. The media are affecting things. They are communicating a meaning and affecting things.

Q: The only thing the news media do is select what they know people are already interested in.

Bohm: Well, they want to communicate meanings that would be acceptable.

The whole subject is very subtle, you see. We can't throw out the notion of objective reality, but at the same time we have to notice that it has limited significance. Now in the sciences – in the 'hard science', as you call it – it has more significance. But even there it is limited.

Q: When we take it inside – this literal and this participatory – that's where we really have to pay attention.

Bohm: There it is very limited.

Q: Because the literal things are what give thought that power to do all the crazy things it does.

Bohm: Yes.

Q: Would you say a few words at this point about judgment? It seems to me that this is the place where individual judgment has to come into play. And I'm confused because of some of the things you said this morning. How should one use judgment appropriately, according to your concept?

Bohm: We have to ask what goes on in judgment. We make judgments of various levels. To say, "this is a table," is an elementary judgment based on perception and experience. We may go further to more abstract judgments like, "this is useful;" or go on to judgments of necessity, saying, "this is necessary and cannot be otherwise" – which is a much more powerful judgment. Or we may say, "This is true." What we say is 'true' is a judgment. What we say is 'real' is another judgment. These are the very powerful judgments that affect us.

Q: Or for example, we say that we must change the ecological environment.

Bohm: 'Must' conveys necessity. A statement like that says it is necessary; it says we *must* change the ecological environment.

Now that we have made a judgment, we have to ask where it comes from. It might come in various ways. One way it might come is by weighing all the factors, and perceiving as well as one can, and seeing through perception that this makes sense. Another way is that it might come automatically from the

program – people get so used to saying it that they just say it. Then it would have a different significance.

Thus, somebody may have noticed what is going on in the world, that it is adding up to danger – the carbon dioxide, the destruction of soil, and so on. You could go through details and say, "This suggests that all that is very dangerous. We can see it, and if we care about this thing we had better do something." Now, that would be something in the nature of making the judgment through intelligent perception. On the other hand, somebody could make the judgment, "Our nation is in danger, we must prepare for war, and in this way we will make ourselves secure." Many things could be the basis for this sort of a judgment. As I said, one of them could be rather automatic, because people have been saying that for ages. One nation says that of the other, and they stir each other up – like the Jews and the Arabs. They have made a series of judgments about each other, each one going by a program and stirring up the other. Such judgments that go by programs are the ones that lead to our difficulties. In particular, we must consider here judgments of what is necessary, what is true, what is real, what is good, what is right – these are the kind of basic judgments which really participate and move us.

Q: But who is to make the judgment as to which is a program and which is an intelligent choice?

Bohm: Well, we can't make it entirely a result of judgment. Each one of us must look at that and see what makes sense. If we don't agree, what I suggest is that we need to have a dialogue.

Q: But suppose the other person has seriously presumed to weigh the balance, and comes to a diametrically opposed feeling, and does not want to have a dialogue? Where do you go from there?

Bohm: Then we don't. But then we are finished. We can't do anything. It may well be that the human race has no solution – that there will be a lot of people who just don't want to talk, and each one is convinced he is right, and like lemmings we will just go over the cliff together. But it does not seem to me to be a good tactic or good strategy to assume that. I consider the possibility

that we can talk, and that we can finally communicate and share our judgments. That is the only intelligent approach that I see. If you think something else is worthwhile, we could discuss it. That is as far as I am able to go.

Q: Is there anything historical that would lead you to believe that we will do this?

Bohm: I don't say we *will* do it, you see. I am saying that I think we *can* do it. It is built into us as a possibility.

Q: Gorbachev meeting the Pope.

Bohm: That's quite something. And Gorbachev is saying, "We are not against religion any more. It has some good points." There is a beginning of negotiation. It's not an unnegotiable conflict any more.

Q: It's a loosening of the rigidity.

Bohm: Yes. And why is Gorbachev ready to do that? He sees that he has got to do it, or else it won't make sense. Perhaps the Pope sees that too. How far they will get, I don't know; but I'm saying it is a good sign, at least.

Q: But isn't he just seeing he has to do this in order to save his own neck?

Bohm: Even if he sees that, it's a very big step; because people for ages have failed to see what would save their own neck and have had their necks cut off.

Q: Isn't that what we're about here – trying to save our own necks?

Bohm: That is one of the things. We would like to go further than that, but if we don't save our necks we will never get any further.

Q: Could we come back to judgment? It seems to me that whenever judgment partakes of the feeling of the absolute, we have missed.

Bohm: Well, it is dangerous anyway. The judgment of the absolute is the area which is extremely dangerous.

Q: So in some sense, whenever I have a judgment it has to be provisional?

Bohm: At least a little bit open. Somewhere there has to be something

open to question. The judgment establishes the question of what is good, what is real, what is true. And once you judge something is real and true, you engage with it. Until you judge it to be true and real, you say, "It's merely a representation floating in my mind. I could consider all sorts of things." But when you say, "That's real," then you are *engaged* with it. That is a judgment. And somewhere in the back of the mind there must be some little room open, so that if anything comes in which doesn't fit you can open it up again. That has to be in the structure of the judgment.

Q: Judgment can't be the largest thing. What about intelligence and good will? How are people who have two different judgments going to deal with each other? There must be something larger, like good will and intelligence and caring. These have got to be greater than any judgment.

Bohm: And also something still greater – the readiness to question your judgment.

The leading physicists of this century were Einstein and Bohr. At first they were very friendly. In fact, Einstein writes that he had a feeling of love for Bohr. He thought it would be great for them to work together, and they started to talk. But they had two different views, assumptions, or judgments about the nature of truth in physics. Bohr's judgments were based on his view of quantum theory, and Einstein's on his view of relativity. They talked and talked with the most extreme good will and friendship – very intelligent people, as intelligent as you could hope for. They talked, but they could never agree. They repeated their arguments again and again. And after many years they gradually drifted apart and didn't see each other.

Then one year they were both at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. And still they never met. A mathematician there named Herman Weyl thought they ought to meet, and he arranged a party to which they and their students were invited. But Bohr and his associates congregated at one end of the gathering, and Einstein and his associates at the other. They had nothing to talk about, because each one had made such a firm judgment as to what is truth. There was no room in it for the other person's view at all, therefore it was closed. Even goodwill, friendship, love, intelligence, and all these excellent qualities still were not enough.

You need the realization that judgments and assumptions have to be open. You have to be open to question. A judgment always ultimately contains an assumption – a premise – on which it is based. A formal example is the syllogism, which has a major premise, minor premise, and conclusion. You have assumptions on which your judgments are based, and there needs to be room for those assumptions to open up a bit. Judgment has to be open, rather than making an absolute conclusion that is all closed together. This is a very delicate and subtle matter, because once you have made the judgment of truth, then it seems to you that that's it. That's the way it is. It is *literally* the way it is.

Q: It closes the door.

Bohm: Yes. If it is that way, it cannot be any other way, so it is absolute *necessity.* As I said before, *necesse* means 'don't yield'. Your body takes part as well in a participatory language. If there is absolute necessity, it means your body also doesn't want to yield. Your blood, your bones, your brain, your heart, your lungs – everything is in an unyielding stance.

Therefore it is crucial to be able to share our judgments, to share our assumptions, to listen to each other's assumptions, and so forth. In the case of Bohr and Einstein it didn't lead to violence that they did not; but in general, if somebody doesn't listen to your basic assumptions you feel it as an act of violence, and then you are inclined to be violent yourself. So this is crucial both individually and collectively; and dialogue is the *collective* way of opening up judgments.

We need first to understand this intellectually. If intellectually the culture says, "There's no problem here at all, you don't need to do it, you don't even need to think about it," then you will never get started. No matter how unintellectual you may be – even if you have never thought about it – you are unconsciously accepting the assumptions of the culture. So we need to question that whole process intellectually, and to suggest something else. This alone doesn't answer the challenge, but if you don't question it intellectually you are stuck.

Perhaps you are a strong *feeling* person. You may say, "I only go by feelings." Nevertheless, you may have made a judgment about your religion,

for example, and you can't even listen to another religion. So going by feelings doesn't answer the challenge either.

Therefore you have to be intellectually clear about what judgments are doing, because judgments are a part of the intellect. And if you are not clear as to what the intellect is doing, it becomes your master rather than the servant.

Q: Couldn't you also say that judgments in the normal sense are based on memory, which is the sum total of experience?

Bohm: But they also could be based on perception. If they are open, if your attitude to judgments is open, it can always be modified by perception.

Q: Then that might not be a judgment.

Bohm: Still it would have the form of a judgment, saying, "this is a table," or whatever. Whenever you make a statement, there is generally a vast implicit structure of judgment behind it.

Q: To say, "this is a table," you have to know what a table is, which depends on memory.

Bohm: But you have also to be able to *see* something to know that this is a table, and not something else. You cannot separate it from perception. If somebody says, "No, it is not a table," how are we going to settle the issue?

Q: Then he is interpreting perception in terms of his experience, which is his memory.

Bohm: But first we have to look at it, saying, "What do we see?" If he is going to argue with you about it, he has to say, "Look at this. That doesn't fit a table." You may not accept it, or you may accept it, but that would be the way we would have a dialogue.

Q: What we're talking about here, though, is the process where the perception – whether his, yours, or mine – is interpreted through that pot of memory, in which are his thoughts and felts.

Bohm: But we have to do that. We are never going to get out of that altogether. Just to run society, we have to engage in such judgments,

which depend on memory; for example, on the memory of what is meant by the word 'table'.

Q: As you pointed out, we ought not take these judgments so literally.

Bohm: Yes. Don't take them so literally. And therefore it is open to perception to lead us to say, "This judgment is not fitting. It's not suitable. It is incoherent to judge it this way."

Q: Whether it's fitting or not, it seems to me that we need to see the process involving memory, recognition, and experience, which so heavily influences our perception.

Bohm: Yes. If we see this, then our judgments can be a bit open, so that we can change them, or give them up, or make a dialogue about them to see why we disagree – not being like Einstein and Bohr saying, "These judgments are absolute."

A judgment does not give you truth. That is the important point. What truth is, we will have to discuss later. But a judgment is not the same as truth. It has a form as if it were truth; that is where the problem is in our language. Literal thought takes it as truth.

Q: Because we don't see the process of it.

Bohm: Yes, we don't see the process. Maybe next hour we should discuss that process a bit more.

Perhaps it is time now for a break.

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Bohm: We have been talking about a great many things. One of the points that emerged in the last hour was that all thought is abstraction, and that abstractions are always a kind of map. They show the structure and relationship of things in an abstract way – by representation, rather than by

immediate presentation. We further said that things are presented to us immediately, and that thought affects that. Thought forms a representation in the intellect, in thinking, into which judgments enter. The representation that thought makes re-presents a past presentation. Representation presents that past presentation again in the present, but presents it more abstractly – just as an actor makes a representation of a character, and then presents that character in a play.

A typical example of representation arises when you look in a certain direction, and thought translates what your eyes are seeing – that is, your visual perception. First, memory recognizes what you are seeing as an object, and then as a *specific* object – such as a table. Thought then re-presents this as an image, which brings that memory into your present perception. I have been using the word 'representation' to describe this image which presents the content of the object *again* in a more abstract way. That representation then affects your immediate presentation, so that you *immediately* see 'the table'. Accordingly, what is presented to the vision, to the mind, and to the intellect is fundamentally altered by the representation made by thought.

Judgments enter into the representation and the presentation as well. Thus, if you are making a map, you must make judgments. You draw a line and you have to judge where it belongs, what is on one side, what is on the other. That line on the map is an abstraction. The line between countries is also an abstraction; borders have changed frequently over the centuries. In looking at the actual territory, you also have to judge where the line belongs. And then if the two abstractions correspond, we say that the lines on the map are correct.

Such a representation guides action. When the representation is presented in consciousness, our whole system is taking cues. Then, if the action which results is coherent, we will call it a good representation. If you have a map which is correct, it will guide your action to go in a certain direction – perhaps toward a certain city – and you will expect to encounter one city before another according to their order as represented on the map. If it all works coherently, you will say it is an accurate map.

Q: But all we know is the abstract.

Bohm: That's right. Knowledge, which is all that we *know,* is abstract. Knowledge is *intrinsically* abstract; it is a whole structure of abstraction. The *act* of knowing is concrete. But knowledge, which is its product, is abstract. Knowledge has to be abstract. And the act of knowing is the concrete activity in which we are learning about things.

Q: Do you mean the process?

Bohm: Yes. The act of knowing is a concrete process, but the product is knowledge, which is abstraction. Knowledge forms a whole body of abstraction. It may or may not all fit together coherently.

The important point to see is that we have a vast body of knowledge, which we may mistake for *reality* if we are not careful.

Q: How would you define 'coherence'?

Bohm: First I'll talk about *in*coherence. Incoherence means that your intentions and your results do not agree. Your action is not in agreement with what you expect. It means that you have contradiction, you have confusion, you have self-deception in order to cover it up, and so on.

You see, some incoherence is inevitable, because knowledge is not perfect. All knowledge is limited, because it is an abstraction. We said that. It consists of only what you have learned up to this point. You have taken *something* out of the concrete, but the *rest* is infinitely more. So knowledge is always limited, and therefore it is going to have the possibility of being incoherent.

The incoherence shows up when knowledge is applied, when you act according to knowledge. Or incoherence can show up when you try to work knowledge out. And then if your attitude is a proper one, you say, "Okay. I acknowledge the incoherence. I will let go of my past knowledge. Let me find out." You find out what is wrong and change it. But if you *defend* that knowledge, then you are off on a wrong track. There is no reason to defend knowledge, but people are caught up all the time in defending it, for reasons we will go into later.

Now we can say something positive about coherence. We sense coherence as order, beauty, harmony. It may make a mistake, but still that is the positive sense of it. The negative sense is incoherence – which is the *road* to coherence. We need both. If somebody only looks at order, beauty, and harmony, he could easily start fooling himself and say that it's all working nicely – it's all orderly, harmonious, and beautiful. But if he is sensitive to incoherence, he begins acknowledging it and then finding out what is its source.

Now, coherence is evidently of tremendous value to us. And it has to be, because incoherent functioning is really very dangerous. In addition, we are built so that we somehow appreciate coherence. It is part of life. If your life is totally incoherent, you might feel that it is hardly worthwhile. So we have a kind of sense of value built in, but our values have become mixed up. As thought developed over the ages, it produced incoherent values which muddle us. So we are not very clear on what is meant by any of this.

Q: Is one of the things that gives these incoherent values such deep meaning our desire for coherence?

Bohm: Yes. Nevertheless, if we have a desire for coherence we can go about it wrongly and simply try to *impose* coherence, rather than discovering the incoherence and dropping it. This is a kind of violence, and therefore a further extension of incoherence.

Q: Could one say coherence is innate?

Bohm: *The move to coherence* is innate, but our thought has muddled it. A highly incoherent response is on the program in memory. We don't know how to get at it, what it means, or anything. And it has become more and more entangled as time went on.

Q: We end up trying to find coherence in thought. We confuse coherence in thought with actual coherence.

Bohm: 'Coherence in thought' is only a *part*. Coherence is in the *whole*. But it includes the whole process of the mind – which includes the tacit process of the thought. So any change that really counts has to take place in the *tacit process* of thought itself. It cannot take place only in the abstraction.

Q: By 'tacit' do you mean that which is believed?

Bohm: No. 'Tacit' means that which is unspoken, which cannot be described – like the tacit knowledge in bicycle riding.

Q: Is it the *actual* knowledge?

Bohm: It is the actual knowledge, and it may be coherent or not. If you don't know how to ride the bicycle then it's not right – the tacit knowledge is not coherent in the context of trying to ride it and you don't get the intended result. The incoherence becomes clear – you fall when you want to ride. Physically, tacit knowledge is where the action is coming from. And physical change depends on changing the tacit response.

Therefore, changing the map is a step abstractly; but unless it also changes the way the body responds it won't be enough. Someone could say, "You're not doing it right. You don't know how. You're turning in the wrong direction. You should turn to the direction you are falling, but your instinct is making you turn the other way." Now, all of that would help, but eventually it has to come into the tacit. You need the tacit knowledge which you get by actually riding, and then you are sort of correcting that knowledge. There is a *movement* in that tacit knowledge, which is that it is exploring possibilities. When tacit knowledge moves and finds a result in the direction you are aiming for, it just continues – it goes in that direction some more. That's the way it learns, until finally you find yourself riding the bicycle. Now, you may be guided by the abstract map, but you need the tacit knowledge as well.

Q: Is the tacit response abstract or concrete?

Bohm: It is concrete.

Q: The bike situation gives you immediate feedback, doesn't it?

Bohm: It is immediate feedback in the concrete, yes.

Q: But then how do we do that with other types of thoughts where we make an intellectual map? Do we also do that other than bike riding?

Bohm: Yes. The question is whether we can do this in *thought* as well as in bike riding, and so forth. If we could do it in thought, then perhaps we would get somewhere. Something would happen.

I am proposing that thought – to think – is actually a tacit process even more subtle than riding the bicycle. The concrete process of thinking is very tacit.

Q: Would it be incoherent first to explore tacit thinking in the same way as it would be in initially riding a bicycle? How are you using the word 'incoherent'? Can you have incoherence outside of thought?

Bohm: If your intention is to ride the bicycle and your muscles don't know how to ride it, then you fall. Therefore the whole response is not coherent to the end in view.

Q: So in that same way – in learning tacit responses, or thinking, or thought – it could be incoherent initially?

Bohm: When you are riding a bicycle and you don't know how, you are going to start incoherently. We will expect the same in thought, and will not be surprised to find ourselves being incoherent.

Q: Then how do we get this feedback?

Bohm: That is what we want to discuss. First I want to say a few more words about the body. There is a quality there called 'proprioception'. It means self-perception. 'Proprio' means 'self'. If you move your body, you are aware immediately that you have moved it. It is not a kind of conscious cognisance, but rather it's almost unconscious. You know that you have moved it, that something else has not moved it. But it's not a knee-jerk reaction either. You *know* that you did it. There is an awareness between your impulse to act and the act, or between the intention and the act.

Now, that is necessary for survival. If we didn't do that we would not be viable, because we couldn't tell the difference between things outside and inside, originating in different ways. There is the case of a woman we knew who suffered a stroke in the middle of the night while she was sleeping. Her sensory nerves were damaged, but not her motor nerves. Consequently,

she was able to move, but she couldn't tell that she was moving. In the dark, she accidentally hit herself. But she did not know that it was she who did it. Her automatic assumption was that somebody was hitting her. So then she defended herself, and of course the attack increased. It ceased only when the light was turned on, so that she was getting feedback through vision giving direct awareness of the relationship between the impulse to move and its result.

The point is that when you make a move, you have to know immediately what the result is without thought, without thinking, so that there is no time lag in the feedback. If it takes a lot of time it won't work. This is essential for survival. You see, proprioception is built into the physical movements of the body. It can be improved – athletes and dancers learn to make it better – but it is not perfect in anybody, because for many of your movements you are not aware of what you are doing. But still it is there.

What about thought? You have the impulse to think. Then thought occurs and all sorts of things happen – felts occur, the body gets tense, and so on. But if you don't see the connection, it would be like the woman who thought someone else was hitting her. She did something, and thought she didn't do it – that somebody else did it. To get that wrong is all the difference in the world.

So the question is: could we have proprioception in thought?

Q: Would you go over that again?

Bohm: We gave an example of failure of *physical* proprioception. That woman did something with her body – in the dark she accidentally hit herself. But then, because the sensory nerves weren't working, she immediately felt that she didn't do it. She automatically assumed that somebody else had hit her, which made her assume it was an attack.

Next we asked: what about thought? Could we have proprioception in thought? Suppose, for example, you think, "What a terrible person he is. I can't stomach him." That thought might be almost automatic – you don't even put it in words. But you could get a pain in the stomach. You might then say, "Something is wrong with my stomach. I must take a powder for my stomach."

That's a failure of proprioception in thought. Your heart rate may change, or other things may happen. Your emotions may arise as you think of that person who hurt you and didn't have due regard for you. You say, "Well, I have deep gut feelings, which must really be valid."

There is a device that can check the resistance of the skin, which shows that it changes according to your emotional state. If somebody says something to you causing you to react, about two or three seconds later the needle jerks, because it takes some time for the impulse to work its way down from the brain through the nervous system. You may not even notice you had some sort of emotional reaction – although if you have a strong one you will notice it – but it affects you either way. If it gets strong enough to be noticed you will say, "I had a gut feeling."

Now, the person said something to you three seconds ago, but you don't see the connection. You don't connect it, and you say, "There is a deep gut feeling, which is a sign that I'm justified in being angry." You use the feeling to justify your anger, and you say, "Here is an independent deep gut feeling, which shows that I'm perceiving something. It shows that my anger is right." Then those thoughts arouse more feeling, and so on and on. You see, without proprioception you cannot get this straight.

Q: When you are using the word 'proprioception' here, are you saying that without some sort of a feedback mechanism there is nothing that makes it honest?

Bohm: That's right. It can easily go wrong, because you then get a feeling. If you get a good feeling, in order to hold it you will say, "What a good feeling." Then the message to the intellect is 'find a thought that builds it up', which may be false. And vice versa – if there is a feeling the intellect doesn't approve of, it sends down a message to change the feeling. Or there may be a feeling that a certain thought is not very nice, and the message 'change the thought' is sent to the intellect. This gets all confused.

Q: Are you saying that proprioception in thought will give me good information about what is going on here, based on what is actually happening?

Bohm: Yes. Direct, immediate information – the same way you get direct information that you are moving your body, even if you are not seeing it. If you look at your body, you know when you are moving it. But if you close your eyes, you still know.

Q: So as it stands now, what we are using for proprioception is feelings and emotions – that's the way I get the feedback for myself. But those are not appropriate?

Bohm: Those come up from felts produced by thought, but we don't see it happening. It stirs up the memory somehow and we get some kind of response, but it is too slow and coarse and gross, and not clearly connected with thought.

Q: But you are saying we need something more subtle.

Bohm: More subtle; and also faster, with a more direct sense.

Q: Is there no way of knowing whether or not a particular response is actually based on reality?

Bohm: Later you can tell. You can figure it out and say, "I can see that it was my thought that did it." But by that time, everything is stirred up and you can't get it straight. Whereas if you had a proprioception of thought, then you would immediately say, "Well I had the impulse to think, I thought something, and then came that feeling. It was directly caused, and therefore that is all it means." Is that clear? 'Proprioception' is a technical word, and you may not like it. You can use 'self-perception of thought', 'self-awareness of thought', 'thought is aware of itself in action'.

If you get a feeling that does not come from a thought, then it will be taken to mean some direct perception of reality. And if in fact it was not produced by thought, that would be correct. Any feeling which is not produced by thought is part of your perception.

Q: Why doesn't the proprioception of thought operate? And how did that get separated from proprioception of the body?

Bohm: Thought is more subtle than the body movements. It is further in the brain, and so on, so it could easily have been lost. But let me suggest, for the sake of a proposal, that in the tacit process of thinking maybe there *is* proprioception, just as there is in riding the bicycle.

Q: But due to insensitivity we don't see it?

Bohm: Yes. But also, we don't see it because literal thought says there isn't any. It says thought is not doing anything.

Q: Do the assumptions that thought makes block its ability to see itself?

Bohm: Yes. Literal thought says, "I'm doing nothing but telling you the way things are. So the question of proprioception could never arise, because I'm not doing anything to be seen."

Q: So you are making two points here. Literal thought not only says that it's not doing anything wrong, but also says it is not doing anything at all. That could be on a more subtle level.

Bohm: That's right. It says it is just presenting things to *you* to judge. There is an implicit idea that there is a *self* who decides whether anything is going to happen when you think. In other words, literal thought has this picture implicit: "I'm telling *you* the way things are. *You* are there seeing, listening to me, and *you* decide what to do. If anything happens, it's *you* who has done it, not me." Do you see? That is a very important point. That is where the question of the ego begins.

Q: Can we go into that again?

Bohm: Literal thought supposedly just gives you the facts, tells you the way things are. Now, the theory behind that is that whether anything happens depends on *you*. 'You' will choose whether to do it or not.

For instance, literal thought tells you, "That fellow is a jerk. That's the way he is. It is up to you to decide whether you are going to react or not." But in fact, you have reacted long before you can decide.

Q: Because you don't realize that you *are* literal thought.

Bohm: Right. And, literal thought really operates. It is participating. By saying, "that fellow is a jerk," you immediately get the whole sense and you are reacting. The thought works before you can decide. But the theory behind it is that the thought does nothing, and it is *you* who decides what to do.

Q: Do you get the *thought* that that fellow is a jerk, or do you *feel* that he is a jerk, and then afterwards maybe you have the thought?

Bohm: It works both ways. But there was a thought beforehand: "He is a jerk." It went into the memory. Then right away it produces the feeling that he is a jerk, and you immediately see he is a jerk.

Q: So as soon as you see him, you have the experience of a jerk.

Bohm: That's right. That is how literal thought presents him to you. And you experience it that way. Then literal thought says, "*You* decide what to do with jerks."

Q: Literal thought decides that?

Bohm: Literal thought implies that it is up to you to decide what to do with jerks. It only tells you the way things are. He is a jerk, you see he is a jerk, you feel he is a jerk, you think he is a jerk. And then you decide what to do.

There is an assumption within literal thought that there is 'you' who makes the decision. The culture has built up this assumption over the ages – nobody produced it by himself.

Q: You said before that if something is not produced by thought, then it is direct, immediate information.

Bohm: Well, that certainly is our assumption. If you were in the jungle and you got a sense of danger, it might really be a first feeling – the first sense that you have perceived something. You get a feeling that there is danger and then you say, "Look! Let me look more carefully. What is it?"

Q: What if we feel this towards a person? What if you feel that being with a jerk in a room is the same danger as meeting an animal?

Bohm: You may feel that, but we have to notice that thought has played a big part in it. If you sense something in the jungle, then it may be an actual fact that some sign is pointing out danger. You may not know what it is, but it is there. And you begin to look more carefully. You are very aware. Therefore, that feeling of danger is part of perception.

Q: In the jungle it's quite clear. But in society we have created such an incredible bundle of responses that it is not really clear.

Bohm: That's right. And much of it is thought. If you say that fellow is a jerk, you will have a hostile reaction to him based on the meaning of the word 'jerk'. This will then create hostility in him, and it will go back and forth. It will get very unpleasant. So you are creating a bad situation just out of that thought.

Q: Suppose I am in a jungle and I sense something. I don't know what it is, and I'm alert. That's functional. Now, I come into a room and sense something, and then all at once I've got a jerk in front of me. What's the difference?

Bohm: The *thought* has told you that he is a jerk. You know that fellow; he's a jerk. Therefore all the responses there are very fast. They didn't come from perceiving anything, they came from some memory of what the word 'jerk' means. You could be in the jungle and say, "I remember this is a dangerous place," but that would be different from seeing the actual danger. It might be useful to remember it, though it is different from direct perception. But is it useful to remember that a certain behavior means that the person concerned is a jerk?

Q: Are we comparing the difference between physical danger and psychological danger?

Bohm: Yes. In this latter case the sense of danger may be produced by the thought.

Q: But what if he actually *is* a jerk? For example, let's say you walk into a room and see a creepy guy. There is a sense that this may be a fact. It's

neither emotional nor judgmental. If you go so far as to say that guy is dangerous, you may be interpreting one step too much. But there may be actually an accurate sensitivity that something is a little funny here, and maybe I'd better leave.

Bohm: But then comes the thought that he is a jerk, which disposes you to a violent reaction. And this shakes the whole system up, so that your responses from then on are confused and incoherent. For example, you don't really want to make an enemy of him, and yet this thought may provoke you to arouse his hostility.

Q: Does it have to happen?

Bohm: No, it doesn't. But it often does.

Q: Most of the time it does, yes.

Q: I think we are missing a key point you made a little while back: that the crux of this is that literal thought says it is an 'innocent tool', which is providing information to 'you' – to the 'self', which is not there at all.

Bohm: Literal thought is supposedly just telling you the way things are. But to present him as a jerk is an interpretation. It is not really accurate information at all. You can say, "This is a fellow who is difficult in this way or that way. Let's be careful." That's one point. But when you say, "he's a jerk," then, as I've already suggested, it has a memory-based emotional charge which gets in the way of all that.

Q: You've gone one step too far when you labeled him.

Bohm: And yet the underlying assumption is that the literal thought is not doing anything at all, but is just telling you the simple fact that he is a jerk.

Q: In the natural state, as it were, in the jungle, there is an action that occurs which we all need. It is very helpful for survival. But in so called modern society, what happens is that incoherence comes in. We tend to override the response of getting angry or fighting or running away, which would be the natural reaction to perceived danger. We tend to jam the mechanism by overriding that.

Bohm: Well, we more or less have to in order to maintain civilized society. We can't have that kind of thing going on.

Q: But then that creates incoherence in the body.

Bohm: Yes. The whole system becomes incoherent. It all gets jumbled up and muddled, and the thing goes wrong. Now, we have to find a way. Suppose we were really proprioceptive about that. The whole response of the body would be sensed immediately, and we would see that the reaction doesn't have any point.

Q: When I am in the jungle and I get this sense, there is no image in that. It's almost as though it's a reality. I come into the room and I get a sense of a person, and at that point there is still no image. But then once I go into the image?

Bohm: But that happens automatically from the memory. It goes very fast. You don't see the difference between perception and memory.

Q: It seems as though to get the feeling, you create an image. It could be very difficult to just hold the feeling.

Bohm: That would be a question of *suspending* the image. For example, if we could suspend the image that someone is a jerk, things would be very different. Such an image interferes with the coherence of thought. That sort of image is wrong, and it prevents you from looking at the thing that has to be looked at.

Q: Could it be that the closure we make is the thing which says we *know* what is going on, instead of allowing something to be?

Bohm: That is what literal thought says: "I'm telling you just the way things are."

Q: So this man has no chance to be anything but a jerk. We made a closure. We said, "that's it."

Bohm: And that has also affected the whole system so that it isn't working right from then on.

Q: Isn't the error more fundamental? Literal thought says, "*I* am telling *you*." So there has been a split. There has been some kind of a separation.

Bohm: That's right. That is the deeper error, which is that thought is already implicitly supposing there is a distinction between 'me' and 'thought'.

Q: You say that there is the assumption in tacit thought that literal thought and 'me' are separate. That point is confusing. Are you suggesting that somewhere in concrete tacit thought there may be – within that same realm, active but covered – the proprioception that would clear it up?

Bohm: Yes. I'm suggesting that at the actual level which thinking emerges in tacit process, it is a movement. And therefore, in principle that movement could be self-aware. Movements of the body are in principle self-aware, without a self to be aware of them. Maybe movements of thought are also. But the thing has become muddled by all this other kind of thought and images, and so on. I'm trying to show that there is a possibility for self-awareness of thought; that the concrete, real process of movement of thought could be self-aware. But our attention is not on that – it is on a lot of other content that is getting in the way.

Q: Suppose we are in tacit thought and content comes up. If we get caught in the content, then we have sort of bypassed that whole possibility. But if we see the process, then we may not get caught. We may have content come up, but we will not be caught by it. We will see the process, with content emerging along the way.

Bohm: Yes. We will sense the connection between the content and the process and the impulse to think or to do, or whatever. The action begins in some impulse or some intention. According to Eccles, there is some neurological activity before we are even aware of intention, and then the intention comes in. So the impulse probably is generated from the whole, and it begins to act.

In principle, it should be possible for that process to be *self-aware* at the level of process – not to bring in a 'self' who is aware of it. Therefore, when the content appears you would say, "Well, that's content." An example could be that if you *know* you are thinking and you decide to think of an ogre, it

doesn't frighten you, because you know that you have produced that ogre by thinking. But if suddenly it happened automatically, you would say, "There is an ogre and it frightens me." For a child, it may happen that way.

Q: We are not talking about changing any of this, because trying to change any of it – like reactions – could distort the whole process. We are talking more about introducing a kind of awareness that sees it all happen.

Bohm: Yes. There is an awareness which is without a self. It is *self*-awareness of the movement of thought, without an entity called 'the self' who would be aware.

Q: Would it be an oversimplification to say, "As one might see the snake for the rope, you see the jerk for the human being."

Bohm: Well, something like that. After all, fundamentally you have to begin with the fact that he is a human being, and then that there are some things you don't like about him, and so on. But you need to see that the image of a jerk creates hostility and violence, and therefore distortion – it calls for all this.

Q: You talk about incoherence in thought as consisting of a conflict between intention and result. When we have the thought of the person as a jerk, it is not our intent to have a sore stomach. But that is the consequence.

Bohm: Nor is it generally our intent to make a big fight with him, nor to spoil something that we want to do, or whatever.

Q: So when we make the instantaneous connection between that thought and its unintended result, what we have to do is either say we want that result – we actually want the sore stomach – or we have to change the thought.

Bohm: But we can't, because we don't see the connection. We think that we are seeing a jerk in front of us – that that is the way it is, and we have to respond to *that*. That seems to be the fact we must deal with.

Q: Could we speed up the perception of the connection between the thought and the result?

Bohm: It may be that that is natural. I wonder if the mind doesn't have proprioception built in, in the same way that the body has – that in the tacit process there is self-awareness. That may be the very nature of mind.

The essential thing is that the body process is a movement, beginning with an impulse and going on to a result, and you sense it as it develops. Now, thought is also a movement; if it is a process, it is a movement. But thought doesn't treat itself as a movement. It treats itself as truth – as just being there, telling you the way things are.

Thought is a movement, and perhaps that movement is self-aware. In principle it could be, except that all this muddle is going on so it can't work – like the lights of Las Vegas, which prevent you from seeing the universe. You might think those lights are the most important thing in the world, because they are so powerful and they fill your consciousness. But something very subtle may be far more important.

Q: If you are attentive enough or sharp enough to see this activity, you are certainly not going to be worrying about whether this guy is a jerk.

Bohm: No. If you really see this, you will say it's not terribly important. But the trouble is that the whole history and the vast number of programs on the memory jump automatically into operation.

Q: If I'm that attentive, I will go into the room and I'll see that *I* am the jerk.

Bohm: The point is that we *don't* have that attention. Somebody could say, "If I were only attentive to the stars rather than to these lights, I would see something of the universe." But suppose these lights are on, and are filling up the whole area. We have to turn them off somehow – the lights of violence.

Q: It is this whole activity of thought that keeps it from seeing itself.

Bohm: It creates disturbance, noise, violence, lights, flashes.

Q: You can see that in the body. When people get drunk or take drugs, the proprioception doesn't really operate. They can injure themselves and not be aware of it, and have movements that they have no control over.

Bohm: Yes. And leprosy is of that nature. The nerves get deadened, and the person doesn't know what he is doing. He actually damages himself because he exerts too much force. He is too violent, really. And so the troubles of leprosy come from the overuse of power by the person who has it, because his nerves don't give him the pain that he should get. He is not proprioceptive, you see. That has been finally demonstrated by people who have studied the disease.

Q: We come back to this sensitivity that we were talking about. Sensitivity is the process of undoing all this terrible energy that makes it so we can't see.

Bohm: We have to become sensitive to the violent process which is creating insensitivity. And to change this intellectual map opens the possibility. We already have an intellectual map which distinguishes muscles from thought. It says that muscular movement may be proprioceptive, but it says thought is very different and could never be aware of itself. In one sense it cannot be – not in the sense of the abstraction. But in the sense of its concrete actuality – or process – it could be.

As I've said, thought is a movement, and movement is a very subtle affair. We have a friend who had a degenerative disease from childhood, so he can't move; he has almost no movement. And yet he teaches movement at the university in Telaviv, and at other places as well. The question is: how can he do it?

Q: Do you mean he teaches movement like a dance class?

Bohm: No, not exactly. He teaches some sort of essential features of movement. In other words, he teaches something to people which helps them in their movement.

Q: Like a theory of movement?

Bohm: No.

Q: Sensitivity?

Bohm: Sensitivity probably. In other words, the beginning of the movement – the impulse to move, and so on – has a structure which he can work on, even though he can't move his muscles.

Q: He still has the impulse.

Bohm: Yes, that's the essential feature. But, you see, we don't pay much attention to that – that there is the impulse to move, and there is the movement. When we don't understand our muscles very well, as we usually don't, then we can't really carry out our movements properly. For example, there are certain individual movements of our fingers that we generally can't do; we can't get the right impulse. Somebody trained in piano playing gets it. Likewise, if we have an impulse to move and that impulse is not very sensitive, then it will create a movement which we don't know too much about. We might know that it is a movement; but if we have become sufficiently insensitive with thought then we might not even know that.

Q: So, there is an impulse behind thought.

Bohm: An impulse to *think*, right.

Q: And if we could maintain attention to that impulse, we might catch it?

Bohm: Yes. Did you ever have the intention to think? Can you describe it?

Q: Well, I say that I'm going to think about something.

Bohm: That already expresses the fact that you have the intention. But what made you say it?

Q: When I don't understand something.

Bohm: So it was your not understanding that made you say it. But then there was a kind of impulse that was in there meaning: "I don't understand, therefore I'll think." There was an impulse that started you thinking, similar to an impulse that gets your hand to move. Suppose you say, "I want to reach this object so I must move my hand." What actually happens is that you have an impulse to move, your hand moves, and you immediately know that this all happened.

Q: Can there be no thought without the impulse?

Bohm: There is the thought which just responds automatically – out of habit. But there must be an impulse to *think*. I am saying that the thinking process certainly requires an impulse. And probably there is also a more subtle impulse from the past that stirs up thought.

Q: You might sense the impulse to move out of the path of a car. But are you suggesting that there is a thought that gives rise to the impulse to think, which is probably more subtle, and that that could be apprehended as well?

Bohm: Yes. Such an impulse may arise either from perception of the necessity for it, or it may arise automatically from implicit thoughts in the program. Or from some mixture.

Q: But in either case, it may actually be possible to sense in some way the impulse to think?

Bohm: Yes. It's a thing you could try. You say, "I must think," so it seems reasonable that there must be an impulse to think which led you to say that.

Q: Does the actual verbalization imply that?

Bohm: If you say, "I must drink water," the impulse arose out of thirst. When you say, "I must think," it suggests something similar.

Q: Does the verbalization have its source in that same impulse?

Bohm: The verbalization may express the impulse. And it helps to define it at the same time.

Q: I can imagine the impulse to watch the process, but actually to catch these automatic thoughts seems impossible. I mean, there will be an impulse to catch them as they have already happened; but would it be possible *before* they arise?

Bohm: We may be making it too difficult. I'm saying that the first point is just to look at it. That may be too difficult, but it may not be. We are not answering it, but sort of feeling around.

Q: Wouldn't there would have to be a place of non-impulse first? The feeling of being uncomfortable seems to come from something that arises before the awareness of uncomfort.

Bohm: If you feel uncomfortable, you may have an impulse to get up. Or you may feel uncomfortable, and you decide you have to think about what is behind this feeling. You see, you may catch yourself suddenly thinking about something and find there is some feeling that is making you want to do it. Or you might discover that something requires thinking – a problem would be an example.

Q: All I'm saying is that this impulse to think must arise from a non-impulse state.

Bohm: At first you may have no impulse to think, or relatively little.

Q: So the sensitivity that you have been referring to would be in that area of watching the impulse. I can sense the impulse where the proprioception arises. But I don't think it is important to have to see where all the images come up; I think it is the impulse for the process that is important.

Bohm: Yes. We have to be aware of the impulse in connection to the consequence – as with the impulse to move the hand and the movement that results.

Q: What is the impulse that is behind that? I mean, why even be aware of the disorder that exists?

Bohm: We may simply want to begin to see if we can find proprioception somewhere.

Q: I understand that. But why should we even want to take that step? In other words, isn't that an impulse? And what is behind that?

Bohm: You might have an impulse to take the step as well. We develop an impulse because we have talked about it for a while and we see the importance of it. That is the way things almost always happen. You don't consciously decide that you are going to do it. The impulse comes from sources you can't

specify. As Eccles has shown, it probably works in the brain before you are conscious of it. Then it appears, and you become conscious of it, and a little later the results come. And sometimes results come *before* you are conscious, as Eccles also showed.

So just simply as a kind of exploration you could say, "Let's see if we can see this process. It may not do anything. I don't know. But it seems to be relevant."

Q: As our thinking functions now, usually it seems as if it is almost an automatism which occurs. I think you may be suggesting that if we have the interest in it and start looking at it, it may slow down. And if so, it is possible that its own nature – or the way in which it arises all by itself – might become visible.

Bohm: Yes. You could find yourself getting into a train of thought and you might say, "I shouldn't be getting into this." But how did you get into it? You may find that there is a certain *feeling* which gets you going, and then it sort of stirs things up, and that that sustains the feeling.

Q: There could be some little stimulation which you are quite unaware of, and then the thing comes out of there.

Bohm: Yes.

Q: Is this impulse going to be aware of itself?

Bohm: It is something even more subtle that might be aware of itself. This information is some of what enables the mind to get into the connection between the impulse and the act. But the *awareness* of that is probably in the tacit process.

The movement itself is being produced in the tacit process, which ultimately we are not really conscious of. But there are various things – subtle cues that we can be aware of in ordinary consciousness – which help move us in that way.

Q: Is the impulse the next step past the tacit?

Bohm: The impulse is already a slight explication of the tacit, yes. It has not yet reached words or thoughts or anything like that.

Q: But the impulse is not part of the tacit? It's the next step?

Bohm: It is *unfoldment* of the tacit.

Q: How would you describe the impulse to think that somebody is a jerk?

Bohm: It must be part of the background of your thought that such and such behavior means he's a jerk. You might find that you want to think that. Or it is a habit, it feels more comfortable thinking that. Or he annoys you, and you can get back at him in your mind that way. All of that sort of thing may give rise to an impulse.

It is very subtle. A certain kind of discomfort may give rise to an impulse to think something that will relieve the discomfort – just as it may lead you to move the body to relieve the discomfort. If the body is uncomfortable, you get an impulse to move in the direction of comfort. Likewise you may get an impulse to think in the direction of comfort, or security, or whatever it is.

Q: Away from discomfort.

Bohm: Yes.

Q: It's almost as if there is a thought process on top of a thought process. I'm looking here, and in some sense that is a thought process because I can function within this room. And then one particular thing that was looked at calls up the feeling, "This isn't quite right." But it isn't known that that second thought process has happened.

Bohm: Among the things that make it difficult is that the thought process may be literal and say "I'm only telling you the way things are, there's nothing to look at." You have to realize the participatory nature of all thought in order to make sense of doing this.

Q: Rationalization?

Bohm: Rationalization is participatory too. But if you suppose that thought does nothing and that *you* do everything, then there is no point at all in raising the question of proprioception of thought.

You see, thought itself has a tacit theory about how it works, which is misleading and implies that there is no need for this at all. That assumption implies that there is no need for self-awareness of thought, because thought isn't doing anything at all. *You* are doing everything.

Now we begin to realize that we are *not* doing everything. It is happening, like the weather. It's being done *to* us. And there is a lot of resistance to seeing that, if you think of it, because we like to believe that we are doing it – some of the time, anyway. But at least a large part is being done to us; it is thought just working that way. And even thought that is correct has that nature – it is a movement, it is not truth. It is not something transcendental, or anything like that.

Q: I'm concerned about cause and effect here. Things are happening to us. That is, we are not causing them to happen. But in the example of the thought, "I don't like this person," and the resulting bad feelings in the stomach – in that case the thought gives rise to the physical problem. And that is something that we have in fact done to ourselves, because it is our thought which created that physical problem.

Bohm: Yes. We have done it in a way, but mainly insofar as we have subscribed to the notion that we have chosen our thoughts intentionally.

Q: Also, I'm thinking that the need to look for this initial impulse, the need to be aware of all this, arises out of incoherence. If we were functioning perfectly and coherently all the time, and everything we intended always came about, there wouldn't be any need to explore this.

Bohm: That's true. But we know that thought cannot do that, because it is incomplete.

Q: And I think that I first become aware of incoherence by being aware of physical manifestations, the pain. I'm wondering about the solution to that. Is all this search for the initial impulse necessarily going to have to be retroactive? In other words, when you are already past the impulse and you have the bad feelings, do you have to go back and go through it?

Bohm: No. You don't have to. That's the point. The bad feeling *regenerates* the impulse to think some more. So you are always doing it. It is like looking at a stream which has a source where it is beginning and an end where it is flowing out – rather than going back to the past, to the temporal beginning of the 'stream'. However, in this stream the cause becomes effect and effect becomes cause. It is reciprocal causality, and not linear causality.

Q: But what if I'm conscious of the fact that I have created this discomfort in myself because of some thought I had about this person?

Bohm: You didn't do it intentionally, you see. It was some sort of automatic process. You were not aware of what you were doing.

Q: But is it possible through thought to discover that that's what I have been doing, and to change?

Bohm: Well, that's a delicate question. We will have to go into what that means carefully tomorrow. But the quick answer is that it is not that simple. The first thing is that we don't just have cause and effect, but the effect becomes a similar cause. They keep each other going, like the Jewish and Arab nationalism. So you cannot break into that cycle – not directly. You can't just say, "I'm the cause and I'll change that," because I am also the effect. I'm both. You have to get beyond that division of cause and effect, as you have to get beyond subject and object. You have to get beyond some of these divisions that thought is bringing in all the time.

Q: So there will be discomfort and that will create an impulse to watch the process doing its thing.

Bohm: This process has been happening for thousands and thousands of years, and generally speaking humanity hasn't gone beyond it. I'm saying that it is only when we call attention to this by a careful looking at it, and see the meaning of it, that this impulse to watch may arise.

People have been suffering this process throughout history, and didn't look at it because they accepted the superficial way thought was presenting it – that this is the way things are. Now we have gone into it very carefully, and have

given it another meaning, which reveals that our thought has been doing something pretty unintelligent. And therefore, that may give rise to the impulse to change it.

Q: In a sense you are saying that we are making a new context which allows for a different possibility.

Bohm: Yes. Ordinarily people don't think that the way thought has been presenting things is unintelligent at all. They think it's just the way things are. It's what everybody does, it's inevitable, and that's the way it should be.

Q: So the impulse comes first?

Bohm: No. You see, we have been making a long and somewhat intellectual analysis, and showing by inference that what we have been doing all along is pretty unintelligent and not really necessary. And if we don't want to go on doing it, then we will begin to get an impulse that we would like to stop this.

Q: The impulse isn't simply to save one's own neck, because that hasn't worked.

Bohm: Right. It is an impulse that comes from seeing that this pattern is unintelligent and destructive and unnecessary. Then very naturally you begin to say, "I have an impulse that it would be good to change it if I could."

Q: But, to take that further, I ask *why*.

Bohm: One simple reason would be: "Well, I don't want to do all this stupid stuff and get in all this trouble." Or, "I'm missing a great deal, and maybe I'm missing the real meaning of life." All of those kind of reasons.

Q: Is it a self-interest thing?

Bohm: In a way, yes. But you see, if it is, it's a broader notion of the self. I'm saying that I am interested in coherence, and that I see that this sustained incoherence which defends itself is pointless, futile, and without meaning. Why should I go on with it if I don't have to?

Q: We suggested before that the potential for coherence is innate.

Bohm: Yes, except we are doing something stupid that stops it.

Q: Well, if something is innate it has a tendency to want to be that way overall.

Bohm: We do have a natural inclination to want to be coherent. I think that is built into us. We have a natural wish for coherence, just as we want food when we're hungry, or health, and everything like that. We may have, therefore, an impulse to begin to look into this to see if things will change. We don't want to go on with all this. We don't have to. That is the suggestion.

If we don't want to go on with our sustained incoherence but we *have* to, then there is no way out. Many people say, "I would like this to change but there's no way." Therefore they don't go any further.

Q: But then this stream, this incoherence, is moving along. And I see that it is functioning poorly. So that is like being proprioceptive. I see a bad functioning, and so it creates another impulse – or the same impulse to watch the process.

Bohm: The impulse is *arising.* And as a result of all that we have been perceiving and saying and thinking and feeling, and seeing how pointless and self-defeating this all is and how we really want something else, we have a *new* impulse. But unless we had seen all this, there would be no way to get that new impulse.

Q: Perhaps it's not really that we have a new impulse. But the impulse which we always have – to not suffer – is pointed in a new direction.

Bohm: That's right. It is aroused and stronger and pointed. There is then some possibility of its working.

Q: So are you suggesting that that activity is taking place in that same tacit area?

Bohm: Yes. It is in the same tacit area that all those other things are taking place.

Q: What about the smoker who has the impulse to stop because of new information about cancer, and yet the person can't?

Bohm: It may stop him but it may not, because he doesn't understand all that we are talking about – about how his thought creates discomfort and the need to smoke. Do you see? Addiction is a complex process. We have discomfort, and one way to relieve it is by endorphins, which could be released by thinking comforting thoughts. But suppose you are used to relieving the discomfort by smoking. Then there is a feeling of discomfort when you think of stopping, or when you are stopping, which gets so powerful that it creates an impulse to smoke.

So merely seeing the danger doesn't stop it. But it may create an impulse to go further, and say, "I've got to go into this." If you merely try to oppose the smoking it will become a kind of violence. The right impulse would be to say, "I have got to look into what is behind all this."

Q: Is what we are talking about kind of zeroing in on what meaning is?

Bohm: It is a question of meaning, yes. The meaning is finally what determines the impulse.

Shall we start tomorrow morning at the usual time?

SUNDAY MORNING

Bohm: We talked about several things in the session last evening. We discussed proprioception, whereby the body is aware of itself and gets immediate information – it directly apprehends its own movements. And the question was raised as to whether the processes of thought could have a similar sort of proprioception. Such a perception would let you be directly and immediately aware of the activity of thought along with the meaning of thought. But our present literal thought implies that there is no need for such a perception because thought isn't supposed to be doing anything – it is regarded as just presenting 'facts' and leaving them for *you* to judge. We also discussed tacit knowledge – and in the level of tacit knowledge there are the unconscious *assumptions* which we wrongly take to be 'facts', and which are the unspoken basis for our actions. We said that any meaningful movement toward coherence has to take place in that tacit area, rather than merely in the level of abstract thought. And then we talked about impulses, saying that an impulse is the beginning of the unfolding of the tacit, and that it begins below the level of verbal thought or conscious awareness. I suggested that the intellectual process of making a sort of 'map' of the nature of thought might lead us to an impulse to see whether it is possible for thought to act coherently.

Now, before we go on, are there any questions that anybody would like to raise?

Q: What about a very young child? The child seems to have impulses even before he can think or talk.

Bohm: Those are coming from knowledge that is already tacit in the child. And he is constantly adding to that tacit knowledge from his experience. He learns very early to recognize his parents, for example. That recognition becomes part of his tacit knowledge. It jumps up without his having to think about it – such as happens verbally later when he learns his name.

Now, suppose the child sees some bright objects. One of those might be a fire, which he has never seen before. He reaches for it because he has the memory of many bright objects which gave him pleasure. But this time he burns himself. This experience would then leave a memory of both pleasure and pain – the pleasure of a bright object, and the pain of burning himself. The next time he sees a fire, the anticipated pleasure is the impulse that makes him reach. And the anticipated pain is the impulse to stop. So he's sort of balanced; he is suspending the action.

This state of suspension might cause the whole impulse to turn back into the memory. The impulse to act would then be turned into the impulse to search the memory for an indication of what would be a right action. He might make such a search and find a memory that fire was pleasant when he wasn't too close and painful when he was closer. And in this way, he finds a solution. Then the next action is to move a reasonable distance from the fire – not get too close.

Thus, something pleasurable may give rise to an impulse to act, and something painful may give rise to an impulse to stop. But the two together will then give rise to an impulse to turn around the original impulse to act. We call thought 'reflection', which means 'turning around'. We may say that the impulse to act outwardly is reflected into an impulse to turn inward to search the memory. That impulse comes out again as a reflection; and if what comes out is not satisfactory, the impulse goes right back in again, to keep on reflecting until a solution is found. Now this suggests pretty convincingly that thought – elementary thought anyway – goes by some sort of impulse to search the memory. As that develops further, it may also contain an impulse to ask a question, or to do other things such as to watch for incoherence.

Q: Could we say that thought has the impulse to stimulate the intellect?

Bohm: That is what it does. The first impulse is to search the memory. That is the beginning of the stimulation of the intellect. If the memory doesn't have an answer, then you need an impulse to do something else – let's say in a more creative way.

Q: What we are doing then is trying to see this impulse in action?

Bohm: That's right.

Q: One of the mistakes that might need to be examined is the assumption that thought ends in our body. Is there not a larger thought?

Bohm: If we want to talk about something larger, we can say that the thought goes out into the group and comes back to the individual. But it is still basically the same general process of thought.

Q: If we search only within our body for this impulse, we may be missing a lot.

Bohm: Yes. Suppose I ask you a question. The impulse comes from me in the first instance. Then you might answer before you even have time to think; but this means that you develop an impulse from what I say. The memory responds so fast that you can hardly notice it as an impulse.

Q: I had been trying to particularize the impulse as a little spot – like a button that was being pushed, or something. Now I'm seeing that this impulse is a big *huge* movement.

Bohm: Yes. For example, Eccles showed that you may have an intention to do something, but that there is electrical activity going on in the brain before you actually know the intention. And heaven knows from where that ultimately gathers. But more immediately, part of it may gather from the memory or from what somebody said or from some yet larger context. This begins to show that our traditional mental picture, which says that *'I'* decide everything that is going to happen, is not right.

Q: Doesn't this seem to be the error?

Bohm: Yes. You see, it's an on-going process.

So you have all these impulses. And you can begin to watch them, or you can even bring them up deliberately. If you go into anger, for instance, and stir up the words that make you angry, the feeling you get in the solar plexus or the chest or wherever is, in effect, an impulse to keep on thinking those

thoughts. Thus the cause becomes effect, and effect becomes cause. You can't make a linear chain of cause and effect. You can't say, "Let's find *the* cause, and get rid of the effect," because what we have called 'the effect' is already also the cause. So we need another approach. Somehow you have to approach cause and effect together.

Q: It's more like a net or a web, where a vibration in one part of the web vibrates throughout the whole.

Bohm: Yes. It all goes together. Cause becomes effect, effect becomes cause. It all gets set up as a constant process – in which they are opposed to each other, or balancing each other. It is a constant process.

You don't necessarily have to go back to the past. That is another mistake you could make – to think that you always have to find the cause in an impulse you had in the past. In any case, you can find at most a memory of it, because the original impulse is gone. But there is a similar actual impulse right *now,* because this is a *continuing* process. Cause and effect are together in a continuing process, therefore this impulse is *present.*

Q: Like two cymbals when you clap them together. You can call one cause and one effect, but it's the noise that counts.

Bohm: There are two sides. One is called 'cause' and the other is called 'effect', and you can turn them around.

Q: Is there a way of drawing a picture or of defining what an impulse is? I mean, is it a physiological occurrence, or is it a mental occurrence, or what?

Bohm: It is indicated by a kind of a *feeling* you get that makes you want to do something. Sometimes you can catch it.

Q: Is it just a feeling?

Bohm: Another word for it is 'urge' – it's an urge.

Q: Then it is more mental than physical?

Bohm: The word 'impulse' means 'impel' – it is pushing you. We discussed thought: thinking and thought, feeling and felt – thinkings and thoughts, feelings and felts. I could introduce two words here, just to help us in thinking about this. Instead of the word 'impulse', we could use the words 'impellings' and 'impelleds'. There is an *impelling* that goes on in the present moment from the fresh perception. There are all the *impelleds* in your memory, which also operate. But it is hard to distinguish them. Consequently, you may take an impelled and judge it to be an impelling.

We even use the word and say, "This is an impelling reason." Suppose you have an impelling reason to do something. That suggests that out of such an impelling reason arises an impulse which is impelling you – pushing you. You get a feeling of being 'pushed' – of being 'urged', or even a 'drive'. These are different words for this same sort of thing.

Q: Would impelleds be particulars that we have as memories? And impelling would be broader?

Bohm: As I've already said, impelling is the present process. What you perceive right now may impel you to do something; it may therefore be called an *impelling*. But it may be that what you perceive evokes an impelled from memory.

Q: So conditioning doesn't come in until after the impulse?

Bohm: The impelled may be part of the conditioning. If you are programmed with an impelled, then when something happens or when you perceive something, an impelled jumps up and you are pushed. You have a compulsive urge. To *com*pel and to *im*pel are related. They have the same root.

Q: But didn't you say that it had nothing to do with the past?

Bohm: I said that you don't have to go back to an original impulse in the past to understand this, because it is constantly being recreated.

Q: What is the original impulse?

Bohm: We don't know. This process has been going on for ages. One impulse leads to another to another. It's like a stream – it's just going on.

The point is that the whole process is self-generated – it goes on by itself.

Q: But it comes out of our conditioning?

Bohm: And it also adds to it. Every experience that goes into the memory adds some more.

Q: So every time there is an impelled you create more conditioning – you add more to that layer in which we are stuck.

Bohm: Yes.

Q: In a certain context, couldn't this impulse – or being impelled – be like a servo system that sets up stability on a ship? If a wave hits the ship on one side, the servo system immediately brings the system back to stability. If something happens on the other side it immediately brings the system back to stability.

The very basis of existence, which is manifestation, depends upon our ability to detect changes in an environment. Say I look over and that speaker isn't there. I immediately see that something is wrong, or that there is something I don't understand. Or I look around and God is in His heaven and all is right with the world – the trees and the sunshine are there. And the continuity of activity is what I expect to happen. I project into the future how we are going to end the meeting, and that we will then go back home – everything has a continuity. If something happens in this continuity which is not expected – not in the program – that brings in a shock, because there is a constant desire to maintain this continuity.

So in a sense we create the world every second by this constant desire to survive as an individual. If I don't create this context, this continuity, then I don't survive. I – this entity, which is 'me' – have to *create* me by this constant activity, by this tremendous expenditure of energy to maintain this image. The whole thing is happening a million sensory perceptions a moment, and each one has to be resolved in terms of its survival. Does that make any sense?

Bohm: Well, that is something we can come to discuss when we discuss the ego or the self. But what we were discussing here was the thought process that underlies that. What I mean by thought is not just the intellect, remember, but all the rest. And there is a whole process going on which may get involved in the urge to survive. There *is* an impulse to survive. This is part of the survival instinct. But then thought takes that up and begins to expand it, and makes all sorts of things survive which have nothing to do with your physical survival.

Q: I think he is talking about the survival of the ego.

Bohm: Yes. But this begins with the impulse to survive physically, which you could say is built into us.

Q: Not necessarily physically. The physical structure seems independent of this desire to maintain that self-image. For example, I'm trying to be, in a sense, intelligent. And I have to put on a show which maintains, in my opinion, what I think of myself – because I don't want to make a fool of myself. I want to maintain what I think 'I' should be. I have a whole set of criteria for being me, which is part of the world.

Bohm: Yes. It comes from the society.

Q: It's a constant *de*fense and *off*ense. I've got to maintain my 'divinity', so to speak. I've got to keep your distance from me. You can't insult me, and so forth. This whole set of criteria about what I demand in order for *me* to exist is insanity.

Bohm: Well, we have to go into all that. What is this entity? And what does it mean? Now, I say that we know that there is an inbuilt impulse to survive physically, and thought can take that up. I identify myself with the physical and with the mental. And it then seems that I have to survive with the internal image as well. So the impulse to survive can spread to the psychological image. We probably should come to that as we go along discussing the self, or the ego – which has got to survive, because there is the thought of the ***absolute necessity*** of its surviving.

Q: Which is a tremendous, tremendous force.

Bohm: Necessity is the most powerful force there is.

Q: Actually, that's the basis for the world, isn't it?

Bohm: The world of society. Yes.

Q: Which only exists in order that I can be me.

Bohm: That is what thought says. Now, what we are discussing is certain structures of thought which are not just yours – they are shared over the whole society. So we have all that. And all those thoughts contain impulses, or 'impelleds' – very compulsive impelleds. That is, you have a compulsion to think that way, which is part of the *necessity*. We may experience necessity as *inner* compulsion to go on with something. We have to get into that. Maybe we'll come to it a little later. But I think we have to discuss the nature of the self a bit more before we can go very far.

Meanwhile, we have to see that there is a process going on which is more fundamental than that self – that there is something underlying. It is in the whole nature of thought. To begin with, we are trying to get at that underlying process. And the self is part of that process.

Q: The self, in what context?

Bohm: In the one you were describing.

Q: The self-image?

Bohm: Yes. The self-image is produced by thought, and it is *part* of thought. Now, if we can see how thought works, that lays a foundation for seeing how the self-image works. But if you try to jump directly into the self-image, you have no foundation.

Q: How are we distinguishing between the *im*pulsion and the *com*pulsion?

Bohm: 'Com' means together. Somebody can compel you from outside, which means that he is pushing on you to do something. But he really is trying to drive you from *inside* as well. That is, the compulsion is exerted inwardly by

getting you to do it. So he is trying to take control of your impulse in a way. And you also have compulsive urges of your own, arising from memory, which can take control of other impulses – take priority over them. That is one of the means by which necessity works – it is the sense of 'not yielding'. A strong compulsion means 'don't yield', which means necessity.

Q: When you use the word 'compulsion', I have a reaction that says, "Be wary of this. Compulsions come out of our neuroticism."

Bohm: That's true. But a great deal of our thought *is* neurotic. I'm trying to point out that the general structure of human thought is now pervasively neurotic. That is the problem. If thought were not neurotic in this way, it would be very different. But the general structure of thought, which has evolved over a long period of time, is neurotic. It's not primarily the individual who is neurotic; basically, it is thought that is neurotic. The individual is infected with the neuroticism of thought.

Q: One of the neurotic aspects of thought is that I am an individual.

Bohm: In some sense you are an individual, and in some sense you are not. One of the main difficulties is that the self-image is mistakenly identified with individuality. However, your body is actually distinct.

Q: Isn't that what is causing the problem, though?

Bohm: It's not quite so simple. There is a confusion, as we will see, between the self-image and the body. They seem to merge.

Q: This thought we are talking about is a very large thought that I just happen to be a part of. It's not *my* thought.

Bohm: It's anybody's. It's the whole general thought. It's like viruses circulating around, which may infect anybody.

Q: The idea that I have my own thoughts is a little neurotic, isn't it?

Bohm: When you are sick you could say that it's your cold, your flu, or it's Asian flu, or somebody's flu. But actually it's just flu. The thing is that your

body nourished it. Similarly, your mind nourishes all these thoughts, even those that have harmful or destructive effects on the whole system. You could say that we have caught these neurotic thoughts and given them nourishment.

Q: Does neurosis actually mean a disease of the neuron?

Bohm: That's what the word means literally, but it probably doesn't actually mean that. The overall neurophysiological process is really upset by a neurosis, but you couldn't associate it to a single neuron.

Q: Are images on the neurons at all?

Bohm: The neurons will fire whenever there are images; they are inseparable. If you have a lot of incoherence, the neurons are going to be opposed to each other and wear themselves out, and so on.

Q: So it becomes a neurosis?

Q: We have a sense that we somehow invented thought. But you are saying it's just *there.*

Bohm: Thought invented *us*. I suggest that we turn it around.

Q: We use it because it's *there,* not because we want it?

Bohm: Yes.

Q: We don't even use it. It uses us.

Bohm: It uses us. We have not learned to use it as an instrument, except in a limited way. We can see what the difficulty is by watching how impulses, urges, compulsions, and all that go on. Thought produces impulses and impulses produce thoughts. In this way, cause becomes effect, effect becomes cause. There is no linear chain that says that I am the cause of my thought. But the whole tradition of our culture is that each person is the cause of his thought.

Q: The word 'impulse' and 'compulsion' confuse me. You aren't suggesting that impulse in and of itself is destructive?

Bohm: No. You can't live without it.

Q: And compulsion?

Bohm: That could be more dangerous. It usually has some irrational element in it.

Q: So impulse of itself may be fine. The problem happens when we are not sensitive to it, and it gets carried away into the intellect?

Bohm: The point is that thought has a wrong idea of how thought works. Thought says, "Impulses are *you*, and *you* are the cause of the whole thing. *You* choose your impulses. *You* choose your thoughts. *You* choose it all." Now, that is a wrong theory of this whole thing. And when thought has a wrong theory about how it works, that makes thought itself work wrongly.

Q: Even a good bit of our conditioning is not a problem in itself. The problem is our not being aware of it.

Bohm: Yes. We have to have conditioning – some of it, anyway. When you learn to walk or drive a car or learn a language, there is a great deal of conditioning. But there is also irrational incoherent conditioning.

Q: Couldn't you be conditioned to think that a particular type of situation may be urgent? That may not be a compulsion; it may be true.

Bohm: Yes. For example, if a child doesn't know about electrical wires he has to be taught that it is urgent to avoid them. There has to be an impulse in there to be aware. So we need some conditioning, but the problem is that it is not working coherently.

Q: Compulsion conveys the feeling that there is something lacking, that I *have* to do this in order to set things right. And that goes too far.

Bohm: Yes. It's violent, in a way. Compulsion has violence in it – undue use of force. There are various things that are 'undue' in thought; in this case it is the undue use of force. This compulsive impulse may be very subtle. You may not even notice it. A lot of little things go on in the mind – little

sensations, which in a way are little impulses, which we might assume are harmless little impulses.

But they may not be so harmless. They may be the impulses to think thoughts that are deceptive, such as the impulse to make things a bit easier. The way it works is that if you have an impulse to make things a little easier, then the mind searches for the way of making it easier. So the mind may search in this level of tacit thought, like the bicycle rider moving this way and that way, and when it finds a move that makes things easier it's as if it said, "Let's move a little more that way." However, that move to make things easier may be toward a thought which is *comforting,* but *wrong.* So there may be some very subtle impulses there which lead to self-deception. And self-deception turns thought into something very dangerous.

At a certain neurological level, there is instinctively the move toward whatever is pleasurable and away from what is painful. This is common at the animal level, and at the animal level it works fairly well. But then thought takes that up. Now, the difficulty is that thought can produce felts of pleasure and pain, from the memory. A certain thought produces a felt of pain, and then comes a demand, or impulse: "move it, get rid of it." Something takes place in this subtle tacit level, which makes thought work to find the move that decreases the pain. The whole process moves to a comforting thought.

So thought creates the problem of pain, and then tries to remove the problem – it makes another move to get rid of the pain. But the two moves don't cancel each other. They add up to self-deception.

Q: And these are the impulses that really need to be seen – not so much the bodily ones, but the ones where thought starts getting itself moving in a kind of self-deceptive action of, "I have this problem. I'm going to solve this problem." It seems neurotic, because thought doesn't realize that it is constantly creating the problem itself.

Bohm: Yes. That is the beginning of the whole neurotic structure. Freud called it the pleasure-pain principle. The basic principle at the animal level is pleasure-pain – toward pleasure, away from pain, at the level of tacit

movement. But with thought that gets into trouble, because thought can *produce* felts of pleasure and pain.

If you have a toothache, it may make sense to move to reduce the pain in some way. Or if your body is uncomfortable you may move to make it comfortable. But let's say that you have been hurt psychologically. You have pain, and you move to get rid of it. You say, "Well, I'll never allow myself to be hurt again that way." Or, "I'll never see that person again." You may tell yourself that the person who hurt you is wrong. You may think all sorts of thoughts: "I'll get even with him." "Revenge is sweet." The sweet thought of revenge removes the pain.

But that means that you are in trouble, because that may lead you on to some very dangerous actions. And if you don't act you are frustrated. Thought thus introduces the further pain of frustration, saying, "I ought to take revenge, but I haven't had a chance." Or else, "I shouldn't be taking revenge. But I want to."

Q: You are saying that we have set up our sense of pleasure-pain, and we are predicating our experience of pleasure on coming up with an image which gives us that sense.

Bohm: That's right. And as I said, that is the beginning of neurosis. Now, Freud mentioned the idea of the reality principle, which is that you ought to go according to reality rather than according to pleasure and pain. But the trouble is that people generally can't do it.

Q: In a way you can be forced to do it, in the sense that if you take codeine for a bad toothache and it makes you sick, then you have to stop taking it.

Bohm: That's true. Sometimes you are forced into the reality principle. And sometimes you aren't, as when you are addicted to drugs. But on the whole, the tacit movement, which is unconscious, is movement toward pleasure and away from pain – for example, to find thoughts that make you feel better.

Thus, if people are hurt they may think about revenge, saying, "Revenge would be sweet." That may make them feel better. But if they actually took revenge, they might well regret it, thus feeling pain. Or they might think, "I

won't take revenge because I might regret it or because it might be dangerous." But they are still hurt. It seems that no matter what they do, they don't get rid of the process in which they are hurting themselves.

Q: There's not much of a reality principle in psychological matters, is there?

Bohm: It appears very hard in these matters to get into *any* reality principle. We aren't even clear as to what this 'reality' would be.

Q: We think that the psychological matters are the reality.

Bohm: It doesn't seem to help in this area to talk about a reality principle.

Q: Do you think that Maslow's hierarchy of needs has any validity for the human being psychologically?

Bohm: There are needs. But our problem is that we are not clear on what we are doing. If I say, "I need revenge," that's what the immediate need seems to be right now.

Q: That's a status need. And Maslow thinks it's intrinsic to human beings to keep pressing for an equilibrium in status.

Bohm: I'm not sure it is intrinsic. It may be a way of thought. I say I need revenge because I've been hurt, I feel uncomfortable. If revenge is what I need, I've got to get it somehow. Or I could say, "I'll show them. I'll go somewhere else and get what I need."

Q: Or, you can kick the dogs.

Bohm: You can kick the dogs. None of this makes any sense. You are still hurt. The machine is still there hurting you.

Q: Is there a way of relieving it by some kind of further action?

Bohm: Yes. But because it is still on the program it acts again and again. You haven't gotten rid of the program. So the movement away from pain doesn't get very far.

Q: At that level, is it all self-deception that is operating?

Bohm: Basically self-deception – because you don't know the source of the trouble. You are treating the symptom and not the cause.

Q: So someone comes up with a great way that he thinks is going to alleviate the problem on the psychological level, but that actually only reinforces it.

Bohm: Yes. Somebody may say, "Look, we've been treated very badly. We want to have a war for revenge. It would be wonderful." Then they have a war. And it isn't wonderful.

Q: This concept of 'need' has quite a powerful statement in it. Does this 'need' that we're reacting to when we kick the dog really exist in the first place?

Bohm: Well, that is implied in the notion of necessity.

I wonder if we could introduce two new words – 'needings' and 'needeeds'. Say one of my *needings* now is that I am hungry. And there are also all the *needeeds*, which are on my program. I've been hurt in the past, and those needeeds are operating, saying I must get some relief. There are all sorts of ways of relieving it. One way could be revenge. I could say, "I'll show them. Maybe then they will apologize." But the thing is on the program. Instead of removing the program, we generally try to arrange our whole lives so as to relieve the pain that is coming out of that program.

Q: Is it a 'needing', or is it a 'needeed'?

Bohm: That is a fundamental distinction. Is it something in the now, or is it from the past?

Q: I'm still confused about what is the *ground* of the human being. Are there intrinsic needs? You are not saying that there are only the needs to eat and sleep, are you?

Bohm: No. There is more than that.

Q: What 'mores' are there?

Bohm: It would be hard to define them. But people need order, they need coherence, they need beauty, they need friendship and love. They need various things. But they don't need revenge. Not really. If you are hurt psychologically, that does not create a genuine need. But it is on the program that you need it. That is like the computer telling you that you need something.

Q: Doesn't being hurt come out of a need for order? It's not that you specifically want revenge, but you need to put back order. You have to correct the situation, whether by revenge if you are hurt or by getting food if you are hungry, or whatever. Maybe we mistake psychological order with physiological order.

Bohm: I think there is another order involved. It involves sensitivity to the difference between memory and actuality. Something has happened in the past, which has left a program. It operates and stirs up the nerves and makes you feel uncomfortable.

Q: And you want to find order.

Bohm: But you are going about it in the wrong way.

Q: But what if you see that you are in a state of needing order?

Bohm: The order you need is to get rid of that program.

Q: Then what you are imagining as the order that you want to get back to, may in fact be disorder.

Bohm: Yes. Because you don't see the difference between cause and effect. The program is the *source* of the pain, for the program can *produce* felts. But we don't notice that. Our tradition says that feelings are all genuine and real; and that when you *feel* the lack of something, you need it. But I say no – that's not always so. Some of these things are felts.

For example, you may say that you are 'itching' to do something. Now, this itch could be produced by felts, by the machine making your nerves itch. This sort of program in the memory remembers how to stir up the nerves that create an itch. In fact, you can create a physical sensation of itching by

thinking of an itch. You just think for a while and you can make the skin itch. Where does it come from? In the memory there is a program of how to make the nerves itch. It's remembered. And you fish around and feel around for a while, until finally by this tacit process you stir it up and then it starts to itch. And as it itches a little more, you move more in that direction and build it up.

Now, that has no meaning really. It's not a genuine need. Thus, you might say that your need is to stop this itch, and you would then scratch the skin. But the more you scratch, the more it's going to itch. So the real need is to stop doing this sort of neurotic thing – this crazy thing.

Q: What is your program for getting rid of these unwanted programs?

Bohm: There is no *program* for doing it. But I'm going to suggest things we can do which will help in that direction.

Q: Is it any use to ask how the unwanted program was started?

Bohm: We know how it started. It went into the memory. We did all sorts of things in the past – the whole human race. And it was remembered and passed on from one generation to another.

Q: Why is the child so easily printed, and then when we are adults it's so hard to re-print?

Bohm: That is the way it goes. The child is open – very impressionable. It has to be. And then the parents give it all these neuroticisms instead of giving it some sensible impressions.

Q1: Instead of the parent in some sense fostering that movement of openness, we teach the child to be closed.

Bohm: Yes. We teach it all these things we have been talking about.

Q2: But we have to – you can't keep a child from coming to conclusions.

Bohm: No, but we teach it to do all these wrong things, like nationalism and hate – all sorts of things like what we have been talking about. We don't

teach the child to understand the difference between thoughts and felts, and so on. We give the child tremendous confusion.

Q3: We hand children our conclusions, rather than letting them develop conclusions on their own that are only temporary for a particular situation. We impose on them, so they never find it out for themselves and go through that tacit learning.

Q2: I don't think that's true. I think it's *part* of the process. But even an infant forms some conclusions on its own, such as 'when mother is going to come'. You can't take a child and not see conclusions being formed.

Bohm: Well, some conclusions are formed; you have to form some. But the conclusions that cause trouble are those about the nature of the thought/felt process, and the meanings of all that – about being hurt, and about being angry, and about what sort of thoughts you should have and what sort of feelings you should have, and a vast number of things. All sorts of violence which is going on is impressed on the child.

Q: So are we saying that some conclusions are good and some conclusions are bad?

Bohm: The conclusions that are tentative and that could be opened up are all right. But many conclusions are absolute; for example, "You must never play with that sort of child because he is no good, he is poor, he is of the wrong group."

Q: Is the process deeper than that? Is there a natural state to form absolute conclusions that is not imposed from the parent?

Bohm: It is probably weak, but it's built up. There is *some* tendency toward violence – undue use of force. But the parent, by example and by teaching, can either bring it down or bring it up. Some slight inherent tendency one way can become very big if you keep cultivating it.

Q: You have to be careful even with a simple physical thing like not

touching a hot stove. You could show the consequence of touching the stove. But if you instilled an absolute fear of touching it, then you have gone too far.

Bohm: Many people think that we do overdo the amount of instruction children get. In more primitive groups they allow the children much more chance to find out for themselves, which means that there will be that much less arbitrary conclusion.

Q: But in our present society, mothers haven't even looked at their own fears and anxieties, and this is catching. The child picks it up non-verbally from the very beginning.

Bohm: Yes, it is non-verbal. Now, that is the key point. Remember that the real process of thoughts and felts and impelleds, and all that, is in the tacit non-verbal movement – like the skill needed to ride a bicycle. That is really where it happens. That is the subtle communication, because the attitude and the way people go about things is a direct communication to the non-verbal. And that is picked up without conscious thought. But if that is combined with words, then it really locks.

Therefore, the right education of children requires that parents be in the right state themselves, and that they have more or less reasonable ideas of how to present that to the child, and so on.

Q: Is the information that's being imparted secondary to the attitude?

Bohm: The two work together. The information which is right won't work if the attitude is wrong. The impulses are communicated by the *surroundings*. The child gets impulses from everybody and builds them up. The thing is that this is all going on in the tacit level.

How can we put it? This tacit level is constantly moving. We build it up. We condition it to move to something more comfortable, more pleasant. It creates discomfort, and then moves towards something more comfortable.

Q: Is that process of moving toward more comfortable thought something that the parents impose on the child, or communicate to the child? Or is it that the mind – for whatever reason – just naturally moves toward that?

Bohm: Well, there is a certain amount of natural tendency, but it's being built up by the way the parents are conditioning the child.

Q: That would seem to tie in with the comment that somebody made – that the mind may tend toward forming conclusions; because when you have a conclusion, then there is a certain *safety* within that limited closed system of the mind. You think you *know,* and there is apparent safety in that apparent knowledge.

Bohm: But it's not all that strong at the beginning. It is just a tendency, and it can either be built up or brought down. If a child is learning tacitly from the parent that we don't do a particular sort of thing, then it will gradually bring it down. Whereas if he is learning from the parent that that's the right way, then it builds up; it gets stronger.

Q: Absoluteness and conclusions are things that we *do* transmit to children, just by the strength of our convictions and the way we say things.

Bohm: As I said, the tendency to move toward comfort is meaningful at the physical level. But with *thought* it is generally not meaningful, because thought itself makes the discomfort and then moves toward comfort by introducing self-deception. Therefore, the right way would be for thought to stop making you uncomfortable.

We get into the habit of entertaining thoughts that make us uncomfortable, and holding them rather than going into them. It is ironic that it is the very desire for comfort that makes us hold to uncomfortable thoughts – because we don't want to be so uncomfortable as to look at them, and therefore we get stuck with them.

If we have a thought that we think is going to make us feel bad, the automatic process makes us move away from that before we even look at it. There may be nothing to it at all, but we have already assumed that it is going to be very bad, and therefore the thought is stuck there.

Q: When you say 'not look at it', look at what?

Bohm: Be aware. Be cognizant of what this thought is and how it is affecting the felts, and all that.

Q: Then it's not so much an analysis of thought, but rather an experiencing of how it is affecting you.

Bohm: In a healthy society, that would be spontaneous, you see.

I think that there is a natural potential for spontaneous proprioception of thought. It is very subtle. But it has been inhibited; otherwise you would just say, "Okay, there's a thought that builds up an image that's frightening, or uncomfortable. But since it's just an image, it is not very important." But instead you say, "I mustn't think of that." Or you don't even think it, but you start moving away. You can't keep your mind on it. If you try to put your mind on it, your mind moves away. It jumps, attention goes to something else, or you forget – constantly forgetting, constantly getting senses of anaesthesia and dullness. The brain is producing all that to prevent you from getting into that thought, because the brain is trying to protect you from what it regards as something very bad.

Q: That could also happen on a societal level, couldn't it? I once heard the term 'psychic-numbing' used with respect to the nuclear situation.

Bohm: Yes. It gets numb. Or else it gets very excited about something else instead. It darts. It jumps. It forgets.

Q: In some sense we are probably deeply immersed in that process right now, if I believe in our words – if I believe in this thinking as something tangible that's going to make things all right. I'm present here trying very hard to understand these words and put them together in a way that will then allow me to relax. And that very movement of trying to take hold of these words in this way is the stress that stands in the way of something opening up.

Bohm: It could be said that if we could just listen to the words without stress then something would open up, because they would then convey a meaning, and it would be sensed whether it is right or wrong. The whole

system responds to that meaning without any further attempt on our part to do anything. This is the important point.

Our whole culture teaches us otherwise. It says *we* are the ones who do it all. But, you see, *it happens* – if we can listen to the meaning. So *the important thing is to listen to the meaning.* The meaning provides a sort of a show, or picture or something, and the whole system is acting according to that. And if you find it is incoherent, you have to look at it.

Q: How can we get coherence if we don't find out whether your meaning coincides with what we presume the meaning is in our heads? We've got to get some coherence by seeing if we meet in some congruence. If we don't, your meaning can be one thing and we can have other meanings floating around. And there's no coherence at all.

Bohm: There is a way out of that. We can *suspend.* In terms of a dialogue, that happens collectively – we suspend *all* the meanings. We can just simply share the appreciation of the meanings; and out of this whole thing, *truth* emerges unannounced – not that we have chosen it.

The difficulty comes if you already have some meanings which are closed conclusions. Then these reject the meanings that don't agree with yours. So you don't really listen to them. You oppose them, or argue with them, and so on.

I'm saying that if all the meanings can come in together, we will be able to work out what the coherence is. As a result of this process, we may naturally and easily drop a lot of our meanings. But we don't have to begin by accepting or rejecting them. The important thing is that we will never come to truth unless the overall meaning is coherent. All the meanings of the past and the present are together. We first have to apprehend them, and just let them be. And this will bring about order.

But we don't trust this. We believe that 'we' have to control it. That idea is very firmly implanted in us. Parents have told us that, everybody has said it. But, you see, there is a whole process moving tacitly, which we do not control.

I am saying this for you to consider – don't accept it or reject it.

Q: So you are saying that we are looking for the coherence in the wrong place. We are looking for coherence in a chain of words, which is sort of meaningless. And it's hard to understand that the coherence is not going to be in a sequence of words.

Bohm: The words are merely conveying a meaning. We could go ahead and *say* that this tacit process, which we don't trust and hardly know about, *does* actually do the whole thing. But we have a 'picture' in which we *feel* that it is being done in *another* way.

Q: Is it that we tend to think linearly, which would involve time? Like riding a bicycle – it's not a linear process but we tend to think that way.

Bohm: It is not linear even as cause and effect, because cause becomes effect and effect becomes cause, and you can't keep track of that chain.

There is a process going on which *is* able to handle this. But we don't believe it.

Q: When you suggest that we find this in tacit meaning, it's like you have stood me on the edge of a cliff, and you have taken away what I have always used to find meaning. It's a very threatening suggestion.

Q1: The other day when you were talking about meaning, you used several words, one of which was 'significance'. Significance, as you pointed out, has the word 'sign' in it, and is like a sign pointing towards something. It seems that very often when we use the word 'meaning' we are talking about something extrinsic to the thing itself. For instance, we've been told what the meaning of money is. The meaning of a title and a position and a good job is that you are a good person, and so forth.

That kind of 'meaning' is something which is in effect a *conclusion*, which thought has attached to a situation or to an event. And perhaps in that sense, what was asked a few minutes ago – about having your meaning, her meaning, our meaning coincide – is asking for various conclusions in thought to coincide. But they are all actually separate from the thing itself. They are abstractions or images. And the meaning may not be in the abstractions.

Bohm: Yes. If you identify this meaning is mine and that meaning is yours, and so on, that's already a level of abstract thought.

Q1: What is *abstract* are the conclusions and values attached to whatever has happened, or is happening. Those conclusions are based on the particular felts and on the particular brains responding to what is happening.

Bohm: All the meanings are there together. The minute anybody says something, it is your thought, your meaning. It is added to all the other meanings. Even if you say it is somebody else's, it is still yours – just as my flu bugs are really yours once you catch them. They are not mine any more at all. However, it might well be that these flu bugs that you are nourishing are not compatible with your overall bodily processes. It has to be all worked out inside by the immune system.

Q2: Are we discussing the difference between symbolic meanings and tacit meanings? And do tacit meanings arise from an even deeper meaning that we may not know anything about?

Bohm: The meaning is basically tacit. And what we can say *explicitly* is only a very small part of it.

Q2: And most of what we can say explicitly is symbolic?

Bohm: Yes. The words are symbols, standing in for something.

Q1: Which gets back to your saying that significance is a sign – it's representing or pointing toward something.

Q3: Well, I'm still confused in this dialogue. Are you saying that if we listen to your words that there is some automatic way that your words will be accepted in our brains?

Bohm: Not accepted or rejected automatically, but understood – in the sense of seeing their meanings. And not just *my* words. Listen to anybody. When we come to the notion of dialogue, we'll see that everybody's words are on the same basis. We have to listen to them all and see what they mean.

Q3: Now, you just said, "see what they mean," but earlier you said one doesn't have to see what they mean. How does one learn without seeing what something means?

Bohm: Actually, I never meant to imply that one doesn't have to see what anything means. Perhaps when I said that it would be enough to really *listen* to the meanings of everybody, this may have wrongly created the impression that I wanted to exclude *seeing* the meanings. But what I really wanted to say is that you don't take a defined action to see what anything means – not any conscious, willed action. Seeing what it means is a natural potential.

Q3: But this can be realized only if you have some background. A child of four could not begin to see the meaning of what has been said here, because it doesn't have enough background to make any coherence out of it.

Bohm: But you *have* the background. We have the common language. We know the meaning of the language, and from there on we can see the meaning of what is being said. And if we nevertheless lack some of the background, we can discuss and find out where we lack it and perhaps remedy this lack. But the first thing is to let the process work, to see what it *means*. If you find that it's puzzling, you can ask a question to go further. The main point I want to make here is that seeing what it means is not done by an entity called 'me', but that it is a natural potential of the whole system.

Q3: Without background, the system is not going to get much meaning.

Bohm: The system already contains background. It is by now part of the system.

Q3: You call it a system, and you don't want to use the word 'self'. But there certainly is a built-up background of identity – I don't care what you call it.

Bohm: Well, we will discuss that – what it means – later. But the background contains some information that you need, to be able to understand. We will assume that that is there. We understand the language and a great

many things in common. As I suggested before, if some of it is missing we have to be able to communicate about it, so that eventually we may share what has been missing.

Q4: Is the background the conditioning? Not that that is necessarily bad.

Bohm: Yes. The conditioning is all sorts of things. Much of it is necessary, and some of it may involve confusion, and so on.

Q2 to Q3: What is it that you think is missing, or that you would like to present to the group? What do you have in mind when you are asking about 'meaning'?

Q3: Well, from what I have learned about learning, it is almost impossible to hear words and put meaning to them that you can store for further use, without having a background of all kinds of connections and things happening in the brain. For example, if you start with the baby, the baby cannot do it.

Q2: But it has a little background that gets it started.

Q3: Right. And we keep building up the background. But I don't understand how you can just listen and get the meaning.

Bohm: Naturally if you don't know the language, you won't get it. And there are other things you have to know to get it. But we share most of that in common. As I've already said, I feel that we don't actually lack a common basis for talking about these things. I think that we have a good enough basis, a good enough common background, so that by really listening to each other, we can share the perception of meaning.

Q5: If you sat down with a Kalahari Bushman and watched the sunset, without words there is a shared meaning. Without knowing the language there is a shared meaning. I recall the exchange in the Campbell-Moyers dialogues where they discussed about the search for the meaning of life – this idea of the search. Campbell suggested that the search for the meaning of life was an illusory search – that the meaning was *in* the living of life. And that is a 'process', as I envision it or feel it. That is beyond thinking or thought.

Bohm: Yes. A very large part of the meaning is not that accumulation of words, but it is something more fundamental. This tacit process I'm talking about is really shared. We can even share a great deal of it with animals. We have the ability to share from our very nature, our constitution. Of course, we also need the language, and so on. But a great many of the most fundamental things can be shared without a tremendous background, because the thing we have to share is not primarily the background. The main thing we have to share is the perception of what is beyond that background – that which is *fresh* and *new,* and that which I hope we will come to in more extensive discussion as we go along.

Q2: So the question here is the difference between background and the new meanings that the background merely helps to convey.

Q3: Well, one last thing. For instance, if you wanted to discuss your theories of physics or astrophysics with us, you couldn't do it, right?

Bohm: No. We couldn't do it. I agree on that. But as I've said before, if we want to discuss *this* sort of thing I think that we can, because we have a common language in this area and we have some common experience – enough for that purpose. However, the thing we want to discuss is beyond all that. Perhaps it may be discovered by all of us together as we go along.

Q3: That's where my problem is. I don't think we have that much of a common background for getting on with what you want to discuss.

Bohm: Then let's leave the question open, and see how we can go from here.

Q: Why don't we be personal and bring it back to the individual and say, "*I* don't have enough background to discuss this."

Bohm: Any person may say that for himself or herself, and that's all right.

I think that in the next hour we should discuss the question of dialogue, because we have come to that now – in a natural sort of way. In a dialogue, we may all get to know each other's assumptions and backgrounds.

Q: Going back to the impulse – you discussed the ones that arouse pain. How about the impulse to pleasure, which seems to me a different type.

Bohm: That could be equally difficult, because the memory of pleasure gives rise to the desire to have it again. But generally it can't be repeated in that way. Then there can be a frustrating and painful felt of not getting that pleasure, and this starts the whole thing going again.

Q: Is there something going on here where we share something that is fundamental, and we don't have to generate some observer to see that? Is that what you are saying?

Bohm: Yes, that's what I'm suggesting. In the afternoon we will discuss the issue of the observer and the observed, which is a key part of the whole question. But it seems reasonable, at this point, to go on to a discussion of dialogue, because that is part of the whole process of how we could share meaning.

We will have our break now.

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Bohm: We were discussing meaning, and how we can share it. I suggested that dialogue is a way.

It is often instructive to go into the derivations of words. The word 'dialogue' has a Greek root: *dia* and *logos*. *Logos* means the 'word', or here I would say, the 'meaning'. And *dia* means 'through'. So 'dialogue' conveys the *flow* between us, rather than an exchange back and forth.

In contrast, the word 'discussion' has the same root as '*per*cussion' and '*con*cussion'. It really means to 'break things up', to 'analyze' things from many points of view. It also suggests some kind of game like ping-pong, where we are sort of going back and forth and trying to win. We may adopt part of the views of the other person in order to win. But we want to convince and persuade.

In a *dialogue* that is not our aim. It has a different sort of flavor. Some time ago there was an anthropologist who wrote about visiting some North American Indian tribe, a small group of hunter-gatherers. The tribe would meet fairly regularly in a circle and talk – apparently with no agenda and no purpose, and making no decisions or conclusions. After some time the circle would just sort of end, and apparently they all knew what to do then.

The suggestion is that they were sharing meaning. In that simple society it was obviously easy to do. In our society it would be much harder.

Now, a basic notion for a dialogue would be for people to sit in a circle. Such a geometric arrangement doesn't favor anybody; it allows for direct communication. Unfortunately, we can't do that so well here because there are too many people – you may have noticed that those who are in the back of the room have a hard time communicating with those who are in the front.

In principle, the dialogue should work without any leader and without any agenda. But of course, we are used to leaders and agendas, so we would probably have to start with a facilitator and gradually work toward not having one. If we were to start a meeting here without a leader – start talking and have no agenda, no purpose – I think we would find a great deal of anxiety in not knowing what to do. Those early people sort of took it naturally, but we have become used to the other way. Thus one of the things would be to work through that anxiety, to face it. In fact, we know by experience that if people do this for an hour or two they do get through it and start to talk more freely.

If we try to have a dialogue, we will find various further obstacles in the way. First of all we find that some people talk easily, and tend to dominate the conversation. Others find it harder to talk; perhaps they don't have confidence, and they are afraid to make fools of themselves. That situation creates a lot of frustration all around, and tends to impede the dialogue. People stop.

And when people do get together, they often ask, "Why are we together?" There are two main reasons why a lot of people might get together. One reason would be for entertainment and pleasure, and the other would be to do something useful. Now, this dialogue is not going to be always entertaining, nor is it doing anything visibly useful. So you may be inclined to drop it as soon as it gets difficult.

But I suggest that it is very important to go on with it – to stay with it through the frustration. When you think something is important you will do that. Nobody would climb Mount Everest unless for some reason he thought it was important, as that could also be very frustrating and not always entertaining. And the same is true if you have to make money, or do all sorts of things. If you say that they are *necessary,* then you do them.

I am suggesting that there is a *reason* for dialogue. We really do need to have it. This reason should be strong enough to get us through all the frustration of some people dominating, some people finding it hard to talk, anxiety, and all that.

I'm saying it is necessary to share meaning. We can say that a society is a link of relationships among people and institutions so that we can live together. But it only works if we have a *culture* – which implies that we share *meaning;* i.e., significance, purpose and value. Otherwise it falls apart. Our society is incoherent, and doesn't do that very well; it hasn't for a long time.

So how are we going to go about it? A group that is too small doesn't work very well. If five or six people get together, they can usually 'adjust' to each other so that they don't say the things that upset each other – they get a 'cozy adjustment'. But if there *is* a confrontation with one or two people in such a small group, it seems very hard to stop it; it gets stuck. If you raise the number to about twenty, then something different begins to happen. And forty people is about as many as you can conveniently arrange in a circle – or you might put two circles concentrically.

There you begin to get what I call a microculture. You have enough people coming in from different subcultures so that they are a sort of microcosm of the whole culture. And therefore the question of culture begins to come in – the collectively shared meaning – which is crucial, because the collectively shared meaning is very powerful.

The collective thought is more powerful than the individual thought. In fact, the individual thought is mostly the result of collective thought and of interaction with other people. The language is *entirely* collective, and most of the thoughts in it are. Everybody does his own thing to those thoughts – he makes a contribution. But very few change them very much.

We have been talking about ways of exploring thought individually, and dialogue is a way of exploring it collectively. The two really go together; we have to do both sides.

In this dialogue, one basic thing that may come up is that we have different *assumptions*. We have different backgrounds, as we were saying, and therefore different assumptions – which is the same thing. People in one culture maintain one broad set of assumptions and attitudes, people in another culture assume something else. And then, within any culture there are also very great differences among its sub-groups – such as the different sub-cultures within a country, and that sort of thing. Therefore, we don't all have the same assumptions. And that will interfere with communication, because these assumptions are tacitly affecting the whole meaning of what we are doing.

We could also say that *opinions* are essentially the same sort of thing. An opinion is generally an assumption which people tend to defend. There are, of course, cases where people can have opinions that they don't defend. A doctor, for example, may have an opinion about a patient. If he's a good doctor and it's a difficult case, he might call for a second opinion. He is not expecting to defend his opinion against that of the second doctor; that would be a waste altogether. He just wants another opinion, another point of view – and then to put the two opinions together.

However, that is not usually the case when people have opinions. When people discuss and have opinions, they tend to *defend* them and to try to *impose* them. They try to convince and persuade. There can be a compulsive element, which is a sort of violence – an undue use of force. And that prevents communication.

If we defend opinions, we are not going to be able to have a dialogue. And we are often *unconsciously* defending our opinions. We don't usually do it on purpose. At times we may be conscious that we are defending them, but mostly we are not. We just feel that something is so true that we can't avoid trying to convince this stupid person how wrong he is to disagree with us, and all that kind of thing.

Opinions are thus often experienced as *truths*. They may only be your own assumptions and your own background. You got them from your teacher, your family, or by reading, or in yet some other way. Then for one reason or another you are *identified* with them, and you are defending them.

This is the common state of affairs in our society. It means that any large group is not likely to get very far if they suddenly start to try to have a dialogue. People talk about dialogues, but not in the sense I'm using the word. At the U.N. they sometimes have what are called dialogues, however the people who take part are not really open to questioning their fundamental assumptions. They are trading off minor points, like negotiating whether we have more or less nuclear weapons. But the whole difference of two different systems is not being seriously discussed. It's taken for granted that you can't talk about *that* – that nothing will ever change that. And therefore their discussions are not serious, not deeply serious. A great deal of what we call 'discussion' is not deeply serious, in the sense that there are all sorts of things that you hold to be non-negotiable and not touchable, and you don't even want to talk about them. That's the cause of the trouble.

On the whole, you could say that if you are defending your opinions, you are not serious. Likewise, if you are trying to avoid something unpleasant inside of yourself, then that is also not being serious. A great deal of our whole life is not serious. And society teaches you that. It teaches you not to be very serious, because it implies that there is no point in doing so. It's the lesson learned by the girl who had the incoherent teacher: there are all sorts of incoherent things, and there is nothing that can be done about it, so you will only stir yourself up uselessly by being serious.

But in a dialogue you have got to be serious. It is not a dialogue if you are not – not in the way I'm using the word. There is a story about Freud when he had cancer of the mouth. Somebody came up to Freud and wanted to talk to him about a point in psychology. Then the person said, "Perhaps I'd better not talk to you, because you've got this cancer which is very serious. You may not want to talk about this." Freud's answer was, "This cancer may be fatal, but it's not serious." And actually, of course, it was just a lot of cells growing.

I think a great deal of what goes on in society could be described that way – that it may well be fatal, but it's not serious. The point about a dialogue is that it would be serious in the sense that we really want to get at these assumptions. We want to be able to communicate, even if we have to go through some things that may be a bit unpleasant.

I'm going to suggest the way it ought to work. Assumptions will come up. And if you hear somebody else who has an assumption that seems outrageous to you, the natural response might be to get angry, or get excited, or to react in some other way. But suppose you *suspend* the activity, in the sense that we discussed suspension. That means it is sort of there in front of you. You are not suppressing it, not carrying it out, not believing it or disbelieving it, but simply seeing the meaning of your assumption along with the other person's. You may not even have known that you had an assumption. It was only because he came up with the opposite one that you find out that you have one. You may uncover other assumptions, but we are all suspending them and looking at them all, seeing what they mean, and so forth.

Q: If you are suspending the judgment, you may have a chance to watch that impulse.

Bohm: That's right. In fact, you will *feel* the impulse. Your impulse may be to do something – to say something, to defend, to get in there. Or else you may get another impulse that holds you back, meaning, "I mustn't do it. I'll make a fool of myself." So there are a whole bunch of impulses going on.

If we can all suspend carrying out our impulses, suspend our assumptions, and look at them all, then we are all in the same state of consciousness – the content is the same. And therefore we have established the thing that many people say they want – a common consciousness. It may not be very pleasant, but we have got it. People tend to think of common consciousness as 'shared bliss'. That may come; but if it does, I'm saying that the road to it is through this. We have to share the consciousness that we actually have. We can't just impose another one.

The fact of that common consciousness shows in what people say, in the way they think, in the stance of their bodies. What is going on outwardly and inwardly is very similar from one person to the next. Everybody is similar in that everybody is doing basically the same thing – which is to have different opinions that are in conflict with another person's opinions.

In the situation of a dialogue, some people may not be all that strongly attached to certain opinions, and those people can come in and defuse a particular issue so that it doesn't get too confrontational or polarized. Now, if people can stay with all this and look at it, then a change can take place. A common perception can take place, which is stronger because many people are involved; because it is being reinforced collectively, socially and individually; and because we are all so built that we tend to regard what everybody agrees on as true. The common perception builds up. However, the collective is often troublesome. For example, the group may act like a conscience, inducing powerful guilt feelings in its members. Or it may act like something else that people are also afraid to oppose.

But we are not aiming for the type of group that condemns and judges, and all that. We can all realize that this is going to get in the way. Therefore, this group is not going to judge or condemn. It is simply going to look at these opinions and assumptions and let them surface. And I think that there will then be a change.

There is a great deal of violence in these opinions that we are defending. They are not merely opinions, they are not merely assumptions; they are assumptions with which we are *identified* – which we are therefore defending, because it is as if we are defending ourselves. The natural self-defense impulse, which we got in the jungle, has been transferred from the jungle animals to these opinions. In other words, we say that there are some dangerous opinions out there – just as there might be dangerous tigers. And there are some very precious animals inside us that have to be defended. Thus an impulse that made sense physically in the jungle has been transferred to our opinions in our modern life. And in a dialogue, we get to be aware of that in a collective way.

In fact, we can do this individually too. We will discuss that in the afternoon. Facing this sort of thing can be done both collectively and individually. And actually we ought to do both. But something new – the whole cultural conditioning – comes in when you face it collectively. You see, individually it is very hard to be aware of it. You normally surround yourself with people who have a very similar culture. You share assumptions and don't know that you have them. But in a group of about twenty to forty, you are bound to have people with different assumptions and things that they do not share. The point is that we are facing the fact that we don't share our background – not entirely. We share a great deal, but disagreeing on one point can be enough to blow it all up. The more we share, the quicker it will blow up when there is one point that doesn't agree.

I'm going to say what might happen in a dialogue, if we sustain it and go through the unpleasant phases of the process together. In such a dialogue, this whole structure of defensiveness and opinions and division may collapse; and suddenly the feeling may change to one of fellowship and friendship, participation and sharing – because the fact is that when we are sharing all these opinions, we are all participating in the same thing. We are then partaking of the common consciousness, and we are taking part in it. So you get the feeling that we are *participating.*

Of course, people can participate in hate, too. It is a very powerful bond. Many years ago I visited some people who had fled Nazi Germany. They had been anti-Nazi fighters and were now living in Ireland, and they found it very tame and dull. They said, "When we had the Nazis to fight we really felt alive. There was hate between us and them." Not that they wanted the Nazis back. The thing is that this hate is a common bond which is very powerful.

Now, as I have already suggested, if people could stay with this power, violence, hate, or whatever it is, all the way to the end, then it would sort of collapse – because ultimately you see that we are all the same. And consequently you have participation and fellowship, and you can become friends. People who have gone through that could become good friends.

Therefore, the whole thing goes differently. They become more open and trusting to each other. They have already gone through the thing that they are afraid of, so the intelligence can then work.

However, as long as we have this defensive attitude – blocking and holding assumptions, sticking to them and saying, "I've got to be right," and so on – then intelligence is very limited, because intelligence requires that you don't defend an assumption. There is no reason to hold to an assumption if there is evidence that it is not right. The proper structure of an assumption or of an opinion is that it is open to evidence that it may not be right.

That does not mean that we are going to impose the opinions of the group. Everybody may or may not have a different opinion – it is not that important. It isn't necessary that everybody be convinced to have the same view. This *sharing* of mind, of consciousness, is more important than the *content* of the opinions. And you may see that these opinions are limited anyway. You may find that the answer is not in the opinions at all, but somewhere else. The *truth* does not emerge from those opinions, but it must emerge from something else – perhaps from *a more free movement of this tacit mind.*

As we have said, the tacit mind can be shared. It is shared not only in words, but also in body language. It is shared in ways that are very subtle. Therefore people can think together. When you hold opinions, you cannot think together with somebody. Thinking together means that 'A' can say something and 'B' can pick it up and carry it along, just as if it were his own thought. 'C' does it; 'D' does it; and so on. That is clearly the kind of mind that is needed to deal with social problems. If our legislators could think together, they would be able to make an intelligent response to whatever is going on.

Q: Would it be appropriate here to say that what you are suggesting is considerably more difficult than climbing Mount Everest?

Bohm: Yes, but I do not see any way for the human race to be viable in the long run if we don't do it, or if we can't do it. We may last a hundred years, two hundred, or perhaps even five hundred. But in the long run, it is not viable with high technology and a complicated society. If we could manage to return

to something like the Stone Age, we might continue all right – provided that ninety-nine percent of us agreed to leave the field so that the remaining one percent could live in Stone Age technology, because we couldn't produce enough food and things for the rest.

Q: As difficult as it may sound, I think that dialogue does occur occasionally. Quite a few of us have taken part in 'discussions' which *occasionally* became dialogues. I think one can, after a certain while, distinguish phases of gatherings of this sort. In the first phase we are all very polite, and feel out each other and see who says what and who thinks what. The second phase, if you keep at it long enough, is that there will be some people who expose their notions and ideas relatively strongly. I think this phase is a very important one – like the lady over there who comes and says, "well, I don't understand this," and, "I think this." This is a very important phase of dialogue – that people expose what they have in their mind, not just as a little set of questions, but as they actually feel about it, psychologically moving with it.

Now, this generally goes into a lot of zig-zags. And I suggest that this whole process, if you follow it through, is very much the same as the creative process. In this zig-zag, the various opinions of people are going to clash: "*I* think this. *You* think that. How come?" And so forth. Then comes this 'evangelizing' urge to rid each other of our absolutes.

The next phase is outright chaos. And this may be the most valuable phase of this whole thing, when we all feel that this whole thing is not worth doing – and how many times have we felt that, right? Then there are two things we can do about the chaos. Perhaps someone is a good leader or facilitator and says, "Let's organize this thing. Otherwise we just cannot go any further." So we fragment into various little groups and we think that this will work. Then we find that the groups have different views and tend to get into fights.

Now, if we survive the chaos, and do not give way to the conclusion that the whole thing is not worth doing, there comes one of the most beautiful things. Coming out from the chaos is the letting go, the dropping of views, the

yielding and saying, "Well, really I'm not too sure after all. And for the sake of perhaps getting out from this – because my neck is on the table also – I am ready to let this whole thing float. Let's see what happens." If this stage arrives, *after* it something quite remarkable may happen. The words from the Bible come to my mind when Jesus says, "If two or more of you come together in my name, I will be in the midst of you."

And that's exactly the feeling which comes. There is a sense of love and care, a certain sense of brotherhood in which it doesn't matter too much any more what you say because it is this *atmosphere* which is important. It is this sense of being together, quite independent of your opinions. But, of course, opinions are included. I will listen to you; I can even tell you that you are a fool, or whatever, and you can tell me the same. This kind of atmosphere, if it comes about, is the most fertile ground in which you can start with anything, any thought. The important point remains that you and I are together in a very deep sense of this thing. We are not separate, yet our opinions may be different.

Probably this chaotic state has to be there in the beginning. And perhaps within it communication needs to be properly facilitated. I don't know exactly what it is. But to survive this chaotic state brings about something so memorable, a sense of being together, which will then make the group able to survive new chaos – new ups and downs.

This same process is actually very much what one can individually sense as the creative process. That's how new ideas come about individually. We go into that process with some assertion: "That's how it goes, that's what it should be." Then we find an obstacle to our assumption, and the assumption collapses. Zig-zags arise. As an engineer, I go through this over and over again. I tend to get lost; it's chaos, I don't know what to do. Then somewhere, sometimes, when I really let go, the ideas pop up from nowhere. But the important thing is that the idea pops up from a background, a feeling, a certain deep sense of meaning and intelligence and love. All those things are behind it, and it pops out from that. From there on, there is the feeling: "Oh yeah, this is it." And I think that the same thing, or a similar thing, can occur in a group environment.

Bohm: Well, that's really a very good outline of the whole process. I'll only add that what it amounts to is getting free of the domination of this abstract verbally dominated process and allowing the tacit process to take over.

The tacit process is common. It is shared. The sharing is not merely the explicit communication and the body language and all that, which are part of it, but there is also a deeper tacit process which is common. I think the whole human race knew this for a million years; and then in five thousand years of civilization we have lost it, because our societies got too big to carry it out. But now we have to get started again, because it has become urgent that we communicate. We have to share our consciousness and to be able to think together, in order to do intelligently whatever is necessary.

So the suggestion is that people could start dialogue groups in various places. The point would not be to identify with the group, but rather it would be this *whole process.* You are liable to say, "This is a wonderful group," or something, but it's actually the process that counts.

I'm saying that there is no point in keeping up a particular group indefinitely. You have to keep it up for a while, or else it won't work, as you were explaining. It may be valuable to keep it going for a year or two. It is important to sustain it regularly. And if you sustain it, all these problems will arise. The frustration will arise, the sense of chaos, the sense that it's not worth it. But if you understand that you have to stick with it nevertheless – which is the same as climbing Mount Everest, or whatever – then something new will come.

I think this *new* thing will open the way to changing the whole situation ecologically and in other ways. For example, the ecological movement – the green movement – is now in danger of fragmenting and splitting, because many of the groups have different opinions about how to deal with the problems. So they can wind up fighting each other as much as they fight for the ecology. It therefore seems particularly urgent that the green movement get into dialogue.

Q: It's even expressing itself violently in some ways. In the northern states, some of the environmental groups have been attacking forests. They put spikes in trees to cause problems for people who try to cut the forests down.

Bohm: I was reading also that they have begun to attack cattle in isolated farms. One group does that, and then another group says, "No, that's wrong." The trouble is not even so much what they are doing, but the real trouble is that they split the whole thing and make it ineffective.

Q: Are you saying that the splitting is a violent action, that it is perpetrated by a violent impulse?

Bohm: There is a violent impulse, which has a violent thought behind it, sustaining it.

Q: Should they then have a dialogue? When you described dialogue, you talked about not having an agenda, and people saying whatever they wanted to say. But in this case, would they have a dialogue about the environment?

Bohm: You can also have a dialogue in a more limited way. It would be best if they would accept the principle to let it be open, because when you limit it, you are accepting some assumptions on the basis of which you limit it, assumptions that may actually be getting in the way of free communication. And therefore, you are not looking at those assumptions. However, if people are not ready to be completely open in their communication, they should do what they can.

This green movement is a kind of window of opportunity, because people can see at this moment how highly dangerous the situation is – it has sort of hit them. But if something doesn't happen, the window is gradually going to close. The whole thought process goes on working the way we described – to make you feel more comfortable and to make you forget about it. So, you see, unless something happens, that is very likely to take place. Now, the purpose behind this green movement seems conducive to dialogue, but it has to get going.

Q: I have been in several dialogue groups, but never in a sustained one with more than twenty people. It seems that people commonly assume it's not very important to have more than twenty. And yet I have a sense that it is important. Could you speak to that?

Bohm: You can do something with less, but there is a certain important point that occurs when you get between twenty and forty. First of all, you get enough points of view to constitute a microculture, so you begin really to face the question of cultural diversity, and what the culture is. If you have too few people, you are not likely to get into cultural questions very far, even though the basic differences *are* cultural. For example, the attitude to nature is a cultural question. And in a small group, even if there are some important differences of sub-culture it is often likely to end up in confrontation, because there are not enough independent points of view to defuse such situations.

The second point is that the power of the thing goes up – a large number of people has a tremendous psychological power. That is why people are afraid to talk in a large group – they feel that the disapproval of a large group has a tremendous power. But that also means that there is another kind of power, if the group is working right. It's a microcosm of a different kind of culture and a different kind of mind.

Now, if only one or two people do transform in their minds, it is at best of limited significance. But if you get a microculture transforming, which in principle can spread – as members of its group go and participate in other groups, or start other groups, and so on – then the principle of the change of the culture has been established. It is like nuclear fission; when physicists first experimented with that, there were only a few uranium atoms involved, so it didn't look very important. But the principle was established, which was universal.

This helps to show what could be the significance of a change of culture, which means a change of shared consciousness and shared meaning. And as I have said, I think it takes a group of a certain size to establish that meaning.

Q: There is another aspect. I feel the family is a natural example of a dialogue group. In fact, most of my experience in dialogue *is* from my family, where such thing as this shared common meaning and the sense of love and compassion for each other has occasionally been established. You have all kinds of diversity in a family, including cultural diversity. So I am not sure that the group has to be large. Perhaps we are thinking too much of the

results – 'we have to change society'. It seems to me that the very sense of what is a community, what is a dialogue, and what it is to be together, are far more important than to 'get to the results'. And the family is a natural place for that. Friendship is a natural location for such a thing to start.

Q: But it seems that most families are not capable of dialogue.

Q: Yes. That's unfortunate, of course.

Bohm: The family suffers from many of the same difficulties that I've mentioned affect small groups which try to have dialogues. And I would add that a family tends to be strongly hierarchical in structure – though there may be exceptions. But more generally, regardless of the size of the group, the thing that mostly gets in the way of a dialogue is holding to assumptions or opinions, and defending them. You see, if you are identified personally with an opinion, then that would get in the way. But if you are identified collectively with an opinion, that also gets in the way. The main difficulty is that we cannot listen properly to somebody else's opinion because we are resisting it – we don't really hear it.

Q: We engage in an activity like a dialogue, but the personal opinions that I have seem much more important to me than the dialogue. Clearly I haven't actually understood. And I don't know how I do come to understand that the dialogue is far more important than my personal opinion.

Bohm: Yes. But the problem is not only my personal opinion. I might be identified with a large group, like my country or my family or various groups which have their own views. And I would feel impelled to defend that, saying, "I represent this group. I must defend its beliefs."

Many people do identify opinions with their personality. Because of that identification they feel that they themselves are being attacked in a very central way if their opinions are questioned. As an example, we had a dialogue in Israel and we were talking of various things. Then somebody said, just in passing, "The trouble is that Zionism is interfering with the relationships of Jews and Arabs." He said it very quietly. And then suddenly

somebody else got up, with his eyes popping out, and he said, "But without Zionism the country would go to pieces." Now, Zionism was not only his personal opinion; it is part of that whole body of opinion with which he felt identified. And because it was such a big body, he defended it even more.

So the question is the *defense* of opinion. I'm saying that *any* identification with your opinion or with anything doesn't make sense.

Another point is that if we are going to have a dialogue, there is, as I have already indicated earlier in connection with the family, no place in the dialogue for the principle of authority and hierarchy. These may be necessary to run a society or a functioning sub-group within a society; we have to set all that up to run things. But we need a place where there is no authority, no hierarchy, where there is no special purpose – sort of an empty place, where we can let anything be discussed.

Q: What you are suggesting is that a group of people come together, essentially without motive, and engage in a task which is tremendously difficult, and give up their opinions; when really all that they are mostly concerned about is their personal problems – that they can't get along with their wife, or whatever. So why would we come to feel this tremendous necessity?

Bohm: You have pointed to the difficulty of sustaining a dialogue. What you say is quite true – it is not all that easy in our society to sustain a dialogue. Still, let's think about it and say that it does seem to be necessary to have this dialogue – whether we have it in the family, if we can; or with our friends; or in some larger group, if we can. However, as I have explained, I think that there are important advantages in the larger group. But we have got to have this process of dialogue, or else the whole thing is going to go to pieces. As I said earlier, without the glue or the cement it all goes to pieces. Unless we share *meaning* it will become chaos – as it *is* becoming. Throughout the whole world we have this vast set of dangerous and destructive things going on, and everybody defends his opinion and nobody can really be serious about what is actually happening.

Q: And it would seem that the impulse to dialogue is really *there.* A few people in this room keep coming back, despite the fact that there may be an element of frustration involved in trying to institute this thing.

Q: It feels very real.

Q: Is our problem that we have difficulty engaging in something that is purposeless?

Bohm: Well, one of the assumptions of society is that we have to have a purpose to get together – it is sort of a tacit assumption. I am saying that if we insist on that, then perhaps we'll do it that way; but the less purpose we define, the better.

Q: As you were saying, most of our motivations are quite self-oriented. If I could come here and get something for myself, I would travel thousands of miles. But to come here and get nothing – people would think I'm crazy.

Bohm: But perhaps you are getting something. Isn't something happening?

Q: Not that something isn't happening, but that there is nothing tangible.

Bohm: That is what I'm trying to say – that the subtle is the real. The *subtle* is the *ground* to everything. And the thing you can put you hand on is generally not all that important. I'm saying that we have to turn the values of our society upside down, because that is where the trouble is coming from.

You see, we are returning to a set of values closer to the one in which the human race evolved for a million years. It is probably built into us that those are more natural values.

Q: When you talk about the hunter-gatherer societies that used to come together in groups of twenty to forty, there probably wasn't a purpose other than the coming together itself.

Bohm: Yes. It was just a natural part of living together. And twenty is the smallest hunter-gatherer group that is viable while forty is about the largest that will work.

Q: I wonder whether there isn't a *purpose*, but that it is in a tacit place. What we look for is a purpose in the intellect, or something verbal, or something tangible. But there may actually be a purpose on a much larger scale – a purpose for this planet to continue, or whatever. And if we come here with a motive for the 'me' and we move into the intangible, it may in fact come back to the 'me', but not in the area that I would think it would – not from where I would imagine it might contact. It may actually improve *me* anyway – but not the 'self'.

Bohm: It won't be the kind of improvement that our society recognizes or acknowledges. It is entirely a cultural-social question. Our society and our culture have certain values as to what is worth doing – the kinds of things we ought to do, and so on – which we know so well that we hardly even state. And what we are talking about here goes against all that.

Now, why *should* you go against it all? I'm saying there is some reason which is in a sense deeper. If you value that the human race should survive and fulfill its creative capabilities, if you value a good life, then I say that this is necessary. That is the proposal.

Q: If the human race is not viable unless we learn how to do this, then there doesn't seem to be any good reason to give up dialogue. And you are suggesting that the survival of the species does depend to some extent on our ability to do dialogue, or that our inability to do it is threatening our survival.

Bohm: Yes. But even if we *do* somehow manage to survive, we are going to be pretty miserable if we continue as we have been doing. We don't want to be *that* miserable.

Q: It is very interesting. Before I come to these sessions, people ask me, "What's the session going to be about?" And I say, "Well, I really don't know." And then I go home and they say, "Well, what did Dr. Bohm say?" And I say, "I don't really know."

Bohm: That is the same thing again. It is against all the values of society, which says that if you can't point to something then it has no value.

Q: Could we say that it's more diffusive than productive? Dialogue seems to have a tendency to diffuse or dissipate a lot of commonly held beliefs. It may not give rise to *new* beliefs, but it has dissipated some of the old ones.

Bohm: Yes, but I think that it will work in this tacit level of mental process, where the most significant things take place.

Q: I've been hearing these phrases: 'the tacit ground', 'the tacit basis from which all things are functioning'. And earlier you were talking about getting in touch with the concrete activity of things. What is the proper relationship of thought to this tacit ground? What is going on?

Bohm: Thought is emerging from the tacit ground, just as the bicycle riding emerges from the tacit. Any fundamental change in thought will come from the tacit ground. So if we are communicating at the tacit level, then maybe thought is changing.

We will close now and meet again this afternoon.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Bohm: As this is our last meeting and we have now roughly two more hours of this seminar, I thought I would say a few more words about dialogue. We could discuss it a little and then go on to something further.

In the last session, we were discussing the size of a group which would be suitable for dialogue. It is possible to have a dialogue with one person or with two, three, or four. Also, you can have the attitude of the dialogue by yourself, as you weigh all the opinions without deciding. But in a large group of twenty to forty people, certain new things come up. I mentioned some of them.

The power goes up much faster than the number of people. I've said before that it could be compared to a laser. Ordinary light is called 'incoherent', which means that it is going in all sorts of directions, and the light waves are not in phase with each other so they don't build up. But a laser produces a very intense beam which *is* coherent. The light waves build up strength because they are all going in the same direction. This beam can do all sorts of things that ordinary light cannot.

Now, you could say that our ordinary thought in society is incoherent – it is going in all sorts of directions, with thoughts conflicting and canceling each other out. But if people were to think together in a coherent way, it would have tremendous power. That's the suggestion. If we have a dialogue situation – a group which has sustained dialogue for quite a while in which people get to know each other, and so forth – then we might have such a coherent movement of thought, a coherent movement of communication. It would be coherent not only at the level we recognize, but at the *tacit level,* at the level for which we have only a vague feeling. That would be more important.

You see, it is important to have that vague sense of the tacit, even if you can't do any more than that. Proprioception is not something of which you are ever highly cognizant. If you are moving your hand, you are not

very conscious of it – thinking, "I'm proprioceptively moving my hand." Nevertheless, it's there. That's the same sort of thing we have in mind here in relation to dialogue and to proprioception of thought. We have to sort of study it for a while, and work with it to get into that area where we haven't been. And when it works, it should be somewhat similar to the vague tacit sense in the physical area – in that it may look very subtle and insubstantial, but it makes a fundamental change, because *everything ultimately follows from the subtle.* The explicit thought is a map by which the subtle is being guided. Now, that is one point.

I want to say that there are three dimensions of the human being, which we could discuss. One is the *individual,* just by himself. Clearly, the individual body is in certain ways separate from others – although not totally, because it merges with the air and the light and the food, and so on. There is no place where the body really ends; its boundary is relative. We can't say that when an oxygen molecule comes into the body, it suddenly becomes alive; and then when it leaves as carbon dioxide, it's dead. We must say that there is really no sharp end to the body. And perhaps we can't even say where life begins or ends – but there is sort of a focus of it at a certain place. Each individual has peculiar features – physical features, due to heredity, DNA, and the rest; and certain mental features: experiences, background, capacities, and that sort of thing. In addition, he has the self-image, by which he tries to identify himself. We'll come to that later.

Then we have the *collective* dimension of the human being, where we have a considerable number of people – a society and a culture. That has a *qualitatively* new feature: it has great power, as I've said – potentially, or even actually. And in dialogue we discuss how to bring that to some sort of coherence and order.

And then I say there's a third dimension – the *cosmic* dimension. Human beings have always had that in mind, from the most ancient prehistoric times. I think that that was perhaps first nature. Nature is sensed as something beyond the individual or the society. Additionally, in the early days there was animism – people felt that everything was animate, that it had a spirit.

And they were therefore participating in all that. As we know, since those days we have changed to views like the idea that we are all separate. And such ideas then helped to create the very situation that they represent – we have discussed how significantly our perception is influenced by the way thought represents things to us.

Later, as people moved away from nature into cities and farms – even the farm is quite far from wild nature – they began to feel the *need* for the cosmic, and they may have introduced various ways to try to fulfill that need. In the very early times there was art, which probably had a sort of a cosmic connection. And there has been the notion of religion and philosophy – attempting to make a connection that way.

That has persisted, but large numbers of people no longer believe in the assumptions of religions. Religion has left them, they have moved very far away from nature, and philosophy has become confused. In our society, *science* attempts to connect us to the cosmos to some extent; but it is limited, and most people can't understand it all that well anyway. Therefore, the connection to that cosmic dimension seems to be rather lost nowadays.

But I think people want to come back into that cosmic dimension – that it is an essential dimension of the human being, along with the individual and the collective dimensions. Perhaps it is possible for the individual to have some contact with the cosmic; or the collective could have contact – people often accept that idea. In religions, for example, people go to church and expect collectively to come in contact with God in some way.

And perhaps in dialogue, when we have this very high energy of coherence, it might bring us beyond just being a group that could solve social problems. Possibly it could make a new change in the individual and a change in the relation to the cosmic. Such an energy has been called 'communion'. It is a kind of participation. The early Christians had a Greek word *koinonia*, the root of which means 'to participate' – the idea of partaking in the whole and taking part in it; not merely the whole group, but the *whole*. Now, that sort of thing is, I think, significant.

We should keep in mind that the dialogue – and in fact, all that we've been talking about – is not *only* directed at solving the ills of society, although we do have to solve those ills; we would be much better off if we didn't have them. If we survive and we want to have a worthwhile life, we have to deal with those problems. But ultimately that's not the entire story. That's only the beginning.

Now before I go ahead, could we open it up to discussion, either on this or on the dialogue or on whatever else we've been doing?

Q: I feel that a *disconnection* may occur very early in an infant's life – particularly in our Western society, since medicine got hold of birthing. If you've ever seen the event, the infant is obviously totally stressed out in a hospital birth, or was until recently. It seems to me that that stimulates the adrenals overmuch and breaks the connections.

Bohm: There is that notion of breaking the connection – what they call the bonding of the child to the mother, and also eventually to the society. We could say that the bond of our whole connection to the cosmos has also been broken. There have been articles written about the end of nature, saying that originally we thought of nature as vast and ultimately beyond that which humans could do anything about. But now we can see that we are at the point of being able to destroy it. Of course, there is a still greater nature in the cosmos, which we can't get at. Fortunately.

Early tribes said, "We've got nature. The earth is the mother. We have to take care of the mother." That is a similar notion of a type of bonding. But now people just say, "No, that's not how it is. We've got to exploit the earth." So we see a possibility of the end. And also, this change of our relationship with nature – this ending of the bond with nature – has another effect. People used to say, "Well, I know things are pretty bad here. But nature is out there, and it's still okay." Now, however, that's gone. And once people realize that, it makes a very big psychological change. We can no longer rely on nature as being limitless. It's like somebody saying, "You can't count on your mother any more. You're on your own."

So that's the sort of situation we're in. Whether nature survives may well depend on *us*. Thus, there is a *new* orientation implied there – that we are really responsible for all of this planet. And that's not the only question. The question is then: what is the *ground* of that? What are we?

Q: Do you mean, what are we in relationship to this responsibility?

Bohm: Partly, but also what is our nature? What is our being that would allow us to be responsible? You see, we have not generally thought of ourselves as that sort of beings.

Q: We always thought nature would take care of us. And now we've gone from that kind of infancy to a kind of transitional status. Either we become caretakers or we become extinct.

Bohm: We have to be responsible for nature. But from what inner resources can we draw to be that responsible? What would be the ground of that possibility? How would we change from being people who feel as we presently do? It's like somebody who grows up thinking Mother or Father will take care of him. Then he sees, "Well, now it's changed. It's the other way around."

Q: Are you asking how a person would become responsible?

Bohm: Yes. Or on what basis. What kind of change is involved to do that?

Q: Wasn't there a time when man told himself that he had dominion over nature? And consequently he separated himself from it in his mind, rather than being a part of it.

Bohm: One current of thought was that. But simultaneously the other thought remained underneath – that nature was still there. In other words, people still felt, "It's so vast that really we don't have to worry." That was illustrated in a television program I saw about cutting down the Brazilian rain forest. A peasant was cutting down trees with a chain saw. The filmmakers explained that this was destroying everything. The peasant replied, "Yes, it makes me very sad. We made deserts in another state, and here we're doing it again. But I've got to support my family." Then the

filmmakers went to the landowner, who said, "The Amazon is vast. Nothing significant has been done to it. Nature is still there."

Q: I guess my point is that when you say that you have dominion over something, that separates you from it.

Bohm: But in a certain sense, people didn't actually believe that they had total dominion over nature. At the same time, they somehow felt that nature was there *beyond them* to support them.

Q: In some sense, isn't this nature here, operating?

Bohm: It is in a way nature. But we talk about nature as existing on its own. That's the idea that has evolved – that nature developed by itself for hundreds of millions of years, and that it could take care of itself. Then we came along – small beings who at first made very little impact on nature. We depended on nature. And then we increased our power more and more. We began to make cities and farms and to separate ourselves. But it was always in the back of the mind that *nature is vast.* And a lot of people took comfort in that, saying, "Even if we make a mess here, at least pure undefiled nature still exists."

There was a television program from Northern Sweden about the Laplanders. When Chernobyl exploded, most of the nuclear fallout came down on their land and they couldn't use their reindeer any more. It was a terrible catastrophe for them. It was very wild land. They used to say, "This is wild, undefiled land." But now it has been defiled. So there is a psychological matter there, which is worth thinking about: that we are really responsible for nature now. We can no longer think of vast wild areas which take care of themselves.

Q: That statement almost seems to have one too many things in it – 'us' responsible for 'nature'.

Bohm: And nature for us. I'm trying to say that we are responsible to participate intelligently in this whole thing. But previously we said we were not. That was the main reason why we thought we could exploit nature. We thought we could keep on using it, and it would just take care of itself.

Q: It's sort of like stealing from a rich man. You figure, "I can take what I need out of his orchard because he won't miss it." The fact is that now there isn't so much and the stealing has become significant. So are you asking what is the change of mind or state of mind that is necessary?

Bohm: I'm suggesting that we need to be *co*-participants.

Q: Is that the 'ground' you were referring to a few minutes ago?

Bohm: I think there is a ground beyond that. But nature is part of *our* ground; and if nature goes, we lose a lot of our ground. Some people think we can survive by organizing nature, by finding species of trees and plants that can live despite the pollution, by producing new species through genetic engineering, or whatever. They think that we could industrialize our world so much that nature itself is industrialized. We might even call it the 'nature industry'. We now have the entertainment industry and practically have a culture industry and an education industry; similarly, we could have the nature industry. And we could try simultaneously to conserve nature and to make it profitable.

Now, maybe technology could open that up; we can't know. It looks a little dubious, but perhaps it is possible. Then where would it leave us? I mean, what kind of a life would that be?

Q: Well, that doesn't sound like participatory thinking.

Bohm: No, but that's what some people are suggesting. It's participatory, but not a kind of participation that seems good.

Q: It's participatory, but separate from nature. It's not participatory thought *with* nature, or participatory including nature.

Bohm: That is the way our whole literal thought goes. It tries not to be participatory. It *is*, but in a rather incoherent way, because it pretends to be an objective provider of information, rather than realizing how it participates in our perception.

Q: There are some people – such as those who believe in the Gaia hypothesis – who talk of the earth as a *being*, and who try to support certain

parts of it. They say that a certain coastline or some particular mountain regions, for instance, are a very crucial part. They say human beings should use some intelligence for the health of the *whole* organism, which is this planet that supports us, rather than for profit.

Bohm: Yes. In a way we've got to begin to do so. We have to begin to organize our activities so that we not only don't destroy the planet, but that we keep it going coherently. We are playing a bigger and bigger part in this whole thing, and we have to take this into account. And we have to consider that nature has a certain almost religious significance in our psyche – that taking this new attitude has a very great implication for the human being.

However, I don't want to stop there. I want to go on to something more significant. Part of this cosmic dimension is man's attitude toward nature, but there is something *beyond* all that – not merely the cosmos as we see it through the telescope or looking out at the sky at night. I want to suggest that there is something beyond limit, something not finite.

The word *'finite'* means 'limited', 'finish', 'definite', 'define', 'set a limit'. And thought always works by setting limits – by defining what things are and then discussing what they mean, and so on. Thought works *through* limits. And we are also saying that thought is limited because it is an *abstraction*; it cannot get it all. In fact, it probably can't get more than a little bit. But the concrete – that concrete process – goes immensely beyond what thought can get, even materially.

Nevertheless, scientists are now tending to move more and more in the direction of saying that science can encompass everything. At one time science presumed to explain very little. Then over the centuries, more knowledge was added. Scientists made a theory of atoms, which they thought would cover everything. During the nineteenth century, Lord Kelvin said the discoveries of physics were pretty well finished and young people shouldn't go into it as a career, because all that remained to do was a matter of calculating the next decimal point. He said there were two small clouds on the horizon: the Michelson-Morley experiment and black body radiation. Those who know physics will realize that *those were* the 'clouds' that led to

relativity and quantum theory, which revolutionized physics. So Lord Kelvin pointed to the clouds correctly, but did not realize their implications; and nowadays the basis of nineteenth century physics has all been overturned.

Today people are again saying, "We're going to get a theory of *'everything'*." They don't have it, but they say, "We're going to get it." They are sort of writing a post-dated check. They say that nothing will then be needed but just to compute it all. We won't need physicists any more, just computers.

There seems to be something in the structure of thought in civilization which tends to claim that we've got to know everything, or that we are going to get to know everything. We want to know it *all.* We feel better that way, we feel more secure, the body feels better. We think we are going to be able to solve every problem – anything. There is some tendency in thought to say that we *could* know everything and control it all. And that would mean that everything would be known *by thought* – by accumulated knowledge and skill, by our technology, and whatever.

The latest expression of that view is the notion of Artificial Intelligence – that people will make computers far more subtle than the present-day ones, which will do anything that human beings might do and perhaps do it even better. Of course, this is very far from realized. We all know that; everybody agrees. But again, some people have faith that this is going to happen.

This faith reflects desire. It reflects an impulse. Now, some people might say, "Such a world does not appeal to me." But proponents of Artificial Intelligence have an impulse to want this, and for them it looks very appealing. For example, there is a fellow named Minsky who says, "This carbon-based intelligence is a mess." He calls it a 'meat machine'. He says, "Let's have a silicon-based machine, which will be nice and orderly. That will be much more intelligent. It won't get into these messy emotional problems." And there is a strong current in our culture moving in that direction.

On the other hand, you could criticize such faith that science can be all-encompassing and say, "When will science ever know everything? Why should they believe that it can? They are very far from it at present. And people have thought they had it in the past, when they didn't. Why do they think we're not making the same mistake again?"

Actually, we don't really *know* whether we can know everything. So is it the right strategy to say that we can? Even if the fundamental ideas of science don't change for a century, that doesn't mean they won't change in the following century. There is no intrinsic reason why we should believe that we could know everything, and there's good reason to assume tentatively that we cannot. We simply don't know. So it's not a good strategy to say that we *are* on the point of knowing it all. And if we ever get to the point where we do think that we know the whole, we will have closed our minds; it will be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Perhaps more significantly, we should also ask, "Is it in the *nature* of thought to be *able* to know 'everything' – since thought is *abstraction,* which inherently implies limitation?" One thing we surely do not know proprioceptively is what thought is doing. The *reality* of thought – its concrete reality, or actuality – is a *tacit process* that we do not know. And that seems to be very crucial, because whatever we do, thought produces unintended results. You see, if we try to make an analysis of what is going on at this very moment, we use our whole *past knowledge* to do so. But *this moment* itself is contributing, participating – so *the analysis cannot actually cover the moment of analysis.* The assumption is that that is not going to matter, and in certain areas in science it doesn't. But when it comes to this vast broad area, it does matter.

There is no way by which thought can get hold of the whole. The whole is too much. As we have said, thought only abstracts. And the past from which thought draws contains only a certain limited amount. The present is *not* contained in thought. Now, that may not look important for technological purposes, although it actually is. But for the sake of human relationships, what is happening in the present is all-important. This unknown effect of thought may be just the thing which either saves us or destroys us.

Therefore, it seems that there is really no good reason for the assumption that thought is going to capture everything. It doesn't seem to be in the nature of thought to be able to do that at all. Thus, it is bad strategy to make that assumption, and you could question it very seriously.

So suppose we explore the notion that thought *cannot* capture everything. Clearly, thought defines limits. Whatever thought *can* capture is within limits. Then we may say, "Okay, we can always go beyond those limits." In the nineteenth century, science had certain limits. In the twentieth century it has gone beyond those limits, but it is still limited. In the twenty-first century – assuming we get there – it may do something else. In the twenty-second it will do something else again. But it will still be limited. And what is beyond those limits may be extremely significant. It is not a question of slowly *approaching* the limit – getting nearer and nearer. When you get *beyond* the limits, you get totally unexpected new things. Relativity and quantum mechanics were not approached by classical physics; they were totally different. There was no hint of them in classical physics. And maybe the next physics will have new features that we have no hint about today.

Therefore, we could look at it and say that the *concrete reality* – actuality, or whatever you want to call it – *is not limited.* That is the suggestion. Thought cannot capture it. It cannot be put in boundaries. It is neither limited by being known already, nor is it the sort of thing that *could* be known in limits. But it's the sort of thing that's involved when we talk about the working of this tacit process of the mind, and paying attention, and so on. You see, perhaps paying attention has no limits either. When we are stuck with certain thoughts, we pay attention in certain ways to what the thoughts say is important. But then when you release those thoughts, your attention can go in new ways. The attention comes from that tacit movement. It does not come from the thought.

I'm suggesting that basically the Unlimited is subtle; and as we move toward the subtle we get beyond limits. The word 'subtle' fundamentally means 'undefinable'. So it does mean the Unlimited, since 'to define' means literally 'to put down limits'. What we have been talking about is relatively subtle. But as we go further, we would find that it gets more and more difficult to define, and in a sense it eventually gets beyond what you could define. The Unlimited is not just in the direction of going to greater and greater distances out to the end of the universe; but much more importantly, it is also going into more and more subtlety.

I'm saying that the Unlimited is the *ground* of existence. *What is, is the Unlimited.* That is the suggestion we could explore.

Q: Could we say that the activity of thought is always to reduce human beings to a quantity?

Bohm: Not necessarily a quantity. It can have quality. Quality also expresses a classification, which implies a limit – something is green and not red. Just being bounded may create a limit. This table is clearly limited by its boundary. It is also limited because it is wood and not iron, and so forth

Q: But the real thing that needs to be encountered is this unquantifiable aspect of being alive.

Bohm: Or probably not even qualifiable. But it is undefinable, it is subtle.

Q: All of this action of thought, whether in philosophy or religion or science, is always to reduce, to quantify. And we keep trying to get to this undefinable through all these definitions.

Bohm: Yes, by assumption that the definitions will capture it.

Q: And that's what is destroying the whole thing.

Bohm: Yes. Now, science doesn't *have* to do that. Philosophy doesn't *have* to do that. It is only an assumption that that is the way it should go.

Q: The way it *is* going.

Bohm: It is going, but it is based on a commonly accepted assumption that that is the way it *ought* to go.

Q: That through the definition we can find the undefinable?

Bohm: That we can eliminate the undefinable – reduce everything to the definable.

Q: That's death.

Bohm: Well, other people think it would be wonderful. As somebody was saying, "If you did succeed with Artificial Intelligence, you would reduce

us to just a machine." Then somebody else said, "What's wrong with being a machine? It's a wonderful machine. A very intricate machine."

Q: But the coherence we mentioned before – the coherence that's alive in us – is not going to be satisfied with being a machine. So it's incoherent to want to do all these kinds of things.

Bohm: *You* may feel that way. Then we would have to have a dialogue with the person who feels the other way. You see, if we develop one group of people which says being a machine is terrible, and another group which says it would be wonderful to replace us with silicon-based machines, what are we going to do? We will split the human race up into all these factions.

Q: But I'm already one of those kind of human beings who *believe* in all these theories about being alive. Otherwise I wouldn't be here listening to all this.

Bohm: And I'm trying to say that there are still other people who believe otherwise. And we must consider them, because even if you don't care about them at all, the very fact that they *think* that way is affecting us. Their thought is our thought. We discussed that before.

Q1: We need a new thought.

Bohm: Yes. However, to *oppose* their thought is not going to be the answer.

Q1: No, a new thought wouldn't be an opposition thought. It would be a *new* thought.

Bohm: Somehow, we have got to have a dialogue. Even if they won't participate, we can participate in a dialogue between our thought and their thought.

Q2: But there's another factor in here. If I only acknowledge my experience of living that is in my thinking, inevitably I can only look at what I can hold in thinking. So at some point, unless something breaks, it doesn't matter which side I'm on. If all I've ever known or acknowledged is thinking, then no matter how I try, I can't see anything else.

Q1: Just to think couldn't possibly be your total existence.

Q2: That's the only experience of living that I *acknowledge*. My thinking *is* my reality.

Bohm: I'm just saying, "Let's look at this." The idea is that it's important to take this in without jumping to any conclusions. We were discussing dialogue this morning, saying that all these are *opinions*. We have our opinions, which we favor; we have arguments for them. Other people have theirs. We might not think much of their ideas, but it is still important to entertain them. Even if those people are not participating in the dialogue themselves, we are still in dialogue with their opinions. Perhaps, as we've been saying, we have to get beyond these particular opinions anyway.

I want to suggest that whether this thing can be solved culturally and socially depends on dialogue. That's what we're exploring. I'm not saying we're going to have an answer to this now, but it's important to appreciate this background. If some of us come to the 'truth', so-called, while a lot of people are left out, it's not going to solve the problem. We're going to have another conflict – just as there was conflict between different parts of the Christian faith, even though they all believed in love, the same God, the same Saviour, and so on.

Q: Are you saying that if I am in dialogue with another person, and I am willing to hold his view, and he isn't willing to hold mine, that we can still have a dialogue?

Bohm: You can still dialogue inside yourself. Or those of us who do it that way can dialogue together.

Q: And you are suggesting that that will make a difference?

Bohm: Yes.

Q: And that's not strengthening a sub-group, a sub-selection of thought, which is opposing some other dominant thought?

Bohm: We are at least considering them all. We may not have an answer. Often you could go week after week in a dialogue group and people are never

convinced of anything – they still keep talking. So you keep the dialogue going in yourself and amongst the group.

Q: What happens to the conflict, though, if the other person won't dialogue, or the other people with opinions won't dialogue? What happens to the conflict?

Bohm: Well, we can at least dialogue within ourselves as far as we can. It may open up later. I'm trying to say that if we really could do something creative, then it might still affect the other person.

Q: On a tacit level?

Bohm: Yes. It would really communicate at the tacit level, both with words and beyond words. But if we keep on repeating the same old story, then it won't.

Q: I might relax a great deal if I met people who could actually hold my view in their hearts, even though I was aware that they also had another view. That might open something up in me. Whereas, if I'm clear that you have got your view set and it is different from mine, then I'm not going to move.

Q: That's not like tolerance, is it?

Bohm: No. Tolerance means that you agree to let the other person think whatever he likes, but you're not very interested.

Q: I've met people who have been very certain about things, and they are very hard to talk to. Then one day something *real* happens to them – somebody dies or something very serious happens. And all of a sudden they are standing there sort of naked and vibrating and being real, in that they are admitting that they have feelings and doubts and fears and pain. And if you have been clear with them all the way through, then that clarity is the reason they are coming to you for understanding instead of going to someone else. So in this dialogue, if there are groups of people who have a kind of clarity that they're holding, when the so-called 'reality' of the situation impinges upon people who are not seeing it, whom are they going to talk to? I mean, you've already established a relationship.

Bohm: We need to be able to hold all these views; not only in dialogue, but also in politics and in various other aspects of our life. We need to get a feeling for the whole structure of thought – for the impulse which makes it attractive, not merely the intellectual content – because the intellectual content alone will never change people, no matter how ingenious you may get. It won't change you either, no matter how ingenious *they* get. Therefore, we have to appreciate the *whole* human being – what it all means.

It is hard to appreciate somebody who is opposed to you politically or ecologically or scientifically, or in whatever other way. You remember what I said about Einstein and Bohr: they had the greatest of goodwill and were very intelligent and their intention was to do it, but they couldn't. So this calls for something new, if people haven't been commonly looking at it this way – some new creative movement in the human psyche.

Q: We said the opinions and the content of views are important to some degree, but what we are truly looking for in a dialogue is a shift in perception, something far more drastic and far more deep than any view which one may hold.

Bohm: Yes, it's a shift in *perception* and in *fundamental assumptions* about the nature of perception and thought.

Q: As a suggestion, I would say that if a person's model of reality could shift so as to consider nature, himself, and everything as whole – everything as *him* – to the core and depth of his being, that would be a perception change.

Bohm: We have to see all that, yes. But I think that we may have to go through some sort of *process,* which is of the nature of dialogue as you described it this morning – of going through all that chaos and the opinions and vacillation and difficulties. We have to face that structure which opposes this within us. The other person's structure is *you,* just as the other person's flu germ becomes you. Once the flu germ has come in, then if you are a good environment for it, it just grows. Your immune system should stop it from growing; but if your immune system doesn't recognize it as something inappropriate or isn't healthy enough to deal with it, the virus simply grows.

All the thoughts, feelings, views, opinions, and so forth, come in; and they are growing in us, even as we think we are resisting them. And all those things affect us in their basic principles. We are particularly affected by the principle that "that's his view and this is mine" – which is false. All the views are just thought. Wherever thought is, it is just thought. It is all one. It's similar to the way the Eskimos were saying, "it's all one seal," only this is even more so. Here we have an example of where that kind of participatory view really works. Thought *is* all one, manifesting in all sorts of places and with all sorts of specific contents. So this spirit of a dialogue is important in facing this question, even though we realize that we are going in a direction which another very large part of the culture doesn't agree with at all.

Now, let's come back to the notion of the Unlimited. As I said, people have had a feeling of this from the very beginning. Primitive people must have looked at nature and felt that it was vast. They had awe of it. They could look at the sky or the land and say, "We don't understand this, but we depend upon it." In more recent times, we have brought nature within our power; but there is always *more* outside our grasp – even physically, there's the vast universe. People now claim that they might know it, from the beginning to the end; perhaps, though, there will be surprises there, too.

I am saying that the Unlimited is much more subtle than that. I am suggesting that the *ground* of all things cannot be gotten hold of.

Q: How can we get to that? Because I think that's a very important thing if we talk about a perception shift. It seems to me that one approach is by inference. The subtle gets more and more subtle. In mathematics, if you add one plus one half plus one third, and so on, you have an intuitive feeling that it will eventually sum up to two. But that is an inference. Is that what we are doing here – making a nice rational projection of an undefinable Unlimited?

Bohm: That's the first step. We are making a kind of map, because there are already other maps. There are a lot of maps which say everything is limited. So I'm suggesting another one to consider as well. And if you like, you can have a dialogue about these maps. But I am saying that you can provide a good case for saying that there *is* the Unlimited. The Unlimited is ***'that which is'***.

Then what is the limited? You see, if you say that the Unlimited is one thing and the limited is another, then the Unlimited would be limited, because it would have a boundary and there would be something else beyond it. Therefore, you have to say the Unlimited *includes* the limited. Thus the limited is really the Unlimited, but it is *abstracted* as the limited. This is a very subtle point: the limited is really the Unlimited, but it is abstracted as limited.

Q: How can you say it includes? By including limitation, wouldn't the Unlimited also become limited?

Bohm: Not necessarily, because it has *limited itself.* That is the nature of creativity.

Q: What is the 'what is', when it is limited? We do say that what actually is, is limited.

Bohm: But it is also unlimited. We have to say there is a certain paradox in the language when we attempt to discuss anything unlimited or absolute. If you say the absolute has got to be unlimited, that very statement limits it. The absolute is independent of everything. If it depends on something, it's not absolute. And then there is the 'relative', which means it is dependent. Now, how can we distinguish the absolute and the relative? Some people have said that everything is relative. By doing so, they are in effect saying that such relativity is absolute. Thus, they have brought in the absolute anyway. You find that it slips out, that you cannot readily make this distinction of the absolute and the relative without getting into a paradox if you carry it too far. But what I suggest is that you *can* go a bit further, and say the absolute includes the relative.

Q: You could go the other way, as the Hindus do, and say that the limited is only an appearance of the absolute. In that sense it is not real, and therefore it does not have a relationship to the absolute.

Bohm: But it must have one, because there is a difference between correct appearances and illusory appearances. You see, we could say that the

whole world is an appearance to us. The scientific view is that 'our' world is manufactured in the brain – the brain produces a *show* of the world, which guides us. Sometimes the show guides us correctly, sometimes it doesn't. So we may say that there can be correct appearances and false appearances. If the appearance is correct, then in some way it must be related to that of which it is an appearance. Thus, you cannot say that a correct appearance is just totally illusion. Illusion is an *in*correct appearance.

We have to say that this distinction of appearance and reality is one of those paradoxical things where thought breaks down. Reality includes within it the process of creating appearances, so appearances are part of reality. And they can be correct or incorrect, or relatively correct. There are all sorts of possibilities.

Q: We can go in the other way, too, and say that appearances, whether they are correct or incorrect as appearances, also carry an incorrectness, because we ascribe reality to them.

Bohm: If we directly say that the appearances *are* the reality, we are saying something wrong. That means our language is rather crude and unsubtle. We have said that literal thought claims, "I'm telling you the way things really are." But there is more subtle thought – there is metaphorical thought, which doesn't claim that. Poetry doesn't claim that at all. When Shakespeare says, "All the world's a stage," he isn't trying to say that here in front of us is a stage. It's more subtle.

The point is that reality is very subtle, and I'm saying that our ordinary thought has not kept up with it.

Q: Do we imply anything by having this relatively mixed distinction between absolute relative appearance and 'what is'? Do these terms imply something beyond them?

Bohm: They are a kind of map which may point beyond themselves. I am suggesting that they have a significance. However, they are acting like a sign, rather than directly being a copy of reality. A 'sign' does not look like the reality to which it points. It's not a copy. But it has to point properly.

Q: It has to go in some certain way. It cannot be just arbitrary.

Bohm: There is something about it which is proper, but that doesn't mean that in any sense a sign is a *copy* of 'what is'. Thus, our thought in this way is functioning as a sign, a pointer, a significance. We could say that the reality itself is undefinable. And we say appearance comes out of that – reality produces appearances; it is a *real* process. Appearance doesn't just suddenly appear out of nothing. For instance, if the brain isn't working right, things appear in a very different way; or if you think differently, things may appear differently; or if you don't look correctly, they appear differently. A lot of things are required to get a correct appearance. Therefore, appearance is not to be dismissed for being merely appearance.

There has been in thought the idea of the *appearance* and the *essence.* The essence is the true being. The appearance is what shows. But when you go deeper, you may say, "Even our thought is only an appearance. It's an appearance of something more abstract." So we have two appearances, one of them is called the 'appearance' and the other is called the 'essence'. The two together give us a better pointer than one alone.

Q: I don't understand.

Bohm: Well, suppose we say that this table appears to be solid matter. Scientists have said, "In true being it is made of little atoms moving around very fast. That's really what it is. It's an illusion to say that this is a table." But then they say, "Well, let's go further. In fact, the atoms are not solid matter at all either. They are made of smaller particles. There are no atoms there at all. They are appearances, too. Those neutrons and protons are made of quarks, and who knows what *they* are made of." Nobody has seen those particles with the eye. You see them with the mind.

Therefore, we don't seem to get beyond the level of appearances. But the combination of the various kinds of appearances points to the reality in some way, better than just one appearance alone. That's the suggestion.

Q: When does appearance become essence? Is there a dividing line?

Bohm: It's just a division like north and south. What was north becomes south when you move along.

Q: When the scientist is perceiving at this level and then breaking it down to atoms and then to electrons, is that total picture the essence?

Bohm: That is part of literal thought, and literal thought cannot capture the essence. I'm trying to say that the *true being* is undefinable. I think it is coherent to talk this way. Now, whether this will be other than merely a map will depend on something more that we have to do.

Q: But we have to continue going around this issue, as someone said here, "tiptoe around it." May I ask, what do you mean by 'reality' and by 'actuality'?

Bohm: Well, these words are rather difficult to define. The word 'reality' is based on a Latin root *res,* meaning 'a thing'. At that rate, 'reality' would be 'everything'. And *res* comes from the past participle of the verb *reri,* meaning 'to think'. You see, the *thing* is what you can think about, and what is determined by conditions that you can think about. The thing is different from the thought, but nevertheless they correspond in some way. That's the ordinary way of thinking. And we are saying that that way of thinking is limited, and that the essence of this reality might be the true being.

'Actuality' means the actual act. The *appearance* is really the form in which we experience actuality. It is in consciousness that we sense the most actual experience there is.

Q: Do you differentiate between true being and actuality as something actuating, moving?

Bohm: Yes. 'Actuality' means the act. But we can get into very difficult philosophical questions this way, and I am not sure it is going to help us. I think we can get it clear if we stop here and say: we have the notion of appearance and essence, but whenever the essence is *defined,* it turns out to be a more subtle appearance.

Thus, whatever we can actually get hold of are appearances. And what is implied is some *true being* beyond, which I say is unlimited, subtle, cannot be defined.

Q: How far we can go implying? What is the power of implication?

Bohm: Well, we're using that now. And we are *implying* the Unlimited by this argument.

Q: Doesn't the fact that you can drink a glass of water imply the limited, because you can only do that by drinking a glass of water. You cannot *think* it.

Bohm: Yes, but the fact that it is water is told to you by thought. If you had no words, you wouldn't know that. We went into the example of Helen Keller once, and how she couldn't tell that running water was the same as standing water until she had the word 'water'.

Q: Our difficulty, as far as I can see, is that we live as if our thinking were unlimited.

Bohm: Yes, I agree.

Q: Yet that is disproved constantly by the fact that I *eat*, rather than *think*, my meal.

Bohm: A scientist could argue against that, by saying that both you and the food are all arrangements of atoms moving around, doing all that. But let's accept it and say that thought is limited, thought is an abstraction. You wouldn't even be able to find your food without the abstraction of thought. So the abstract and the concrete work together. The abstract is itself the *result* of a concrete process, which in turn *affects* the concrete process – just as the appearance is produced by the underlying true being.

Now, I say that this is a way of talking which is coherent, and that it is important at this level to have a coherent way of talking, because this is the very foundation of it. If you are incoherent at this level, that incoherence is going to spread into everything. People have tried to find coherence in terms of the idea of God – by saying, "God did it. God made it all. And He arranged it all to be coherent. God is the source of everything. God is the true Being." All sorts of arguments have been made. People have done that throughout history.

Q: I didn't really follow all that you were saying enough to get hold of it in thought. However, I don't think you are saying that we have to have followed each word so that we understand it verbally, because we might then take that understanding as reality. But are you trying to loosen up something when you say how important it is that we be coherent – so that basically we will see that what is being perceived and thought about is not the concrete? Is that what you are saying?

Bohm: Such perception is not the whole of the concrete reality, though it does point to it. It has a relation somehow.

Q: But you are trying to loosen up this process for us.

Bohm: I am saying that the underlying true being – whatever you want to call it – is undefinable, and that it defines itself. That is, I have used this idea that it *unfolds,* that it unfolds into the things that appear.

Q: But we can't get hold of that.

Bohm: No. Then we say that the *true being* is that *whole* process. Now, that's a way of looking at it too. So the question which will arise is: can we do more than that? You see, we have cleared up the map to some extent. Is there a possibility of consciousness actually somehow contacting the true being in a more intimate way than that? I think everybody knows what the question means. People have gone into it in many many ways over the ages. Perhaps we could now talk about it for a while.

Q: I see two possibilities. One is the way we seem to be exploring here, which is coming to project and consider the Unlimited by implication. And with that, we also derive various notions, suggestions, and proposals to think about it, to feel it out, and so on. The other way is the experience of the mystic. He is *directly* there. He doesn't tiptoe around. He says, "Reality *is.*" And then he or his followers may say various other things, which of course become a set of interpretations. These are two ways, and I wish to ask whether there are any other ways.

Bohm: Well, that's the point. Is there something between? We might say, "Here's one way, here's the other." But that's like all the divisions – the scientist and the artist, and so on. The question is whether there is something in between. I'm suggesting that we explore that.

Q: You talked about the scientist on the one side and the religious person on the other side, but in your experience you might be able to say that they are both close together. I mean, I think that any scientist who is looking deeply into these questions of physics must in a way be very deeply involved in some philosophical question. Without that, science would have very little meaning.

Bohm: The only reason I brought that example in was to say we have all sorts of oppositions.

Q: But everything is leading to this question.

Bohm: Yes. This is the question, I think, on which ultimately the whole thing turns. Otherwise, even if we manage to get the human race to survive we would well ask, "What for?"

Q: We can say the Unlimited is. And out of the Unlimited, everything else *is*.

Bohm: I am suggesting it is more coherent to organize our way of using language so as to talk that way. But that doesn't mean that we are necessarily talking directly from the Unlimited.

Q: And out of this limited has come *thought*, which is even more limited.

Bohm: No, thought has come from the *Un*limited. I'm trying to say thought is part of the Unlimited.

Q: *Everything* is out of the Unlimited.

Bohm: Yes. Including thought. We mustn't divide them.

Q: But then there is the limited. It arises.

Bohm: There is and there isn't. In one sense it's a mere appearance. In another sense, it may be a correct appearance, which has more being than a *mere* appearance. The limited has a 'kind' of being, but it isn't the *ground*.

Q: It arises out of the Unlimited?

Bohm: Yes.

Q: Or it is an 'aspect', or any way you want to say. Now, out of this limited comes thought?

Bohm: No. Ultimately, thought comes from the *Un*limited. *Thought is the process of limitation itself.*

Q: Outside of thought, is there any limited?

Bohm: There is no limited outside of thought.

Q: The material is not what you mean by the 'limited'?

Bohm: No. I think matter is unlimited. But by thought we *attribute* limits to it – which may be good maps, or may be good appearances.

Q: So no matter how you say it, thought is not that big of a thing. In actuality, it's a very small thing.

Bohm: Yes. It's there, but it's not that big.

Q: But the problem with thought is that it thinks it's the Unlimited.

Bohm: Yes. That's the problem. And in fact, it is always moving in that way. It says, "I'm very modest. I only tell you the way things are. I avoid fantasy and speculation and such." But it always ends up by saying it is everything.

Q: Thought has taken over as God, as reality, as everything. But if we at least have this perspective, we might not be so easily fooled.

Bohm: Yes. It took over. And the same problem arises religiously. You see, you could say, "God made everything. God is Unlimited and He made all the limited things. So He determined the limits."

Q: That's a thought.

Bohm: It's a thought. But it's very similar in form to the thought which I'm suggesting about the unfoldment of the limited from the Unlimited. I'm saying that the same problem arises again in different ages in a different form.

Q: I'm trying to get to that place where I'm not fooling myself.

Bohm: You either have to be there or not.

Q: I was hoping the process of this whole enquiry would be to de-delude me somehow, or to dis-illusion me, or whatever.

Bohm: We can't do that. I think that we can only say, "Let's be serious. If we are very serious, then maybe we won't fool ourselves." We are simply exploring.

Q: We are exploring by understanding the whole thought process. But if we try to get hold of it, wouldn't that just be further delusion, because it would still be in thought?

Bohm: Yes.

Q: Then are we postulating that there's no way out of this?

Bohm: No, no.

Q: No way out of it in thought.

Bohm: Well, even that may be a bit too strong to say. We're saying no way out of it by thought *alone.*

Q: Religion traditionally has hypothesized the existence of some primal force, some essence, which we might call 'the ultimate reality', 'the all', 'the everything'. It also hypothesizes that this is somehow knowable by human beings, at least to a degree. But it says that this is not knowable through an intellectual process, nor through empirical thought; rather, it is knowable somehow only intuitively. Is this what you are alluding to?

Bohm: Well, there may be some similarities, because I am saying that if we are going to contact it in any way, it would have to be through the *subtle tacit process,* which we wouldn't ordinarily be able to define.

Q: Would that be the intuitive?

Bohm: Some people call it 'the intuitive'. It is a matter of what the words mean. Other people mean something else by 'the intuitive'.

But the main point is that this question has arisen perennially, in different forms. And so we can consider it now in this form. We'll say the Unlimited is 'that which is'.

Now I'll discuss the question of *truth.* And then we must get to the question of the *self,* which gets in the way of this whole thing. Otherwise, we are not going to make sense of all this, because we will have left out the principal barrier.

Let's begin by saying something about the truth. We talked about the 'true being'. The word 'true' in English means 'straight', 'honest', and 'faithful'. That's clearly part of truth; that is, not fooling yourself and not twisting things up. In Latin, the word *verus* means 'that which is'. So that's another good meaning – the truth is faithful to that which is. In Greek it's *alethia,* which means 'not being lethargic', 'not being asleep', 'being awake and alert'. The Indo-European word is *deru* and it meant 'steadfast', which is yet another connotation of truth.

There are many different ways of looking at it. The point is that we do not *grasp* 'that which is'. But we *are* that which is, or at least we are in it, or part of it. We participate. And truth, insofar as it goes through us, is a coherent part of that which is.

There are two theories of truth that are commonly thought about. One is the *correspondence theory* of truth, which says that the thought is true if it corresponds to reality. We discussed that before, saying that it is a very abstract idea of limited value. The other view is the *coherence theory* – that truth is coherent with that which is. But then, the way people interpret that is usually too narrow. Do they mean 'coherent all through the whole of life'?

You see, truth *is* coherent, coheres with that which is. But more than that, *it is that which is.* Truth is not just something *about* that which is. But the truth *is*.

This is an important point to realize – that truth participates. But the false also participates, as we have been talking about – literal thought claims to be just telling you that which is, the way it is, and not participating. And that has been the basically false feature of literal thought.

Q: Is there no objectivity?

Bohm: Not ultimately. There is a *relative* objectivity, which we need, but on the really important questions we can't get it.

We are saying that the truth obviously must participate in the Unlimited. It *cannot* be limited, that's clear. Truth itself cannot be limited. Otherwise, what would it mean? So we have to get *meanings* coherent if we are going to perceive truth, or to take part in truth. That is why I say that the dialogue is so important. If our meanings are incoherent, how are we going to participate in truth?

Q: Do you mean *realize* it? Because we are already participating in truth.

Bohm: But we have to do it in a certain way. When we begin, the whole group has different assumptions and people don't meet. The meanings are incoherent, so we cannot arrive at truth.

Q: But I am saying that simply by the fact of our being alive and here in this room, we are already participating in truth.

Bohm: Yes, but in another way we are not.

Q: Because there's no realization of it.

Bohm: That's the important point. If we want to realize truth and take part in it, we have to get our meanings together and coherent. Then truth may emerge, unannounced. It sort of comes in subtly. But the attempt to arrive at the truth directly is too violent, too arbitrary. And it's one of the worst ways of creating disagreement. As we discussed, Einstein and Bohr each had different ideas of truth. Once you think you've got the truth and somebody else with a different idea thinks he has the truth, you can never meet. The same holds in religions. So you need to get the meanings clear.

Q: When you say, "get the meanings clear," are you talking about the verbal level?

Bohm: And also more deeply – the whole thing. Therefore, throughout this entire seminar we are exploring *meanings,* and perhaps truth will arise, or whatever it does.

Q: Moving toward coherence is already a pointer toward truth, isn't it?

Bohm: Yes, and it also creates a mind which is the proper vehicle of truth. A mind that is incoherent cannot hold truth. It cannot take part in it.

Q: We may have to be careful not to point toward coherence as something final, and to think that that way we will arrive at truth. But maybe moving towards coherence is already a vector pointing toward truth as we go along.

Bohm: Yes, and the move toward coherence is primarily the move to acknowledge and see the self-deception, to see that the mind is conditioned to move away from coherence – through the whole social background and whatever other reasons beyond that. And as we get into this area of the Unlimited and whatever would be meant by 'truth', we find that the principal source of incoherence is actually the thought about the *self* – about yourself or what you identify with: your country, your religion, your self-interest, and all that.

Q: How is truth different from the Unlimited?

Bohm: There is no real difference. It is a different way of talking about it.

Q: It's a dangerous concept, truth.

Bohm: Well, it can't be a 'concept'. That's the point. Truth is *that which is.* It is not a concept. It is that movement which is the subtle, the tacit. The truth is not any particular *thing* that is conceptualized in abstraction.

Q: Then seekers of 'truth' per se are necessarily operating incoherently.

Bohm: They are if they seek it as a *thing.*

Q: To say, "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" probably is incoherent, isn't it?

Bohm: You won't really capture that, you see. I think you have to say truth is whole, but you don't 'get' the whole truth. Other people have said, "God is truth." And in a way, if you say, "Truth is that which is," you can understand why somebody might associate it with God.

Q: But isn't truth of the now, just in the moment?

Bohm: It may be. That takes some further discussion – including what we imply by 'time' – and we'll come to that in the next hour. I think that we've now reached a point where we could just look at it – pause a moment. We could take one or two questions, and then have a break.

Q: Are truth and facts the same thing?

Bohm: No. A fact is much more limited. The word 'fact' is based on a Latin root meaning 'what has been made or done', which is also the root of 'manufacture'. We can establish a fact in various ways, but you have to ask whether it is really a fact or whether it is the truth. People can establish facts which are misleading. So is it a *true* fact?

Q: Don't we have to be very careful if we use the word 'truth', because we can impose limitations on that, just as people do with the word 'God'.

Bohm: That's right. Therefore, we have to be very aware of it. People have mixed up the word 'God' with all sorts of other things. The word 'truth' can very easily encounter a similar difficulty. And then people who believe that they have the truth will not be able to agree with each other.

Q: That's why it is so important to be able to hold in a dialogue *all* of the opinions, because it goes to something more subtle.

Bohm: Yes, there is something more subtle. Truth is *being.* It is that which is. It is not any particular *content.* It is the true being – the essence, if you want to put it that way. But these are all rather metaphorical ways of talking, and we mustn't take them too literally.

Q: Does that then mean not opposing anybody's opinion, no matter what?

Bohm: Well, that's too strong again. You see, you may not agree with somebody's opinion. That's perfectly all right. For a long time we may not be able to get an agreement on opinions, even if we can all listen to the opinions. We probably wouldn't agree with Adolf Hitler, for instance. But it would be important for us to be able to put ourselves in his place, as it

were, to see his thought and to see how it would inevitably give rise to his impulses. Perhaps we would lack the information needed to be able to do this. One piece of information is that he was beaten mercilessly by his father and that he ran away once. The whole society was constantly beating children. Another piece of information is that there was some possibility that one of Hitler's ancestors was Jewish, in a society where that was regarded as very bad, and he wanted to be sure that he dissociated himself from that. There are various items of information which could help us, most of which we obviously don't have. But it is important to understand the other fellow, although we don't necessarily agree with any of what he is saying.

Q: And that would come through dialogue?

Bohm: That would be our dialogue amongst ourselves, or even by yourself. That is the attitude of dialogue. And the further this attitude could spread, the more I think it would help to bring order.

Q: It almost seems like it's not such a bad thing to hold opinions, provided we're ready to have them attacked somewhat. Because *not* to hold opinions is also kind of a falseness.

Bohm: You can have opinions all right, provided it's a bit open, and provided you're a little open to the other opinion. Even if you don't agree.

Q: The point isn't to be totally neutral about cutting down the Brazilian rain forest.

Bohm: No. But you can understand why some of the Brazilian landowners believe that there's no problem.

We'll take a break now.

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Bohm: The way we start a dialogue group is usually by having a discussion about dialogue, just as we did now – talking it over, discussing why we're doing it, what it means, and so forth. I don't think it is wise to start a group before people have discussed all that, at least somewhat. You can, but then you'll have to trust that the group will continue, and that these questions will come out later. So if you are thinking of meeting in a group, one way which I suggest is to have a discussion or a seminar *about* dialogue for a while, and then those who are interested can go on to have the dialogue. And you mustn't worry too much whether you are or are not having dialogue – that's one of the blocks. It may be mixed.

Now let's come back to the question of the self. The principal difficulty in our whole thought process is the thought about the self – about the ego, or whatever you want to call it. The ego seems to be so important that we are ready to distort everything in order to protect it. We will deceive ourselves, engage in violence, and do all kinds of things.

So what is the ego? I made the suggestion that there is a *self-image* that everybody has – an image of himself. Part of that is the body image which is built into us. You get a feeling about your body which is a kind of image. If a person has his arm cut off, he will often feel that it is still there. That's a kind of image. A sense of the body – a kind of image – is projected from the brain, and that helps guide you.

But there is another kind of image that you make of yourself. You might make a picture of yourself in the imagination as to what you look like, and gradually you identify with that picture. And you attribute various properties to it, according to what people say, or what you would like, and all the rest. You begin to feel that image is real.

Let's look at the analogy of a television set again. It projects an image – perhaps the image of a telephone. Then sound occurs, and you may feel that it is coming from the telephone in the image on the screen. But that can't be. There is no telephone in the set, only spots of light on the screen. Yet you still get the experience of a telephone. If nobody in the television program gets up to answer the phone, you may wonder if your representation of what

is happening is coherent or not. And if they still don't answer the phone, you realize that your image is not coherent. You say, "Perhaps it's my own telephone that is ringing. There it is in the other room." First you experienced the phone in the television picture in this room, and then you suddenly experience it in the next room.

Once again we see, as we've said, that the way you experience something is according to the way thought thinks. That is the same as to say that 'thinking makes it so'. You experience your image according to the way you've been thinking.

Another point is that you accept other people's thoughts. Anybody else's thought becomes your own thought. You may resist his thought and say, "He's an idiot. It's not right." But it still enters your consciousness – like a virus, as we discussed before – and you are trying to protect your image from that thought. If his thought is negative about you and you accept that thought as true, you'll attribute it to your own image and feel bad. Then you could react to that and say, "No, it's not true. He doesn't know." But his thought is still there, and you have to defend yourself against that thought. You still worry, "Suppose he's right?" But you won't want to accept that. You generally won't be really logical and say, "He says I'm an idiot. Am I an idiot, or am I not an idiot?" Even that is silly, though, because to identify yourself with what somebody else says is really idiotic.

So you have your self-image, and also you have an image of other people. You attribute the qualities of your thought to them. You say, "They're good. He is my friend. He is an enemy. These people are good. Those are bad." You feel that's it. You feel that's how they actually are. You see them that way. It goes into your experience in the immediate. The image enters the immediate, and you no longer see that it's an image. Rather, you treat it as reality. And therefore, since the source of that image is thought, you have to control your thought to protect the image. And you have to be careful not to let thoughts in that will disturb that image. Thus, your thought goes wrong, and moves into self-deception.

Why do we engage in this strange behavior? It is really crazy. Idiotic. Stupid. Whatever you want to call it. It is very hard to find a word that is adequate to describe this. And yet it seems that the entire human race is caught up in it. Moreover, we regard this as the most important thing in the whole of life, and are ready to do anything or destroy anything in order to maintain it.

As we've said, one point is that literal thought has the capability to project an image and say, "That's just the way it is. That's the way I am." It can get into that trouble. But it doesn't *have* to. Then why do we do it? You can see that we get caught up in it. And once we do, it is hard to see our way out of it, because we can't tell what's real and what's not real anymore.

Part of the problem is that this image has such great importance – tremendous value – which gives it priority that overrides everything. If somebody questions it, or you yourself question it, asking, "I wonder if that means anything," the question is just pushed aside. It's blocked out. It's zapped. It's anaesthetized. You forget it. All of these ways of violently protecting the image pop up because you say, "I must use all my force to protect it." That's the way the thought goes.

But there are some still deeper questions. The nature of this image is actually the nature of the self. You say, "There's *me*." You distinguish yourself from everything else. That has a certain limited value; up to a point it makes sense. There is a boundary at the skin, but even that boundary is movable. Consider a blind man holding a stick. If he holds it tightly, he feels that he ends at the end of the stick. If he holds it loosely, he feels that he ends at his fingers. Similarly, if you identify with your country, you feel that you end at the boundary of your country. And when somebody crosses that boundary, it is *you* who are attacked. Or you may put that identity inside and say, "I'm somewhere inside here looking at my arm," as if it were something else. That sense of self comes down finally to a point somewhere, to no dimension. When you ask somebody to point to himself, he might point to the heart, or to the solar plexus; sometimes people will point to the head. It could be anywhere. You say, "That's me." Then it is attributed, and that's how you experience it.

That 'point' that you experience is clearly not there. That's a thought, an image. It is supported by muscular tension, and you may even feel the muscles being tense where that point feels to be. That gives it some sense of reality. Thought produces muscular tension, just as it produces emotions and felts. And there are also intentions, or impulses. Thought can produce impelleds, as we discussed. And then you can attribute your impulse to that point where you think you are. That is, I have an impulse to act, and I experience it as coming from the point where I think I am – the center of me. It's all arranged by thought.

But perhaps you could equally well arrange for it to come from way out there. It has been done. Some people have felt that they are out of the body looking at themselves – and not only in dreams. A man I knew went into a special tank that had been set up, where everything was uniform temperature, very quiet, and all that. He wondered whether he could have an out of the body experience. He stayed a long time trying it, and then suddenly he felt that the center of his being had moved a little bit away from the center of his body. So he thought, "Whatever I did, I'll do a little bit more of it," and the center moved a little bit further. It was implicit, it was tacit. Then he got it to move way out there, so that he was looking at his body from far away. Perhaps in such a circumstance the body doesn't look very important – the pain in the body or whatever doesn't matter all that much. But obviously, if we experienced the body as far away like that, we wouldn't protect it very well and we probably wouldn't survive. Therefore, we have developed so as to experience ourselves as being somewhere in the middle of the body. But that experience is all arranged by thought. You see, thought can arrange the center to be anywhere.

Thus, there is the notion of the center of myself. But *what* is the self? The word 'self' fundamentally means 'that which is quintessential'. You know what an essence is. And the prefix 'quint' means 'fifth', like a quintette. People used to say there were four essences – earth, water, air, and fire. And in the Middle Ages they added a fifth essence, which was still more essential. In other words, it was the essence of the essence. They called it the fifth-essence. So the quintessence is the thing itself.

The self is supposed to be the quintessence, the very center of the true being. But still, *where* is it? You never find it if you look for it. That point moves around. It's obviously arranged by thought; but it seems nevertheless very real, because it produces all sorts of results that make it feel real. It can get hurt. It can get angry. It can think. We attribute everything to the self. We say, "*I* think. *I* get hurt. *I* do this. *I* do that. *I* choose." Then we experience it that way, and we say, "There is the self."

We all know the three words: 'me' 'myself' and 'I'. They all mean the self. We assume that they all mean the same thing basically. But there are subtle differences. 'Me' refers to the self as object. 'Me' is the self to which everything happens. It happens to 'me'. 'I' is the subject. 'I' is the one who makes it happen. 'I' is the one who thinks, who does, who chooses, who perceives. 'I' is the *source,* the one who decides everything, who determines everything. The concept of 'myself' is the union of 'I' and 'me'. 'Myself' means that 'I' and 'me' are the same. The object is the same as the subject. Now, if we could stick to that we wouldn't be in trouble; it might not be interesting, but we wouldn't be in trouble.

The concept of 'I' has implicit the notion of the Unlimited. This is the thing to notice. It is nicely illustrated in the Biblical story of Moses and the voice in the burning bush that he confronted. One of the things that Moses asked this voice was, "Who shall I say sent me unto the tribes of Israel?" The voice said, "You shall say, quote, 'I Am' sent you," – indicating that the voice thought that 'I Am' was its name. That seems a very strange name to have, but you can see that it is a very good name for the voice of God – 'I Am' *by itself.*

If you say, "I am *me,* I am *this,* I am *that,"* you are implying limitation, because those imply that you are what you describe yourself as, and *not something else.* But 'I Am' by itself suggests something unlimited. That feeling of 'I Am', when you don't add anything to it, suggests really, "I am The Great I Am." That's exactly what God said, "I Am That I Am." That was His name too, His more extended name. His first name was 'I Am' and His second name was also 'I Am'.

Now, what about 'me'? We said that 'me' refers to the self as object. But nobody wants to be treated as an object. Someone says, "You treated *me* as an *object*. You hurt me. You pushed me around. You manipulated me." But objects *should* be pushed around and manipulated. And since 'me' is an object, why shouldn't it be like any other object? In fact, society does treat everybody as an object. It says, "You have a job. You've got to do this. You belong here. You're an object." The law says you are that sort of object, and yet it also says, "You are a subject who chooses, who is responsible." And so on.

In this way, is it possible to have this union of subject and object, and make a real concept of 'myself'? Here is a difficulty – 'me' *has to be* limited, because it is an object. Everybody says, "I'm limited." More likely, they say, "*You* are limited." They tell the child, "You are not 'The Great I Am'. You think you are great, but you are not." Society is always telling you that. People, however, want to feel, "I'm the greatest. I'm wonderful." They would like to say that out loud, and some people do. They get a great feeling out of it. Why else would they say, "I'm the greatest. I'm the King of Kings. I'm greater than all the others." Or, "I want to be. It would be great if I were." Or something similar.

So the phrase 'I Am' implies God. That's the meaning of that episode of Moses in the desert. Unfortunately, one is constantly discovering that in reality I'm only little me, though I would like to be The Great I Am.

Now, there is a contradiction there. It is incoherent. That incoherence contains a tremendous urge or drive to expand one's self-image, to have delusions of grandeur, megalomania. Why should such delusions be so prevalent? Why is it important whether you are great or not? It's not clear. Why should it be so important? It does seem that it is important to people to feel that way. A lot of people do, and probably underneath everybody does.

As I said, society systematically tells you, "You are just little you. Don't imagine you're so great." It tries to keep people down. But at the same time it keeps on saying, "You ought to be great. You ought to do great things. You should aim for great things and make yourself great." Thus, it creates this conflict, this incoherence. It's one of the main impulses, one of the main motor

forces of all action – the impulse to expand, to become great, to do something great, to get a great reputation. If somebody thinks of you as great, you might start to think of yourself that way. Then you could say, "This point inside is very great." And that seems to produce a very good feeling. Why is all that?

For example, why do people make money? In part it is because they need things. But they want to make a lot more money than that. One reason is that they want to feel self-esteem, they want to feel *great.* They want to feel that everybody knows that they can make money and spend it, and that therefore they are good people, powerful great people, and all that. That is one of the motivating forces of the whole society. Or if not to make money, then to become famous, to acquire power, or to do other things to make themselves feel important.

You can see that there is something in the meaning of the notion of 'I Am' which leads to all that, which implies all that, when it is confused with the limited 'me'. This very attempt to define and limit the self as an object implies that incoherence. If there *is* a self, the only true self might be the Unlimited, because the 'self' should be the quintessence – and that would be another word for the Unlimited. But there is an inherent tendency to confuse the limited 'me' with the unlimited 'I Am'. And society is always saying, "You are limited." So you tell yourself that you are limited; otherwise you get into trouble.

There have been other notions of the self. Instead of saying, " 'I' am defined by 'me'," there has been an ancient notion saying, "What I am is unknown, but it is constantly being revealed, unfolding." That's another notion you could think of, which would even allow you to say, "I'm a manifestation of the Unlimited." Now, in some sense perhaps we ought to able to say that we are the Unlimited. It is really wrong to say that we are limited 'objects'. But we are confused about it; it's incoherent. We cannot manage to deny that we are limited without creating a terrible problem.

Q: We don't see that the Unlimited is the same as 'no-body'.

Bohm: Yes, that's another aspect. And if we look deeper, we say that the Unlimited is *no thing,* because every *thing* is limited. The Unlimited cannot be a 'thing'. It implies no thing. But we feel that the word 'nothing' seems

vacuous, it's pejorative. It's bad to say something is nothing. 'Nothing' is very bad. I have got to be *something*. So that's a drive. It's an impulse.

Q: A depressed person might say, "I'm rotten," or, "I'm evil. I'm the object of a curse." Or something like that.

Bohm: That comes from going to the other extreme, saying, "I lost hope of being something, so I'll really go the other way." It's still the same sort of thought. He really feels, "Though I am nothing, still I ought to be something," and that makes it worse. He doesn't say, "I'm nothing, and that's it."

Q: But then a psychiatrist might say, "This person needs self-esteem."

Bohm: At a certain level, yes. But more deeply we are not discussing that individual, but *the fact that the whole society is crazy.* And I don't know if 'self-esteem' is what will cure the society. There is something wrong with this whole culture – which includes the psychiatrist, because he has his problems of self-esteem and incoherence, too. I mean, he has also been told that he is nothing, and that he ought to be something. And perhaps he feels that he ought to be something, that he ought to be great. But now we are discussing a much broader context. A psychiatrist may help a person in a certain limited area, but we will still be moving toward the cliff, which we will duly jump off like lemmings.

So what can we say about this self? There is the question of the self, and the connection with thought. One of the things thought has said is that there is the self, which is supposed to be the *thinker* – the *source* of thought. Thought says, "I'm produced by this being called 'me'. The source of thought is 'me', or 'I'." But suppose that, as I have suggested, it turns out that thought is producing the *impression* that there is a thinker – an *image,* like the telephone in the television set, which isn't really there. It would be quite possible that thought is producing such an impression that it is created by a thinker, when in fact it is just going on as a *process.*

Thought is always searching, seeking. As it does, it attributes authority to itself, because the thinker is also the observer – the one who sees and knows and has the truth. Thought builds up authority. It reinforces itself by saying,

"I know this. It's similar to these other facts that I know. And furthermore, out there is somebody else who also knows it." And thought can then get a certain amount of energy out of that.

Now, to a certain extent, the image of the self is needed. Each person has his own interests, his own particular background, his own needs, and so forth, which can be directed by that kind of thought. The difficulty is that that thought takes over, it gets first priority. Because of this 'I Am' feeling, the self-image immediately gets treated as the Great I Am – as God. Everything else takes second priority to that image. But then society says, "No, you are not first. The society takes first priority." Then it's 'we'. But that also leads to fragmentation, because it's the same thing – *us* against *them*. There was a common English word in the eighteenth century, 'wegotism'. We could say there's the ego and the wego. It's the same thing – you get exactly the same problem with 'us' and 'we' as you get with 'me' and 'I'.

Thought does not see itself as being a *process*. The fact that *thought thinks it is produced by a thinker* is one of the reasons why it is so hard to see through this. As I was saying, thought wouldn't do this if it were proprioceptive. But the notion that thought is produced by a thinker is taken literally – it is literal thought. And that creates the impression of a thinker.

You see, you can make a distinction between yourself and the table, and hold to that. It will work. You distinguish yourself from the table. If there is something wrong with the table, it's clear that you are thinking about the table and doing something with it. In order to do something with an object, you must first think that way – separating yourself from it in thought, making a map, using that map, and even *perceiving* the separation from the object in that way.

Then it seems natural to extend that process. We discussed before how thought and felt are interrelated and provoke each other. For instance, you may get an unpleasant feeling or a felt, which is caused by thought. Then thought appears and says, "Okay, what shall we do with it?" Thought says, "There it is. I must draw back and look at it." So it sets up a *point* that draws back and looks. That point isn't anything concrete – any more than

there is actually a real telephone ringing inside the television set – but that's the way it looks and feels.

It feels as though there is a *looker* and what is *looked at*. We don't realize that that division is created by thought. And our acceptance of that division justifies the argument that we need to try to do something about the bad feeling. Therefore, thought tries to think some more thoughts that will change the feeling, which thought itself created in the first place. We discussed before the trouble that thought gets into by not realizing that it is causing the problems it is trying to deal with. It is confused.

Thus you have the thinker and the thought, the observer and the observed, the experiencer and the experience – or various other things of that nature. Similarly, you could say *consciousness* and its *content*. We say we are conscious, and that that consciousness is distinguished from what we are conscious of. But the two cannot be separate. That's all one general form. Krishnamurti has emphasized this a great deal. He has said that the observer *is* the observed, the thinker *is* the thought.

But our whole assumption is that it is not so. Rather, you experience that there is a thought or a felt inside of you; and that you are standing back from it, looking at it and trying to change it to a better form – as you might try to change some outside object like the table. But that cannot work, because there is no real division. *It is all thought.* The division that is being assumed is not there, any more than the national division is really there. In fact, it's even less real than the national division; it is an extremely tight connection. What we call the thinker and what we call the thought are just *two images* which might refer to the same thing.

Let's take as an example the thought behind anger or violence. If you are angry, you could have the thought, "I'm justified in being angry because of so and so." And then you could say, "There is my anger. I've got to get rid of it, control it, change it." You justify that by this image that you and your thought and your anger are all separate. You will find it hard to question that, because it looks as if that's the way it is. But if you repeat the thought that is behind

your anger, you can begin to see that it is the way I suggested – that the thought is somehow producing that whole situation. And the situation is producing the impulse to keep on thinking. We discussed this before. You can see that it is really all connected, though it all looks separate.

And you can say the same with violence. The typical thought behind violence is that this is a situation where force is needed. I then get violent felts and feelings, which I say are different from *me* who is looking and thinking. But suppose I have gone into all this and I begin to say, "I *am* that violence." Because 'I Am' *is* that violence – whatever I have meant by 'I Am' at this moment *is* that violence, is *controlled* by it. That is a major factor. Not only does that mean that those felts are violence, but so is the thought that says that this is a situation calling for force. And I *am* that thought. That's a little harder to see, because we are very conditioned to believe that *we* have produced that thought, and *it* is serving *us* and telling *us* the way things are.

Q: At that moment we *are* that thought?

Bohm: I'm saying only at *that* moment. In another moment we are something else. At that moment, we are that thought, we are that felt. But the mind is always moving away. It doesn't *want* to see that it is *not separate* from the thoughts, because there is the feeling or notion that the 'self' – whatever I am – must be continued and defended. *I* must continue. *I* must keep on going. Therefore, there is a defense by moving away, by obscuring the issue, by becoming forgetful, dull, and so on.

But if you are serious and stay with it, then it might be that you could see this whole structure collapsing like a house of cards. And you could see that there is the thought that, "I think force is justified." And you could say, "Well, without all that pressure I can look at that thought, and see that it isn't valid." However, with all that obscuring and defensive movement going on, it can't be seen.

Shall we discuss this for a while now?

Q: When you say that you *are* the thought, I guess you need to hold to that and not let it slip away, because you would tend to want to get away from that.

Bohm: Yes. You will not want to think that. You don't want to accept it, because it begins to make you feel very uncomfortable.

Q: I am whatever I'm doing, is that right?

Bohm: I am what I *think*, what I *feel*, what I *do*.

Q: When there is violence, I am violence.

Bohm: Yes. But we need to see that the violence is *sustained* by the *thought* that force is justified. This thought will produce the appropriate feelings, and those feelings will help hold the thought. The sustaining of violence therefore depends on the thought, which is that force is justified. And in some cases it is true. You need a certain amount of force to move this table, for example. But is that true about thought? Suppose somebody thinks in a certain way and you feel, "I've tried to talk to him. I've tried this. I've tried that. He doesn't listen to me. I'd better use some force."

Q: It seems to me that violence depends entirely on there being objects.

Bohm: That's true. Otherwise, there would be no sense to violence. Force can only be applied to an object. To use violence, we must decide to treat that person as an object. This happens between various groups, like the Arabs and the Jews. Let's call them 'A' and 'B'. 'A' tries this and tries that and tries another thing, but it doesn't work – 'B' won't listen. Finally he says, "B only understands force." But obviously, nobody understands force. There's nothing to understand about it. The only thing you can do is convince the other person that you are stronger than he is. Then he will do what you want as long as he is convinced that you are stronger. But he will be thinking all the time about your weaknesses, and how to get at you.

Q1: You were talking before about how one sets up an observer who draws back to try to look at himself. And thought is always one step behind when it tries to do that – like a dog trying to catch its tail. I think, though, that that is what we do unconsciously all the time. There is a thought, and then after the thought has flashed at some non-verbal level, an aspect of the brain 'draws back' and repeats the thought at the verbal level – outwardly if

you're talking with someone, or silently if you are not. Even when I'm starting a sentence like this – as I am speaking now, here in this room – somehow I have some idea of where my statements are going to wind up, although I don't consciously know the exact words I will use until I hear myself say them.

So there is some deeper schematic or image-type thought or impulse, which the brain then verbalizes to itself. That sort of process seems to be going on inside all the time. There is always that verbal layer of chatter, which is in effect repeating or explaining to itself the non-verbal thoughts. It's the feeling of an observer, who is 'reading' the thoughts inside the head.

Bohm: Well, that's a kind of impulse to analysis.

Q1: It doesn't seem particularly analytical or intellectual. My assumption is that most people are doing the same thing – that they are talking to themselves all the time, just not doing so aloud.

Bohm: I meant it seems to me that that sort of process of explaining is an attempt to analyze what's going on. One way of dealing with actual objects is to analyze their structure or whatever, and get to understand it. Then you can find order, and then you know what to do.

Q1: But it is an automatic movement, which is part of the aspect of this feeling of the separate observer.

Bohm: That's part. But there is a thought behind it, an impulse behind it. I would say that the thought behind it is that analysis is needed. It seems that it's always possible to analyze this thought process, because this thought process is going on and 'I' seem to be observing it. It appears to be different from 'me'.

Q2: As that gentleman was speaking just now, he was watching what he was saying, and I think that we were all following along. And he made the statement, "as I am speaking," and we were watching it happen, hearing the words come out in a linear sense. But it seems that what is *driving* the linear progression of the words is already there as some sort of non-linear totality of

the sentence, or else there couldn't be a coherent sentence formed in a linear sense. It would almost have to be a non-linear driving thing, which already knows what is going to be said.

Bohm: It has been demonstrated by people who have studied the brain that when you are going to say something, there are electrical currents in the brain which contain at least some of what you are going to say.

Q2: In a non-linear form?

Bohm: In some way.

Q1: My point in bringing this up was that it may give a little bit of a feeling for what we're talking about in terms of the *apparent* thinker, who is separate from the thought. This thinker – or verbal process, or top layer of the brain – is continually talking to itself, repeating the thoughts which have occurred on a less verbal level. And by doing so, it is separating itself from the thoughts.

Bohm: Yes. That's always going on. But behind it, I suggest, are some assumptions which would justify it, or make it seem necessary, or make it seem right to have it go on.

Q1: Which gets into what you were talking about in terms of continuity, and how the self must be defended.

Bohm: And also the attempt to grasp it. One way is the attempt to grasp it by analysis. You are constantly trying to analyze what is going on on another layer of thought. But then you don't notice that that's the same layer that it's trying to analyze.

Q1: Do you mean analyze in an intellectual sense? The people taking part in this discussion today are not a typical group of fifty people gathered at random from the face of the planet. Most have probably thought about these topics before. But I think you could talk with *anyone* you meet and you would find that this process is going on in his head as well. He is talking to himself inwardly, translating his thoughts to himself, creating that separation.

Bohm: This is a general human process, because it's part of the process of thought. Whenever there is a problem, one way of approaching it is to try to explain what is going on and to analyze it, and then to know what to do. Even the simplest and most primitive peoples do this.

Q1: But beyond that, whenever there's a thought, 'I' in effect *repeat* the thought. And it seems to me that that may be part of the creation of the feeling of a separate observer.

Bohm: Do you repeat exactly the same thought?

Q1: It repeats inwardly at a verbal level, yes.

Bohm: Well, if it were an external problem, there would be nothing wrong with putting it verbally. If I have a problem and I say I see a problem, I'll state it. It may make it more sharp.

Q1: But whether it's a problem or not, it's as if the thought flashes on some kind of 'screen' in the mind, and then you 'read' it – translate it into words in your head. It's a process of repeating thoughts. That process of repetition separates you in time from the original thought, because you repeat it after the thought has first flashed in the mind. And also there is a spacial feeling of separation – the mind 'draws back', as you put it.

Bohm: You may be repeating it, but why are you repeating it?

Q3: I think that he is describing what may actually *appear* as a division between the thinker and the thought. We do have these two levels going, so we make that error. And he's describing, making a picture of the error and how we see it sometimes.

Bohm: Well, the error is in seeing the repetition as different from the thing it repeats.

Q3: I think that it's basically one thought manifesting in words as well as in the implicit, and that below that we can actually see the impulse of the *two* rising; but it appears split. And so we feel there is a person who is having this verbal thought.

Bohm: Yes. Because there's an assumption somewhere that it is split.

Q1: There is the assumption that these thoughts belong to that person – or that entity, or that point, or whatever it is – that is verbalizing them and repeating them.

Bohm: Yes. So a whole series of assumptions is laid down in the program, which operate. And I think we can go into those up to a point as we're doing – it's useful. But finally we can see that this way will not actually get it.

Q1: No, I'm not describing this as a technique, but this is what I see happening in myself. I think it is our common experience that there is a repetition of thoughts at a verbal level.

Bohm: It's the common *appearance.* That's the way it appears. But appearances are not always correct appearances.

Q1: Well, there is a deception which is engendered by this.

Bohm: Yes. That's the point.

Q1: This deception has a certain reality. I mean, it's a *real* deception. Just as you were saying before that the ground of the limited is the Unlimited, so the ground of this deception is also the Unlimited. And in that, it is actual – it's an actual deception that is happening.

Bohm: I understand. The difficulty with what you are saying is that 'I see that it is a deception but I can't stop it'. I'm saying that that does not make coherent sense to me. I understand what you are saying, but it is not actually a statement that makes sense.

Q1: It's a statement which makes verbal sense. But as we have said in past discussion, there needs perhaps to be some deeper perception or intuition or insight.

Bohm: That's true. But I'm trying to say it's important to focus on this point: that the statement itself – 'I see a deception but it continues' – doesn't make sense, not even verbally. I'm saying, if I see that something is a deception, then I should no longer have anything to do with it.

Q4: Or else you don't really see the deception.

Bohm: Yes. There is something about it that I don't really see.

Q4: Well, isn't there a previous deception that there is this 'I' who sees?

Bohm: That's it. If I say that there is I who sees, that is already part of the deception. I'm not different from the deception that *'I* see'. So could you then go ahead and say, "I am the deception that I see," as a next step?

Now, the mind tends to resist that. It wants to say, "Although there are a lot of bad things going on in me, somewhere there is a pure clear core, which is 'me' or 'I'. And *I* am struggling with all this stuff." That's the picture, the assumption.

Q5: Isn't there an experiential aspect of this – in that, where the thing becomes real, there is a *feeling* which accompanies this thought and this analysis?

Bohm: Yes, but it's no more real than the feeling that there is a telephone in the television set.

Q5: But if we leave that out, if we leave out the experiential aspect of it and focus on the thinking aspect of it, it can't move. Whereas if we move into the experiential aspect of it, the words start to come apart.

Bohm: Yes. You have to see together the feeling, the muscles, and the thought, because it's the connection of those. That's the proprioception – that the thought is producing the whole story, or is at least sustaining it. In the case of violence, the thought that force is justified is what keeps it all going, and then all that feeling keeps the thought going.

The point, though, is that when you are analyzing it that way, you are still *stepping back* and saying, "That's what's going on."

Q: Wouldn't that then point toward something other than claiming that the self is a deceptive process? Couldn't we say that thought, quite inherently, is self-referential in its movement? So it then appears as a virtual 'I'. No matter which way thought moves, it needs a center to pivot around, as if it's a non-linear thing. It needs to bend around something, and then it appears as a virtual self, no matter what we do.

Bohm: It may be. There may be a proprioceptive thought which sees what is actually happening, but we lose track of that and don't experience the self as a virtual 'I'. We experience it as a real 'I'.

Q: In that case, we should find some content which is the 'I'. And we said that no matter how we sit back and look for it, it remains virtual.

Bohm: Yes, but we are not satisfied to say it's virtual. We say it's real, whether it's there or not. That's the difficulty. The crucial point is to be able to say, "I *am* what I see or think." And the same is true outwardly. As Krishnamurti said, "I am the world" – meaning the world of society.

You see, the essential point about society is the collective thought of society – the shared meaning, the cement – which is the essence of the society. Now, when that collective thought comes into me, it *is* me. I may say, "No, it's not me, it's them." But that's just a confusion on my part. Therefore, when you see how it all works, it is important finally to say that *I am* the society that I criticize.

At this moment, that is what I am. It's the same question of our establishing a division where there is none. By seeing that, this thing may collapse to the point where it becomes possible for thought to be proprioceptive and to see what it's really doing in this tacit level.

Q: Not that it becomes in some way linear and selfless or without self reference, but the proprioceptivity could mean that it sees itself generating its own virtual 'I's as it moves along.

Bohm: And it would then see that that is not very important. It would just be an image going on, which is possibly useful in some cases.

I think that it is necessary to stay with this, very seriously and with full intensity. We may not really be able to get to the bottom of it just right here, but this is something. In the dialogue, if you confront an emotional charge brewing up in this way – if everybody does it – then you may get a real change in the whole structure of the collective mind. It becomes proprioceptive.

There isn't time now for us to explore this really very deeply, but it's one of the key points: to end this division, so that then this 'false-Unlimited' – which is the 'I' – goes. You see, one reason we don't contact the Unlimited is that we

think that we already have – namely, it's me. It is I. So there's no need to do it; why bother? I'm God. And some people have said that that is true, if only you could see it in the right sense. But seeing it in the wrong sense makes you insane.

The point is that the notion that this *image* is the Unlimited gets in the way. It means that it's really quite impossible to see anything else that is unlimited. Jehovah said, "There is only One. There is no other like Me." And in some sense, the thought process is thinking, "This already *is* the Unlimited, so what are you asking for?" But if that stops, then maybe there will be a natural movement in which this all can participate in the Unlimited.

What I'm suggesting is that the barrier is in this notion of 'I am'. That doesn't mean that it's all wrong. It doesn't mean that the self or the human being has nothing to do with the Unlimited. This whole question has become very confused and incoherent. But we seem unable to throw out the incoherence. If somebody says, "Forget about religion," it doesn't just go. The Communists said, "Forget about religion," but then they began to worship the state, to worship Stalin. They couldn't stop it; it is built in.

So you have to face this question. And I think this question is tied up to the question of *time,* because thought is very closely tied up to time. We often represent time as a line, and say, "Here we are at this point on the line, at this point in time." We are representing time by space. It is thought which does that. Now, do we ever experience time directly? I question that. We do experience successive movement in process, but not time per se. But then thought becomes immediate, and you get a sense of the experience of time nevertheless. And there is a paradox, because the past is gone, and the future has not yet come. You are here at this point, but this point divides what doesn't exist from what doesn't exist, so how could it exist? That view of time must somehow be inadequate. That line is a *representation* of time, it is not whatever you would mean by 'time'.

We may also consider the view that 'here is the now'. At any given moment, the past is actually both the past and the future. In the future, every moment will similarly have a past and a future. When the future

comes, this present moment will be its past. We don't predict the future; the most we could predict is not the future, but the past that the future is going to have. We don't even know the present – the actual immediate present. It has been proved that people are only conscious of things that *have* happened. All that we know is from the past. It may be a fraction of a second behind, or a long time ago, but it's behind. We only know what has been.

The past is present. The past is now, in the form of a record. A tape recording presents the past – its *content* is the past – but the tape itself is here in the present. Similarly, the past is part of the present. The past is part of the immediate, the now. It is thought. It is knowledge and thought – based on the memory – which hold the past. All this responds and produces some sensation, which fuses with perception and everything else to give the sense of what is here present now. So what is actually happening now is only now. The sense of the past is actually present now. The sense of the future is present now. A sense of movement or of becoming is present now. And it is a complete mystery how this moment ever passes away and becomes the next moment.

You can see that thought contains time as its content. Thought contains the past. Thought contains the projected future – the 'end' which we project – and the impulse to realize that end, which drives us. So *time* becomes our driving force.

Thought itself is also a movement which takes time. It moves in the subtle levels, but it is moving. Thus, thought is like any other process to which we attribute time. But thought tends to take itself as giving truth, and so forth, as if it had nothing to do with time. But if it takes time, then it's incomplete. It does not even tell you what is really now, much less the future. It will tell you some probability for the future, which is often wrong.

So you could look at it differently and ask, "What do we mean by 'the immediate', without the mediation of thought, without the past? What is the difference of this moment from any other?" In certain key ways it is very similar. This moment is similar to any other one, because this moment has a past and a future, and so do all the other moments. They are all moving from

the past to the future. This moment is different only in its particular content. That content is defined by thought, by the response of memory. The more detailed the content, the more you must be conscious of time. And if you abstract from that and make the content less and less detailed – more and more general – then the difference of moments becomes less and less. So you could suppose that if you abstract from it all, moments would not be different.

That is, the subtle tacit undefinable basis of reality is *one*, somehow manifesting in time, in moments which are defined by thought. So time is *unfolding*, as it were, from that.

You could say then that the most concrete thing that we can possibly contact is *now* – that subtle process which is going on now. Anything else is more abstract – it might be somewhere else, some other time, some other place. The now is the most concrete.

In that sense, if we get to that level, then we could say that the importance of time in that context is not so great. It is not that we don't use time, or that we couldn't come back to time, but that the importance of time is less – that when we come to this ground, time is not a fundamental thing. That's what I'm suggesting.

Now, does *attention* operate in time? If we have the assumption that *everything* happens in time, then we will perceive it that way. We will see it all happening in time. So we have to question that. You see, attention gets caught up in the movement of thought. And through that, we experience time as the whole thing. If we could be free of that, I'm suggesting that attention need not go into this process of movement of thought.

We said that thought is not the whole thing. We said there is the Unlimited. The Unlimited cannot be limited by being forced to act in a certain order in time. Therefore, this is a question. We are just raising it now, but it will be tied up with the self, because the notion that there is a self is a notion in thought. And according to that thought, the self is happening in time. It has a past and a future. It is moving toward the future, planning, trying to do something, and so on. Therefore, I suggest that if we really see that the thinker

is the thought or the observer is the observed, then we have undercut the foundation of experiencing time as basic.

That is essentially one of the features of the contact with the Unlimited. And we've said all this rather fast, because there isn't much time and we need time to say it. I should mention that the Greek language has two words for time – *chronos,* meaning time as measure, and *chairos,* meaning the time is ripe for something. And we must consider both notions of time. This second notion is much less connected with the kind of time on a line.

So let's come back and say that the Unlimited is the now. Whatever I mean by 'the Unlimited' is what I contact now, in the true now, in the sense of immediate. Which means time-less. It doesn't mean that it's a sharp point, but really it means where attention is not focused in time.

Q: Very much related to this is a third Greek word, which is *ekstasis*. Time is ecstasy. They say in a sense the Greek word means 'to step out from oneself'. And it's a very nice expression, as if the infinite steps out from itself in time, to come back to itself. It is a virtual opening. And that is then ecstasy.

Bohm: Good.

Well, we are approaching the end. I hope the time is ripe.

We have been through the process of dialogue and enquiry in this seminar, and have perhaps arrived at some insight. But what is required is actually to keep at it, to sustain the work, to keep looking at these things – both individually and collectively.

I think that if the human species could really take this seriously, then a large part of its problems would go. But that would be a minor point compared with what would be opened up.

So we should say that for the moment the thing has come to an end. We hope not the final end. Or perhaps it would be, if we could say the end of time.

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