

Celebrating Differences: Wisdom through Relationships

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Abstract

The Earth we live in is increasingly becoming a battlefield for the forces of integration versus the forces of fragmentation. The play between opposites has encumbered our world as it has our family lives as well.

Psychologists, counselors, management gurus have all been working hard to find solutions to a growing 'relationships' crisis, at both the macro and micro levels. In the developed countries, mental illnesses are on the rise. Growing intolerance has begun to seek release through violence. The trends are disturbing, and there is a growing need for change. What we need now more than ever, perhaps, is a completely new perspective.

The Author seeks to establish new thinking and perspectives on this issue through his book – 'Celebrating Differences: Wisdom through Relationships'. Available on Amazon, Kindle, & Flipkart. This paper is a brief synopsis of the same.

Keywords

Relationships; Wisdom; Psychologists

Introduction

Beyond the beginning of all existence, I think it is safe to say that 'Nothing' existed. Neither were there any universes, energies, nor any consciousness. Differences therefore did not exist. Creation of any kind did not exist. Perhaps, we might say, that only 'infinity', or whatever that is, existed. If indeed Infinity existed, then nothing else could possibly have existed. Nothing can exist separate from or outside of Infinity.

Into this arena of 'nothingness', the first creation was the creation of the 'finite', which is of something very different from the 'infinite'. Hence we can say that from the very beginning of creation 'differences' came into being. They formed a fundamental fabric for all of existence that followed. Whether this creation happened through the process of natural or random selection or through the designs of a 'Creator' is not something we wish to get into here.

'Evolution' as we grew to know it was therefore always an evolution of 'differences' and nothing else. As some of the most

ancient of Spiritual traditions tell us, this evolution of differences is now gradually moving towards achieving 'One-ness' through an integration or elimination of 'differences', leaving us squarely at our starting point, Infinity, albeit now with full consciousness of being Infinite or One. Where through conscious choice human evolution proceeds towards integration or One-ness. But sadly the last few decades have proven that this does not seem to be happening. Instead our world has grown more and more fragmented.

All human experience can say today is that - 'Differences' exist. 'Differences' have always existed. This is a Universal Law. Differences exist at both the micro and macro level. In fact, a bird's eye view of evolution shows us that Evolution, for whatever purpose it has been serving, clearly appears to be nothing more than an 'evolution of differences', from which higher and higher species, species with greater levels of intelligence, have been evolving. Perhaps then we might safely conclude from this that the purpose of evolution at least appears to be the creation of greater and greater levels of intelligence and learning, culminating in the human being.

We then can conclude that 'Differences' are in fact needed for us to evolve and grow into more intelligent species. Without 'Differences' there might not be any 'growth' or perhaps any 'learning' or evolution.

Let's take a quick look at some of the definitions of the word 'difference'.

"'Difference' is a key concept of Philosophy, denoting the process or set of properties by which one entity is distinguished from another within a relational field or a given conceptual system".

In his Critique of Pure Reason, Immanuel Kant argues that it is necessary to distinguish between the thing in itself and its appearance. Even if two objects have completely the same properties, if they are at two different places at the same time, they are numerically different. Hence, even identical twins are numerically different.

Leibnitz regarded 'phenomenon' as things in themselves, consequently as intelligibly, that is, objects of pure understanding ..., and in this case his principle of the indiscernible (*principium identitatis indiscernibilium*) is not to be impugned. But, as 'phenomena' are objects of sensibility, and, as

the understanding, in respect of them, must be employed empirically and not purely or transcendently, plurality and numerical difference are given by space itself as the condition of external phenomena. For one part of space, although it may be perfectly similar and equal to another part, is still without it, and for this reason alone is different from the latter. It follows that this must hold good for all things that are in the different parts of space at the same time, however similar and equal one may be to another.

Because Differences exist, similarities must also exist, therefore 'Relationships' must also exist. Perhaps this too is a Universal law. Hence relationships cannot exist in a world without any differences or dualities. Can strength exist without weakness? Can success exist without failure? Can good exist without bad? Even identical twins have differences in thoughts, emotions, viewpoints and beliefs. And according to Kant and Leibnitz, plurality and numerical differences given by space, all else being equal, are also to be understood or defined as being 'different'. Even our stars and planets are in a constant flux between the different and opposing forces of expansion and those of contraction, forces of breaking-up or separation and those of integration.

According to Melanie Klein, W.R.D. Fairbairn and other early psychoanalysts, the early learning and development of children began with a process called 'splitting', where external objects needed to be split into 'good' and 'bad' objects, resulting in a process of simultaneous internal splitting of the child's ego. This simply meant that at the very outset the child learns to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad', and in so doing, develops a defense mechanism to protect it from all that is viewed and so believed to be bad. Splitting thus takes place when the internal object is perceived as being either good or bad. Two qualities that is diametrically different from each other. In this process the child's early learning and development begins.

The child's earliest learning takes place only through its relationship with its mother. First with its relationship only with one nipple of the mothers breast, then gradually the child realizes that there is more to the mother than this, and soon the child is able to relate to both breasts, then the mothers abdomen, then the whole body of the mother. This process of integration of the parts of the mother is critical to the early learning of the child. The building of relationships and the integration of differences was hence fundamental to our early learning.

This process of integration was seen to continue through childhood and adolescence, enabling the child to develop from a 'paranoid-schizoid position' to a 'depressive position', through the process of integrating the good parts with the bad. This process of integration of different parts provided the child with a larger and more complete view and understanding of the mother and its relationship to the mother. This would in turn lead towards developing a more holistic and realistic inner representation of the external world, where both 'good' and 'bad' can at least coexist in every 'object', and perhaps one where 'good' and 'bad' objects can coexist together.

Integration of Differences through relationships has hence played a significant role in learning and development for all humans since our earliest childhood.

As adults we have grown programmed and conditioned to see the differences in anything and everyone we see. In our efforts to observe our environment we are happy to find any similarities that exist, and perhaps a little concerned or even anxious to find the differences that exist. The key question then that all of us have to address is how are we dealing with the differences we encounter in our lives? Do we engage in 'splitting, 'that is in fragmentation? or in 'integration'?

In each person's perception not all differences are considered to be 'bad'. We enjoy different cuisines and cultures; we go on vacation to different places where we might encounter different architecture, cuisine, people and culture. These and many others constitute differences that we enjoy and relish.

However, we frequently also come across Differences that we find to be significantly disagreeable. This is specially so when opinions, viewpoints, cultures, races and religion, differ or clash with each other. Such differences cause Conflicts. We then tend to go into a fight/flight mode. We engage in splitting off the 'bad' parts. The parts we don't like or we disagree with. Learning is then replaced by judging and blaming. We identify with the 'good' part and split away or reject the 'bad'. In this way we fragment our minds and fragment this world.

True inner learning can hence only take place when we learn to integrate all of the split-off parts or fragments that we have created within ourselves. Only then can 'One-ness' have a chance to happen. We need our relationships to do this. We need a radically different point of view of the value of our relationships, one where we begin to see learning, wisdom growth, and evolution, as being the sole pay offs of all relationship differences and conflicts. Relationships are not about learning how to 'win friends and influence people'. They are more about how to develop ourselves into a higher, more intelligent, wiser species.

Conclusion

To do this we must start at the grass roots level of society – our schools and colleges. Where more than ever before we need to inculcate a culture of true Dialogue and Dialectics, of learning through Dialogue. Simultaneously we must introduce the practice of Dialogue and Dialectics in Leadership thinking and practices. The book explores this in some detail.

In view of the anxiety that Dialogue might go on forever, without any resolution, the book explore the fascinating subject of Dialectics, through which the practice of Dialectic Behaviour Therapy (DBT) has developed.

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