

Article: 1018 of sgi.talk.ratical

From: dave@ratmandu.esd.sgi.com (dave "who can do? ratmandu!" ratcliffe)

Subject: **Krishnamurti on Contradiction**

Summary: is life a series of temporary desires which are constantly changing?

Keywords: fixed point of desire, dualism, the desire to become something

Organization: Silicon Graphics, Inc.

Date: Fri, 7 May 1993 15:20:49 GMT

Lines: 294

*... To know the whole process, the totality of oneself, does not require any expert, any authority. The pursuit of authority only breeds fear. No expert, no specialist, can show us how to understand the process of the self. One has to study it for oneself. You and I can help each other by talking about it, but none can unfold it for us, no specialist, no teacher, can explore it for us.*

— Krishnamurti, "The First And Last Freedom," 1954, p. 75.

recently i find the certainties and convictions i've carried around regarding the state of the world are dissolving. the strident tone the ratitor employed to blast his opinions over the net was a process of giving voice to an inner rage, inchoate, unfocused and imprecise. after spending so many years exploring "who killed kennedy?", and, more recently, "who's killing all of us?", i now see the anger and rage i channeled into suspicion, then condemnation, and finally rejection of external, impersonal authority embodied in "the state", was actually a "safer" means to express my feelings about a much more potent and fearsome authority: my own father. lack of deep connectedness with my father which i dearly yearned and hungered for, fostered in me a confusion about my own maleness—a very core part of my sense of identity. such confusion was the catalyst for the experience of contradiction to overwhelm me and cause years of pervasive depression and feeling very poorly about myself.

i have found the most difficult state of being to be aware of is when i am angry. it's a huge blind spot. of late i have seen again how in certain situations i am not conscious of the anger that occurs within me when another makes a statement—perhaps about me—that i simply accept without question and then "swallow" as if they are correct, period. in "taking inside" what another pronounces, without examining and actually exploring inwardly the accuracy of what is being said, i am repeating the kind of behavior i engaged in long ago when my parents marriage was disintegrating. at that point, no one helped me understand what was happening so i tried to "understand" and explain to myself that which i could not understand. the result was the creation of illusions based on a **lot** of contradictory information and experiences. i never learned how to express anger, or even consciously recognize i was feeling anger in a wholistic and healthy way—it wasn't something "safe" to explore or learn by way of example from my parents actions. to me, *their* anger was frightening and distorted. i came of age cut off from an essential state of being. such a limited, fragmentary learning about an aspect of life severely restricted my capacity to be fully engaged in the moment, *whatever* was happening.

some of my "activist" associates are not interested in my enquiry into Krishnamurti's writings or recordings. they seem to believe that inner exploration is not going to save the world because time is so short now. one who is *very* accomplished in academia, has conducted much research and written a great deal concerning violence in society wrote me, "Being aware, knowing one's self, merging the observer and the observed — all these as ends in themselves seem to me a form of solipsism, or navel-contemplation, not leading to action. That is why it seems isolation and withdrawal to me." i have known isolation. throughout my late teens and most of my twenties i explored a self-created

world of withdrawal and isolation *very* intense and painful. it was an attempt to escape from my own sorrow and grief, from my inability to accept the past. it was a compelling diversion to mask the actuality of what *is*.

on a fundamental level, i was raised to believe that through the process of thinking, i could solve all life's problems. but thought, composed of memory, experience and knowledge, *is* limited. how can something that is limited encompass the limitlessness of existence and being? through thinking i created a richly complex dualistic approach to life that was *incredibly* limiting. by living with an either/or approach to life, i "boxed" myself into a *very small* psychic space. at present i am seeing as never before how life, instead of being "this" *or* "that" is actually this, and that, and this other thing, and this, and this. . . . i am also seeing how i *constantly* judge virtually *everything* i perceive going on within and without. the pervasiveness of my judging mind is quite a curious phenomenon: exactly *where* is this sort of energy and focus originating from? i feel David Bohm articulates something extremely deep, below, when he says "it may be said that we do not see what is actually happening, when we are engaged in the activity of thinking." (for the complete text, see ratical article #1000):

. . . we went on to consider the general disorder and confusion that pervades the consciousness of mankind. It is here that I encountered what I feel to be Krishnamurti's major discovery. What he was seriously proposing is that all this disorder, which is the root cause of such widespread sorrow and misery, and which prevents human beings from properly working together, has its root in the fact that we are ignorant of the general nature of our own processes of thought. Or to put it differently it may be said that we do not see what is actually happening, when we are engaged in the activity of thinking. Through close attention to and observation of this activity of thought, Krishnamurti feels that he directly perceives that thought is a material process, which is going on inside of the human being in the brain and nervous system as a whole.

— Professor David Bohm, "A Brief Introduction to the Work of Krishnamurti"

i have lived within such compelling illusions. having been raised in a culture that puts so much emphasis on the ability to think, to abstract, to create symbols that end up standing in for and then replacing the reality of what *is*, i am at present seeing the depth of *some* of this tendency to abstract and the actuality of contradiction that, up to now, i have tried to change—to make be other than what is. the reality is that contradiction exists in a myriad of forms so long as i apply effort in an attempt to change what *is* into anything else. understanding begins when all effort to change what *is* into what is not gives way to seeing the actuality, the fact, of what *is*; without resistance, without acceptance, without denial, without judgement, without choice, without comparison.

— ratitor dave

from *The First And Last Freedom*, by J. Krishnamurti, 1954, pp. 71-75.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### CONTRADICTION

WE SEE CONTRADICTION in us and about us; because we are in contradiction, there is lack of peace in us and therefore outside us. There is in us a constant state of denial and assertion—what we *want* to be and what we are. The state of contradiction creates conflict and this conflict does not bring about peace—which is a simple, obvious fact. This inward contradiction should not be translated into some kind of philosophical dualism, because that is a very easy escape. That is by saying that contradiction is a state of dualism we think we have solved it—which is obviously a mere convention, a contributory escape from actuality.

Now what do we mean by conflict, by contradiction? Why is there a contradiction in me?—this constant struggle to be something apart from what I am. I am this, and I want to be that. This contradiction in us is a fact, not a metaphysical dualism. Metaphysics has no significance in understanding what *is*. We may discuss, say, dualism, what it is, if it exists, and so on; but of what value is it if we don't know that there is contradiction in us, opposing desires, opposing interests, opposing pursuits? I want to be good and I am not able to be. This contradiction, this opposition in us, must be understood because it creates conflict; and in conflict, in struggle, we cannot create individually. Let us be clear on the state we are in. There is contradiction, so there must be struggle; and struggle is destruction, waste. In that state we can produce nothing but antagonism, strife, more bitterness and sorrow. If we can understand this fully and hence be free of contradiction, then there can be inward peace, which will bring understanding of each other.

The problem is this. Seeing that conflict is destructive, wasteful, why is it that in each of us there is contradiction? To understand that, we must go a little further. Why is there the sense of opposing desires? I do not know if we are aware of it in ourselves—this contradiction, this sense of wanting and not wanting, remembering something and trying to forget it in order to find something new. Just watch it. It is very simple and very normal. It is not something extraordinary. The fact is, there is contradiction. Then why does this contradiction arise?

What do we mean by contradiction? Does it not imply an impermanent state which is being opposed by another impermanent state? I think I have a permanent desire, I posit in myself a permanent desire and another desire arises which contradicts it; this contradiction brings about conflict, which is waste. That is to say there is a constant denial of one desire by another desire, one pursuit overcoming another pursuit. Now, is there such a thing as a permanent desire? Surely, *all* desire is impermanent—not metaphysically, but actually. I want a job. That is I look to a certain job as a means of happiness; and when I get it, I am dissatisfied. I want to become the manager, then the owner, and so on and on, not only in this world, but in the so-called spiritual world—the teacher becoming the principal, the priest becoming the bishop, the pupil becoming the master.

This constant becoming, arriving at one state after another, brings about contradiction, does it not? Therefore, why not look at life not as one permanent desire but as a series of fleeting desires always in opposition to each other? Hence the mind need not be in a state of contradiction. If I regard life not as a permanent desire but as a series of temporary desires which are constantly changing, then there is no contradiction.

Contradiction arises only when the mind has a fixed point of desire; that is when the mind does not regard *all* desire as moving, transient, but seizes upon one desire and makes that into a permanency—only then, when other desires arise, is there contradiction. But all desires are in

constant movement, there is no fixation of desire. There is no fixed point in desire; but the mind establishes a fixed point because it treats everything as a means to arrive, to gain; and there must be contradiction, conflict, as long as one is arriving. You want to arrive, you want to succeed, you want to find an ultimate God or truth which will be your permanent satisfaction. Therefore you are not seeking truth, you are not seeking God. You are seeking lasting gratification, and that gratification you clothe with an idea, a respectable-sounding word such as God, truth; but actually we are all seeking gratification, and we place that gratification, that satisfaction, at the highest point, calling it God, and the lowest point is drink. So long as the mind is seeking gratification, there is not much difference between God and drink. Socially, drink may be bad; but the inward desire for gratification, for gain, is even more harmful, is it not? If you really want to find truth, you must be extremely honest, not merely at the verbal level but altogether; you must be extraordinarily clear, and you cannot be clear if you are unwilling to face facts.

Now what brings about contradiction in each one of us? Surely it is the desire to become something, is it not? We all want to become something: to become successful in the world and, inwardly, to achieve a result. So long as we think in terms of time, in terms of achievement, in terms of position, there must be contradiction. After all, the mind is the product of time. Thought is based on yesterday, on the past; and so long as thought is functioning within the field of time, thinking in terms of the future, of becoming, gaining, achieving, there must be contradiction, because then we are incapable of facing exactly what *is*. Only in realizing, in understanding, in being choicelessly aware of what is, is there a possibility of freedom from that disintegrating factor which is contradiction.

Therefore it is essential, is it not?, to understand the whole process of our thinking, for it is there that we find contradiction. Thought itself has become a contradiction because we have not understood the total process of ourselves; and that understanding is possible only when we are fully aware of our thought, not as an observer operating upon his thought, but integrally and without choice—which is extremely arduous. Then only is there the dissolution of that contradiction which is so detrimental, so painful.

So long as we are trying to achieve a psychological result, so long as we want inward security, there must be a contradiction in our life. I do not think that most of us are aware of this contradiction; or, if we are, we do not see its real significance. On the contrary, contradiction gives us an impetus to live; the very element of friction makes us feel that we are alive. The effort, the struggle of contradiction, gives us a sense of vitality. That is why we love wars, that is why we enjoy the battle of frustrations. So long as there is the desire to achieve a result, which is the desire to be psychologically secure, there must be a contradiction; and where there is contradiction, there cannot be a quiet mind. Quietness of mind is essential to understand the whole significance of life. Thought can never be tranquil; thought, which is the product of time, can never find that which is timeless, can never know that which is beyond time. The very nature of our thinking is a contradiction, because we are always thinking in terms of the past or of the future; therefore we are never fully cognizant, fully aware of the present.

To be fully aware of the present is an extraordinarily difficult task because the mind is incapable of facing a fact directly without deception. Thought is the product of the past and therefore it can only think in terms of the past or of the future; it cannot be completely aware of a fact in the present. So long as thought, which is the product of the past, tries to eliminate contradiction and all the problems that it creates, it is merely pursuing a result, trying to achieve an end, and such thinking only creates more contradiction and hence conflict, misery and confusion in us and, therefore, about us.

To be free of contradiction, one must be aware of the present without choice. How can there be

choice when you are confronted with a fact? Surely the understanding of the fact is made impossible so long as thought is trying to operate upon the fact in terms of becoming, changing, altering. Therefore self-knowledge is the beginning of understanding; without self-knowledge, contradiction and conflict will continue. To know the whole process, the totality of oneself, does not require any expert, any authority. The pursuit of authority only breeds fear. No expert, no specialist, can show us how to understand the process of the self. One has to study it for oneself. You and I can help each other by talking about it, but none can unfold it for us, no specialist, no teacher, can explore it for us. We can be aware of it only in our relationship—in our relationship to things, to property, to people and to ideas. In relationship we shall discover that contradiction arises when action is approximating itself to an idea. The idea is merely the crystallization of thought as a symbol, and the effort to live up to the symbol brings about a contradiction.

Thus, so long as there is a pattern of thought, contradiction will continue; to put an end to the pattern, and so to contradiction, there must be self-knowledge. This understanding of the self is not a process reserved for the few. The self is to be understood in our everyday speech, in the way we think and feel, in the way we look at another. If we can be aware of every thought, of every feeling, from moment to moment, then we shall see that in relationship the ways of the self are understood. Then only is there a possibility of that tranquillity of mind in which alone the ultimate reality can come into being.

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*It is always difficult to keep simple and clear. The world worships success, the bigger the better; the greater the audience the greater the speaker; the colossal super buildings, cars, aeroplanes and people. Simplicity is lost. The successful people are not the ones who are building a new world. To be a real revolutionary requires a complete change of heart and mind, and how few want to free themselves. One cuts the surface roots; but to cut the deep feeding roots of mediocrity, success, needs something more than words, methods, compulsions. There seem to be few, but they are the real builders—the rest labor in vain.*

*One is everlastingly comparing oneself with another, with what one is, with what one should be, with someone who is more fortunate. This comparison really kills. Comparison is degrading, it perverts one's outlook. And on comparison one is brought up. All our education is based on it and so is our culture. So there is everlasting struggle to be something other than what is. The understanding of what one is uncovers creativeness, but comparison breeds competitiveness, ruthlessness, ambition, which we think brings about progress. Progress has only led so far to more ruthless wars and misery than the world has ever known. To bring up children without comparison is true education.*

— J. Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti, A Biography*, by Pupul Jayakar, pp. 255-256