

# David Bohm Consciousness seminar

## Series 2, Friday Dec 1st 1989

Oak Grove School, Ojai, California USA (Oak Grove School is a private, co-educational day and boarding school founded in 1975 by Jiddu Krishnamurti)

### Selected transcript *[with annotations]*

*[DB=David Bohm, AW#=Audience woman, AM# = Audience man, // = some conversation omitted]*



### Part 1:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bP9QUbR1nM8>

[DB] Sometimes I like to start by asking questions... //

We would like to discuss some material about thought. I would like to communicate so that // at least we have the spirit of a dialogue // so that people will listen to each other without trying to come to a conclusion or arrive at truth as our goal. There is a vague purpose in my mind but it is not well defined.// I think this is part of dialogue – to see what is on people's minds ... //

*[DB is entering what might be thought of as a Socratic dialogue, the purpose of which is to open people's minds rather than present an absolute truth]*

We will have to discuss the nature of truth ... // We will discuss the relationship between thought and feeling // and emotion and physical sensations...

[AM1] Isn't discussion meaningless because words themselves are a paradox? Words are essentially a symbol for what? They are a paradox. // So the words we use in that sense don't get anywhere.

[DB] The words we use are a paradox and communication breaks down..? Yes, well, I suggest that there is a lot of paradox in language but communication is still possible. You see, if we say there is no communication at all, you couldn't even say that, right? In some sense you are trusting that the words you say convey some meaning, right? // Paradox is a very subtle concept. You are trusting words to communicate the notion of paradox. I don't think we can say that words don't do anything because when you say that you are already trusting words to say it. We have to say there is a lot of trouble with words, but that doesn't mean to say that it's totally impossible. We are somewhere in between. // Its the same as the question of cynicism. You can't be cynical about everything because then you would also have to be cynical about cynicism too, if you took it seriously. //

[AW1] *[question on]* negation

[DB] Well, to propose is to put an idea forward and to negate is to oppose that – they are both necessary. // *[start of main discussion]*

[DB] Now 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. Now, this may seem strange if you have never heard it before, because thought is considered by many to be the highest achievement. I'm not suggesting it has no value at all, but at the same time, it is a tremendously dangerous thing. It's a double-edged sword.

Now, you may realise that the world is in many ways a critical situation. The nuclear threat has receded to some extent ... // Over the past several thousand years there has been a tremendous amount of chaos – wars, slavery, economic disorder ... its seems to have led to us being in danger of destroying the whole planet by our everyday activities. Because we are using up everything – destroying forests, [etc], changing the climate... Very severe changes could take place – everyone agrees on that. But nobody knows when – some experts say 50 years, others 100 or 200. But if we don't change this, it's fairly certain that a disaster will occur of a magnitude we can hardly imagine. There isn't a lot of time.

You can say – there is all these ecological problems, what shall we do? Shall we save the whales? Shall we save the jungle? Shall we do this, this, ... but it's only slowing it down. And the ecology isn't the problem. It's been around for millions of years before we came along. You see – we are the problem. Why are we the problem? What is the source of it? I am suggesting that the source of it is in the way we think. It is our thinking that has led us to believe we can exploit the world indefinitely. Just as we believe we can have wars indefinitely, and do all sorts of other things indefinitely that we are used to doing. And this is all a certain way of thinking.

Now, the first characteristic of this way of thinking is fragmentation – which means breaking things up or smashing things up. Dividing things. You see you can divide between sheep and goats, or useful and useless plants, and that's alright. But if you divide between things that are united – we try to smash them. Between nations we have a tight connection. It's not a loose connection. Everybody depends on everybody else economically. The ecology is all one. Yet every nation says that it is sovereign – it can do what it likes and nobody can tell it what to do. That's been a principle for a long, long time and people find it hard to change. The Brazilians are cutting down their jungle, but they object to us talking about it because they say – you northerners are producing a lot more carbon dioxide than us. Why do you tell us what to do with our jungles? They are ours. And we would probably say back to them – who are you to tell us what to do with our industries.

You see as long as we are all pretending we are separate, and we can do as we like, and it can't be done.

The pretence that we are separate is a way of thinking. You see, every nation is a product of thought. They come about by thinking. We have a lot of nations now that didn't exist 100 years ago. And people just declared “we exist”, and that's it. And you say everything must be sacrificed for that nation. You must destroy the world for that nation. And so we also have fragmentation all around, between religions, between families, ideologies, different professions ... everything is broken up. Everything which is [*in reality*] united is – in our thought – broken up. So we have a fictitious way of thinking. And if we think in a fictitious way, we are going to get into trouble. So the question is – Why do we have this fictitious way of thinking that breaks things up wrongly and [*then re-*]unites them wrongly? It [*thought*] says that they are one – but

they're not, you can see it. Inside each nation is tremendous division, obviously. So they pretend here is division where there is none and they pretend there is unity where there is none. And everybody sees it that way [*because they confuse the thought for the reality*].

So the question is – Why are we doing it? Because of our thinking, right? We have been thinking that way for ages, and people now defend that way of thinking. If you really try to question it, people get annoyed and say you are making trouble. The fact is – they are making trouble, getting ready to destroy our whole planet. Not merely the human race, but everything else in order to go on with their habits of thought and everything else they have got 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 need to change things unimaginably radically. For example we have to stop economic growth, population growth. //

The thing is – it's thought that is causing the trouble. The collective thought of the human race. It's not just an individual. It's passed on, you see. The point is – we get in trouble when we say this. People don't believe it. They say that thought is nothing... it's just reflecting on reality telling you the way things are, then you [*can*] decide what to do. That's the common deal. But if you present reality in a certain way, that's going to influence what you're going to do. You see, the FBI used to say "we merely present information, and it's up to whoever to use it". But merely putting information in a certain form has a powerful effect. So, if we put it in the form that nations are all different and independent we are going to behave accordingly.

You see – information is not just sitting there. It's very powerful. And thought in general is very powerful. It has produced everything. It has produced cities, it's produced farmland, industry, governments, religions, schools, technology and science, almost everything you see. It's impossible to find any part of the world that is not influenced by thought. There's hardly a part so wild. But 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, it's just there, and there's an ecological problem and I have to think about it some more... So I'll think about it saying we have to stop cutting down trees or killing whales, and stop producing all that carbon dioxide." // And thought also says "We've got to have more fuel and higher standard of living, produce more industry, produce all kind of things and we can't possibly get rid of growth". So, it's impossible. The question is – it's got to stop sometime. If it grows 2½% a year it grows 10x in 100 years and 10,000,000,000 in 1000 years, so it will really crush everything.

At some time it's got to stop, but nobody has really thought about that. So thought says "we've got to grow" and thought says "we've got to get rid of the consequences of growth". It's **incoherent**. It says we've got to grow without these consequences. Now, some improvements of technology will help that, but in the end you can't win. In 1000 years there is no technology that can overcome 100 million times the size. // So we might grow for a while, but we can't just keep on growing. So thought is constantly producing arguments that say "I didn't do it, and I have to overcome the consequences". So that's incoherent, right? You start to produce results you don't intend. And you also start deceiving yourself in order to avoid facing the issue.

OK, that's the second point. The third point is, thought has produced all these things that it's very hard to change. All these industrial arrangements, all this trade, our cities, it's all there. We can't change it, so we've got to go on with it. You see – that's typical of thought. It's constantly

producing consequences and saying “I didn’t do it” and then saying “I can’t change it – it’s too difficult”. Now what are we going to do with that? We need to understand thought better. You see, we have been run by the process of thought. We don’t realise that thought requires attention. It’s been going on for thousands of years – it didn’t start yesterday. The Romans were destroying forests 2000 years ago. North Africa was the most fertile part of the world, and it was turned into a desert by just cutting down all those trees. Now we can do it much faster with chainsaws. We can produce deserts at a far faster rate. Technology is not the answer because technology will do whatever thought tells us we have to do *[with it]*. If thought says “we have to cut down trees, we have to have more money, we have to have more products”, then we will invent the technology that does that.

So science and technology cannot be the answer, and something more fundamental is needed. There is no technological fix. There has to be a change in thought. That is not so easy. //

We somehow have to change this process *[of thought]* that’s 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. Then we try to have industry .. //

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 it would find a way. But there’s no evidence. Eventually the growth must prevail over anything you can invent. Or *[get to the point where]* there are just so many people in the world that there’s no room for them. Now how are you going to change all that? ... the customs by which ... // personal goals // it’s all going to add up to trouble. For each individual it looks very reasonable, so people don’t generally want to think about that and they would rather not believe it. So part of thought is self-deception, saying “it’s not so” and giving another explanation. So that’s part of the process of relieving the tension and pressure and discomfort of thinking that way, thought invents another explanation that is more reassuring.

Now, the question is – what is behind all this kind of thought? //

[AW2] // Thought came from satisfying *[survival]* needs //

[DB] Yes, but if needs were for safety and security and comfort or whatever, one need was to find sources of food. But surely one need isn’t to destroy ourselves. If people were looking at needs they would say – let’s change what we’re doing. But they deceive themselves about what they need rather than face the issue. For thought to be useful it should not engage in self-deception. It should not be incoherent, or at least should not defend incoherence.

[AW3] That’s the only way that humans have survived by defending incoherence and irrationality?

[DB] Maybe, but I think that they’re not going to survive much longer that way. Either we say that the human race is very badly designed and will just disappear. Or we say there’s a mistake in thought that can be changed. Some people say the human race is a bad job – let’s just give it up. // Maybe nature can take our place. It’s a very depressing point of view. And in any case, if we go down we could easily create so much chaos as to take everything down. The best way to preserve nature is to solve our problems.

[AM1] You're saying deception is in the essential nature of thought, or something that's just learned?

[DB] That's my question. First let's look at the question. In a dialogue you have to first look at the question *[for a while]*. Feel it out. One view is that something is wrong with the human race. *[As a starting point for deciding what to do, ]* That's pretty hopeless. //

They are frightened. Thought creates fear. It says "If you say these things, you're going to disturb all our comfortable arrangements". In order to do that *[i.e. not acknowledge what is going wrong]* people must deceive themselves. The say – we're not going to look at this, we're going to assume that everything is going to be alright. So they defend themselves against evidence that something is wrong, using thought. That's surely not a good way to survive. When it comes to technical thought people don't do it so much. If they did, technology wouldn't work at all. But they still do it to some extent. For example people who run nuclear plants have been accused of covering up weaknesses in what they are doing. But not really covering up, but in believing their *[own]* cover up *[because if they were to contemplate the alternative it would be too frightening]*.

[AW4] Thought // needs to make a choice?

[DB] Well, how will you choose if you're not clear? You see, it's necessary for thought to be coherent. Can you choose to be coherent when you're incoherent? We don't know why we're incoherent. Nobody wants to be incoherent. //

[AM3] Maybe over time we have created a structure of thought that is incoherent? //

[DB] Yes. A thought about religion is incoherent. No two religions have really had a dialogue in which they would *[unreservedly]* listen to each other's assumptions. // Even religions very close. Between nations or ideologies it's very difficult to get coherent thought. Whenever anybody's self-interest is involved.

[AM3] We have identified ourselves with our thought process instead of //

[DB] Keeping our thought process intact and our habits intact and other things that make us feel secure... //

[AM3] ... so we maintain this incoherence...?

[DB] Yes. And it turns out – if to do this we have to think incoherently, we cover it up. We deny the incoherence and give a false explanation, making it look coherent.

[AM3] Why is it so important to be coherent?

[DB] If you're incoherent it's almost impossible to produce the intended results. That's one sign of incoherence. Another is you're contradicting yourself. The third is you're deceiving yourself. Now, that sort of thought – what's the point? We'd be better off without it. Nobody intends to destroy the planet. Nobody intended that – we merely intended to get rich. Or comfortable, whichever. I'm not blaming anybody – I'm saying we're all in this. So we did not see that this was dangerous or incoherent. If the *[original]* intention had been to destroy the planet, we would have been coherent. //

Fear and thought are closely connected ... // One of our assumptions is that thought is one thing and fear is another, pleasure is another, anger, and all of the emotions and also the general tensions and stresses in the body is another; and what goes on in the general society is something else... You see – that’s fragmentation. Thought – traditionally over thousands of years – has conditioned us to believe in that, right? Therefore, if you see fear you say “that’s not thought”, but I suggest it may still be thought.

{AW5} We have to have some faith that there is some time, enough time, for us to transform this way of thinking... // And there is this thought that we are so much more important than all these other species. //

[DB] Yes – well in some sense we are *[the most important species]* because we are able to destroy it all. Well, at least we are the key to it. In one sense we may not be, but in another we are the one on whom it all hinges. //

[AM4] How can we use thought to get ourselves out of a problem caused by thought?

[DB] Well, I’m not saying that thought is entirely wrong. Thought is a mixture. It’s in between. It’s doing all kinds of things wrong, but also other [not so bad] things. It needs something more than thought as well, but also we will need to have clear thought. It’s particularly important to think clearly about thought *[itself]* – that’s maybe a first step. *[In this sense, Bohm is saying that thought is morally ambivalent, just like the technology it has produced. To prevent ambivalence, one has to make a conscious choice.]*

[AM4] Isn’t thought a form of memory, and is the result of millions of years of conditioning like the program in a computer? How is thought then able to do anything other than move the furniture round. Is there anything other than conditioning?

[DB] Yes – you can argue from that point of view, but then we are in danger of pinning ourselves into a corner by saying thought is all bad. If you say thought is all bad, then we need something else, but it is only thought that will give it to you. // I can say there is a great glorious thing that will solve all our problems... But it is still thought. So we have to do something else. *[... and Bohm made the same point earlier – that assuming thought itself is irredeemable is one of the tricks that thought plays, by creating an impossible absolute. Even if it turns out to be true, believing that without at least trying to find something else is automatically falling back into self-deception.]*

[AM5] The only real problem with thought is that there is somebody who is thinking.

{DB} Well, yes that is so and it is quite hard to get at because it seems so obvious that there is *[someone thinking]*. *[Hard to get at because the subtleties of unravelling the thinker from the thought – see later. And the “obviousness” creates more obstacles to seeing past it to a more fundamental level. The idea that “there is someone thinking” is in fact a construct of a fragmented world view, that is so strongly held as a belief and in our language that a great deal of subtlety and sensitivity is required to be aware of anything else.]* You see, I hope we can get to that. You raised the question that thought is memory. It’s an interesting point that might be a clue.

Now, I’d like to distinguish between thinking and thought. Thinking is an active process, which is actually going on due to the syllable “-ing” suggesting something active; and thought is in the

past. So when we have been thinking we presuppose that it all vanishes. That thinking tells you what's right and then you decide what to do and then you do it, and then it's all gone. But in fact I say thinking becomes thought – it goes onto a programme. What you have been thinking, especially the conclusions and the assumptions – the general things like that – go on to become part of the *[thought]* programme. If you have been thinking that people in that category are bad, then you will see them as bad, and it *[that thought]* becomes a programme. If you tell your children that, that's how they are going to behave automatically. Memories spring into action like a programme. You don't have time to see that happening *[because it happens so quickly]* and it then appears to be the truth.

Now – we need that because if you're going to drive a car you need a lot of things that you will be doing to become part of your programme so that you will respond immediately. If you took time to think the response would be too late. So you need this possibility of making thought a programme. Yet, it's dangerous because this programme – if you don't notice it – can tell you that “these people are bad” or “I must kill under certain conditions”, or I must do this or that, they are this or that sort of person. // You see thought can tell you that like a program so you see it like that, exactly. It affects your perception. It affects your whole attitude. It affects your adrenaline. For example, if you are in a dark place and people say “there are assailants in this neighbourhood”, and you see a shadow, the thought immediately makes you jump. Whereas if you didn't know there were assailants you would say nothing... And when you looked again and saw it was just a shadow, it would be all gone. So thought that is programmed from what people have said and what you have been thinking – acts immediately. It acts immediately in millions of ways. And this has been going on collectively as well as individually for ages *[thousands of years]*. Gradually building up, as you remarked. It tends to make us have a lot of robotic characteristics.

{AM5} We could think it as not being true

{DB} We have to be careful, because the thought of it not being true can also make a robot out of us. You see – that thought will say “we're nothing except robots” and then we will be nothing but robots. You have to watch out that the very thought we are using in this minute may be very crucial. It may be the very thing that is doing the whole thing.

[AM5] So all worries are a limitation ...

[DB] Well, if you say all worries, we had better keep silent, and when we keep silent we don't solve the problem either. That's a way of using language that makes trouble. The word “all” must be used very carefully. Because it is one of the most powerful programming words there is. Like “all those people are that way”. Or “you will be that way for ever”. That has a tremendously powerful programming effect. // Generally speaking there are times when we can use the word “all”, but we have to be careful. So we have this thought. We can be thinking or we can be having a thought. Thinking is more active because when you are thinking you can detect incoherence sometimes. You can detect there is something wrong. But thought works so fast you can't do that. So how do you detect that? You get a feeling – a sense that something is wrong. You apply sensitivity. Sensitivity is crucial, and I think society systematically destroys it in order to avoid being upset. It would rather have people not notice incoherence, because then you don't upset the apple cart too much. Therefore we have learned to cover that up.

But lets say we have this sensitivity that is very subtle, that can show us incoherence in our thought.

**Part 2:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5di0qwmYNWY>

[DB] So we have thinking and thought. Then beside that we have feeling or emotion or whatever you want to call it. Now, feeling is very active. The word “-ing” at the back of it shows that it is always active and primary and real. But that’s not true. The English language is deficient in this regard because although it has made a distinction between thinking and thought, it has not made a distinction between feeling as a memory and feeling in the moment now. There are feelings and felts. The feelings [*felts*] you had in the past that are in memory have become programs. They are feelings you had – feelings of traumatic events, feelings of pleasure, nostalgia and all that stuff. And that has a powerful effect. It’s hard to distinguish between genuine feelings – say you get a genuine feeling of relationship. Or say in the jungle you get a genuine feeling of danger, and he’s got to think “what does it mean”? If you see a poisonous snake [*i.e. the thought is that it’s a poisonous snake*] and then it isn’t a poisonous snake it’s OK. But if it is a poisonous snake he’s got to move. So there is a relationship between thinking and feeling. In that feeling picks up the perception first and then the question arises “what does that mean?” and thinking begins to supply that. If you’re thinking right, then thinking will show whether the feeling is appropriate or not. But [*thinking*] has to be right to do that.

Now we can also get felts, and there is no easy way to deal with those. If you had lots of traumatic experience as a child with certain things, you get a felt every time something similar comes up and it’s in the memory. The natural intelligence might provide a feeling, but if it’s a program [*i.e. a felt*], that’s also the experience. If he doesn’t know there is one there, he doesn’t know what a program is, then you don’t change it. It’s stuck. The point is that failure to understand [*the difference between thinking/thought or feeling/felt*] is a crucial failure in the process of thought. In other words, what thought thinks about itself is very important, because it conditions and programs itself in the wrong way.

The way in which thought programs itself to go wrong is the thing we have to look at. This is the result of a long history. We have the thinking and feeling, thought and felt. How are we going to get at it? It’s very subtle. There are things that are obvious and things that are subtle. Subtle means highly refined, rarified, elusive, delicate, undefinable, so I can’t define subtle because it means undefinable. But its root is interesting – meaning finely woven [*sub=under, tela=web or texere=weave*]. The mind makes more and more finely woven nets in which we can catch subtler and subtler thoughts [*here, I think he means collectively thinkings, thoughts, feelings and felts*]. Ordinary thought is not so subtle, its net is very coarse, so some of the things we are discussing will just slip right through. So – now what do we mean by subtlety? You will not be able to sense anything subtle without sensitivity, right? It’s elusive, undefinable, delicate – that calls for sensitivity.

Society doesn’t want too much sensitivity. I give you an example... some girl who was going to school and one teacher was doing all kinds of incoherent things, not making sense. The girl was disturbed by this and was bringing this disturbance back home. The mother eventually said “in this house, the teacher is always right”. It didn’t mean she believed the teacher was right, but that there was no point raising these issues – the girl was wasting her time [*complaining to the*

parents]. But it illustrates the point that the whole society eventually 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 that this and that incoherence have to be tolerated but that that all incoherence has to be ignored. “Don’t notice these things, don’t pay them much attention or take them too seriously.” Because you get in trouble and get nowhere. The society in order to stabilise itself systematically through history destroys the sensitivity that is necessary for intelligence. For subtle intelligence. You see, the kind of thought we have been talking about is not very subtle – it’s crude and gross. We need subtlety and sensitivity.

Can we have a formula for becoming sensitive? What do you say?

[AW7] It has to be a whole way of life

[DB] Yes – all of your life is involved

[AW8] She’s been brutalised

[DB] Yes – but all or most of us are. But we have to change, see? Maybe we can and maybe we can’t, but if we assume that we can’t then that finishes it. You see, thought is very powerful. By saying “this is impossible” it blocks it. So it’s the wrong tactic or strategy to begin by assuming that what we want to do is impossible. We may not be able to prove it is possible, but at least we have to leave it open. // Sensitivity is hard to explain. Suppose we take the case of the girl above, where the teacher is doing things that don’t make sense, and that is disturbing her. What is happening, what is she feeling? There are some feelings that come up when something doesn’t make sense. Suppose you come into a room and you say “there is something wrong in this room. I can’t say exactly what”. Then you start to look at what it might be, and maybe you find it.

[AW9] Can it be that we can sense there is something wrong and we don’t have to put it into content, because as soon as it’s put into content we get locked into that – that becomes the reality, and obviously that can’t be because it’s an interpretation.

[DB] But sometimes we must! For instance if you have a machine not quite working, and you sense there is something not quite right here or there, or that there is a problem in mathematics and you sense a contradiction, you want to find out what it is. //

[AW9] Yes with a machine you’re playing with it – you’re not actually [*initially*] coming to a conclusion. You have to look at it, working back and forth between the feeling and then the thought, finding what is not right. If you walk into a room and something doesn’t feel right you say “It’s because...” and then I’m finished. That’s where the sensitivity comes in. You don’t come to a conclusion or have a content – you play with it and its stays alive.

[DB] Yes – you hold back for a while. It’s necessary to suspend the judgement. This suspension is crucial to sensitivity. I don’t decide or say this or that, but I’m looking and trying to find out.

[AW9] ... and keep thinking open, watching what comes up next that might validate (or not) the thought... //

[DB] Yes – so thought can work together with sensitivity. And this [*line of reasoning*] begins to show that thought isn’t always the villain. It has gone wrong in much of history, but it needn’t be

the villain. We need this sensitivity, which is the beginning of something beyond thought. Whereas thought and non-thought can be considered to sit either side of the fence – actually they meet. It may be that by following this we will get beyond thought in some fundamental way, if our minds are open. We don't know. // When sensitivity enters it's a bit beyond thought as the program. The word thought infers a program. But when sensitivity enters, the word thought begins to have new possibility.

[AM#] Is it thought that destroys sensitivity?

[DB] Well, a certain kind of thought. The thought that attempts to defend what is precious, saying "this must not be touched". // There are all kinds of reasons that thought can give you why you shouldn't be sensitive. On the other hand, you can be too sensitive. Thought can make it go the other way by making you very touchy about certain questions. This comes back to the fact that we have got to get to something subtle. Which requires a certain level of sensitivity again.

[AF#] // quality of freshness, awakened attention, aliveness ...

[DB] Yes its more alive, tentative – all the words for subtle could be applied to sensitivity. // We usually think of the senses as being one thing and sensitivity another, but without sensitivity the senses cannot give you much that is of value. Otherwise they only pick up what you are used to. **You could say that the senses are an extension of sensitivity.** That the fundamental quality is sensitivity – that can be in the mind as well as in the senses. //

[AF#] // Sensitivity related more to to perception devoid of the memory bank of thought. And once thought acts on that perception, it alters.

[DB] Yes – well sensitivity is the first step towards perception – it is the requirement for picking up new information which is not in the category of thought. But at the same time is also picking up the category of thought. In a way what destroys sensitivity is a generalised idea of violence. Violent means the undue use of force. It doesn't mean you can never use force, but that the force is used in the wrong place. Which then leads to vio-late – where the right order is being violated. The point is the basic form of violence is that someone is determined by thought, but at some time we respond with force to obliterate or change something. Now that force may be more subtle (e.g. mental instead of physical). If someone does something you don't like, then you make a picture of him always doing that. So he now needs to be pushed aside or hit // so for instance the word con-vince is based on the word "to win" [*vincō* ("I conquer, vanquish")]. // and persuade is rooted in "sweet" - another form of [*more insidious and subtle*] violence (sweet talk). // Persuasion and conviction can be considered as subtle forms of violence...

// If you don't like what the other side is doing, you paint a picture of them as being wicked and say "they don't understand [*words*] – they only understand force". That's typical. Of course, nobody understands force. If somebody responds to you with force, you will feel like you have been violently treated too. If people don't listen you will feel [*experience*] that as a form of violence. Then it gets complex because you may see somebody else's violence – you say "it's his violence". But it's really yours as well, you see, because you cannot see his violence except in terms of your own. You see your own tendency to use undue force inwardly or outwardly. Suppose you watch a TV program with a violent content. There so nothing going on at all except

spots of light, but you can feel the violence in the program, right? But where is it coming from? It's coming from your own violence. Each person has been programmed to violence over the ages, and everyone has plenty of violent programs within themselves. There is no difficulty in finding a violent program to project into the image. Or to project into the image of somebody else. The point is that first of all, if you see violence you see it through your own *[inner violence]*. But then you don't want to say that it's your own and want to deny it, and you say "it's terrible, it's disturbing – it's that person's violence". But the violent movement is still in there, and will come out in another way and destroy. And we also have a thought that says "I am justified in responding to violence with violence". I respond to good treatment and friendship with good treatment, and to violence with violence. That's a commonly accepted thought. But that thought can surely not work in the long run – it will assure destruction on all sides. Because once you respond with violence you are turning your own system into chaos, and everything you do goes wrong and has no meaning. The thing is – this is a very subtle point and requires a lot of sensitivity to see it. But of course, violence is constantly destroying that sensitivity. Your violent reaction churns you up inside so you're not sensitive. Not only not sensitive to that, but not sensitive to almost anything else. You do all sorts of things wrong. So you can see – one of the basic difficulties with thought is violence. You see, the other side of violence is fear. When you think you've got a lot of *[personal]* force you don't hesitate to use violence to overcome violence. But when you don't have that personal force, you're afraid. You try to retreat. The point is that fear and violence are closely connected, because you can project your own fear and violence onto the other person and you're afraid of it, right? So the two go together and are just two *[complementary]* sides of that one process. You can see that physically violence is a problem, but mentally it's a much more serious problem. You can see violence in the way that people insist on their own point of view and simply dismiss everything else. That will provoke violence.

I saw a program // North-South Ireland // There was a referendum in S Ireland as to whether they should allow divorce, and it was rejected totally. You could see that absolute conviction in people and it was simply dismissed. And it was pointed out that this was a tremendous blow against the unity they wanted with the North. The minute the protestants in the North would see that they would say – well we can't possibly unite with them – they simply dismiss – even on this little issue they won't move. So violence in thought is fundamentally the root of all violence with guns. So I want to say that thought that does not understand what it is doing tends to fall into violence. In primitive times this happened much less frequently. People were living apart in small groups and it didn't matter so much because the weapons they had were not so dangerous anyway. Now there are very dangerous weapons and at the same time if we're violent *[then]* we're not going to not be able to get together to meet this ecological crisis and all the other things we need to get together to meet. I think it would be worth looking into being sensitive to violence - your own violence, other people's – in all its forms. Because violence is essentially the movement that destroys sensitivity. So we could say we have to be sensitive to what is destroying sensitivity. That would be the only way out. Therefore – rather than condemning violence or I must not be violent or trying to justify violence or turning the other cheek etc etc ... none of that gets to the root or source of the violence. These are all attempts typical of thought of creating a problem and then producing the means to overcome the problem

that it's constantly producing. It's like hitting yourself across the head with the right hand holding a hammer, and trying to stop it with the left *[hand]*. You continue the same thoughts that create violence and then say "we ought not to be violent". That simply muddles it up. *[Incoherent thought.]* It's another kind of violence. Thought turns violently against itself in response to violence – and remains violent as it does so.

I think it's worth looking at that and being sensitive that gives some insight if you pursue it. You can see a tremendous amount of confusion in your own thought – and violence in which thought is attacking those parts of itself that it doesn't like.

What are you going to do if you find all kinds of things in yourself that you don't like? We're going to 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, and I think there is an approach that will get into it. Which means going into thought and how it goes, and so on.

[AM] Is this violence coming from the need of thought to always feel that it is always correct?

[DB] Well that's certainly part of it. The need to feel secure.

[AM] It has to believe these coarse generalisations?

[DB] Yes it's one of those nets that is very coarse. The violent nets are extremely coarse. Not subtle.

[AW] It seems very speedy like it labels things very quickly.

[DB] Yes very fast emotional reactions. 24:30 // // //

**Part 3:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6L7dXAGVkao>

**Part 4:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QliHJ8Sg1A>