

# **Dogma, Dissonance, And Dissent**

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While I was a student at The University of Texas at Austin, there was a story passing through the psychology department of how a group of drunken fraternity boys pushed a piano through a window that fell 10 floors and killed 2 people in the street below. All of these bone-heads got together and decided they were not responsible. They collectively blamed the victims. "Why were those stupid people walking the streets at 3 am?" they argued.

We marveled at this phenomenon of "cognitive dissonance." Cognitive dissonance is a mental state that occurs when there is a major contradiction in the habitual thought structures of the ego. The ego seeks consistency with its thoughts and projections so that there is a centered and consistent self-concept. A powerful event that is different and contradicts the projections of its habitual reality creates a state of dissonance and inner tension in the mind. Instead of being only superficial and frivolous boys, they are now guilty of killing innocent people. They thought they were good people, perhaps the best, and now they are seen as criminals. To neutralize this cognitive dissonance, this state of tension induced by a great contradiction and confusion to the ego's reality, one has to invent excuses that serve the confused ego and create an acceptable story so that one can continue thinking in the same way as before so that one's projections about oneself and one's "reality" are not contradicted and interrupted. The defensive and guilty psyche must avoid at all costs this painful state of cognitive dissonance. We are all cognitive misers and always look for easy excuses and pretexts rather than the complex truth. If you can not find an excuse, then you live in torment. In the case of frat boys, they can not bear the social censure and personal guilt and simply pass the blame on some "other". This is, of course, much easier when each individual has the rest of the "team" supporting him.

These superficial socialites with the Greek letters were often conformist nationalistic and patriotic types that become model citizens and leaders in capitalist society. Very few individuals on our planet are given the privileges and liberties of these fraternity boys. Although this is an extreme example of selfishness and a complex and

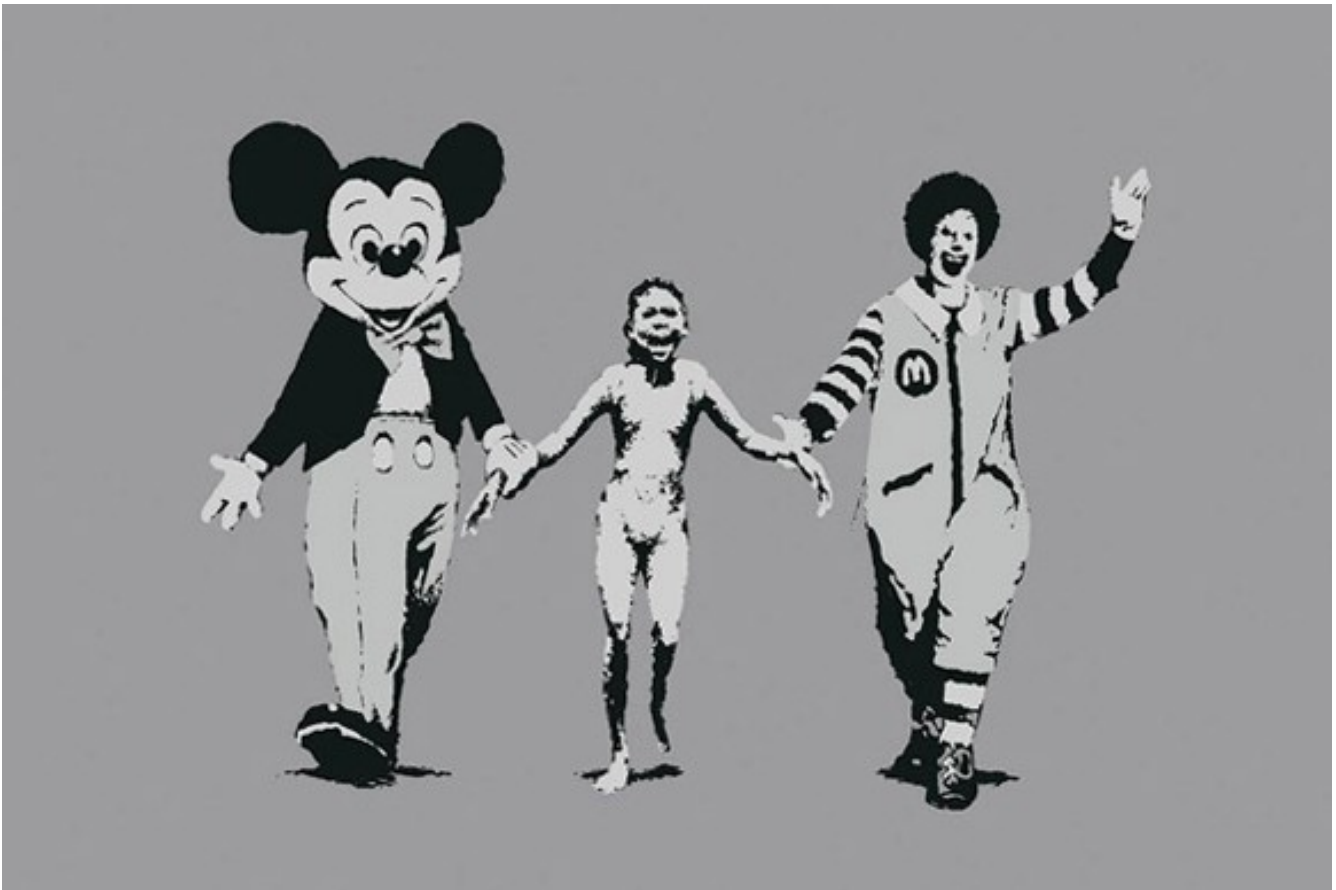
contradictory self-serving bias, the irresponsibility and selfishness of these students really reflect the mentality and biases of materialistic, capitalist society in general. Western capitalist countries have committed mass genocide all over the world and have interfered in the natural evolution of so many cultures and still continue to subjugate and exploit them. Within those imperialist societies there is also so much exploitation, inequality, and injustice. The frat boys tried to blame their victims to justify their own irresponsibility. Similarly, the entire collective mentality of a society can be manipulated by the media spin-doctors, priests and politicians to become bigoted or racist and blame social problems on the poor, the blacks, latinos, or some other people in another country. And if we are about to invade another country for their natural resources we can generate a nationalistic and xenophobic sentiment to justify ourselves and thereby placate our cognitive dissonance.

Under the shadow of materialism, we live more separated and isolated and care mostly about our own selfish well-being, or perhaps only our near and dear ones. The dominant stream of materialistic culture fosters desires that are based mostly in material comfort, and so often tend towards excess. Few think about the consequences of such a life-style; the environmental degradation, economic exploitation of other people on the planet, and widespread degeneration of the human soul trapped in this materialistic, deterministic cage that so much of our world has become. Not many people are concerned about economically motivated wars motivated by our military-industrial complex that undermine democracy by sabotaging the economies and governments of weaker nations. Such destructive acts against humanity create psycho-social illnesses. Our entire society has become mentally ill as we have distorted our most fundamental human values by accepting militant nationalism, multinational corporate domination, and lies like Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Irak. We are constantly forced (at least if we are honest) to see how our society so often goes against democracy and humanism, while at the same time we try and maintain the idea that we are the most humane and democratic.

Most of us are just like repressed frat boys on the inside. We ignore the reality of our immediate community, society and our planet and prefer to watch TV and buy strange things to fill our spiritual and existential emptiness. Nobody will criticize me if everyone is living in

the same way, each in our own island. It can not be bad if everyone else is part of the scheme, if some narcissistic and selfishly biased ideals give one an opiate to filter anything that may create the cognitive dissonance when one realizes that all of this makes one really unhappy. One can buy something new to fill an inner void, seek some adventure to divert the ego when it is bored and empty. Or when Conscience begins to tell you that your world is destructive one may continue trying to raise the flag a little higher than one's cognitive dissonance. Our selfishness, conformity, laziness and ignorance enables individuals and society to continue their impunity and irresponsibility while we remain existentially dazed and psychologically divided.

Our mundane and selfish mentality will not take responsibility for the damage that it is creating all around the world. Most people trapped in materialism do not care so much about what happens to people in other places, as long as they continue to live in material comfort. Their biased ideological distortions and selfishness hide the ugly truth that our imbalanced socio-economic system must steal the natural resources and brutally exploit the labor of others in far away lands, and even create wars to do so. This predatory lifestyle is responsible for so much destruction and suffering for the rest of the planet and its people. Under globalist capitalism, the first world is the parasite of the third.



Personally, I have received great benefits from being born in the first world: a good family, education and a safe environment in which to live. However, things change when one peers out of the false security bubble of a world that is really only sustained by perpetual violence, exploitation, and political subterfuge. One begins to look outside of the box to find true human culture and spirituality. With humane culture, art, literature and meditation one develops a natural, spiritual and universal consciousness. It is natural that one's socio-spiritual awareness expands and one begins to see and understand the terrible things that the politicians, bankers and corporations are doing to the world. So that a few can live in wretched excess, the masses of humanity have to live in misery. And for what end? The modern materialistic society of the U.S. and Europe is so full of mental pathologies that people often end up suffering more than the oppressed and exploited in the third world. Often I see more light in the eyes of the indigenous who live under tin roofs in the mountains than in the people of modern suburbs where I grew up. Though poor and forgotten, at least those people still have a piece of land and have

not been forced into overcrowded urban slums to be devoured by the capitalist matrix. There are still people who are truly of this earth.

However, this situation is an absurd instability that can not last. The people whose profession is to lie and create war and destruction are in a deep part of their psyche actually well aware of the weaknesses in their networks of lies. No matter how sick and distorted their minds have become there is always a live witness that sees through their game of lies. They are not dumb beasts, but degenerate intellectuals ridden with extreme cognitive dissonance. There remains some portion of an inner awareness that makes them uneasy and restless within as they continue to trap themselves in exponentially greater lies without.

Whether we are speaking of the corruption and exploitation in our government, religion, or social group, the dynamics of power and mental manipulation within these distinct structures share a common psychological ground. We enter this world weak and ignorant and we require much struggle and effort to overcome these debilities, whether they be physical, mental, or spiritual weaknesses. Some people are more strong while others are weak, some are more sharp and others are dull. The strong lead or control the weak. Such is the law of nature at all levels: physical, mental, and spiritual. The only problem with this law is how we define "strength" and "weakness" and how people are treated in accordance with those definitions. When leaders become too empowered and selfish, they begin to exploit their followers economically, socially, and ideologically. Eventually their dogmas, prejudices, policies become completely corrupt and go against the common good. Then begins the process of manipulation that trick us into believing and following something we should not. And finally tyranny and repression toward all who resist their hypocrisy and impunity. This cycle causes untold harm to individuals and just as certainly as it brings death to empires. This is essentially the same pattern for all types of social manipulation and spin-doctoring whether we are speaking of the exploitation of the ignorant and weak by the shrewd and strong in the religious, economic, cultural, racial or class structures.

When rational and moral human beings are forced to believe in something irrational and immoral, we become existentially confused and psychologically fragmented. We are overcome by cognitive

dissonance. We can never develop a clear picture of reality because the cognitive models we acquire about ourselves and our worlds are so often very contradictory. From the yogic point of view, the Aham or feeling of "I am" can never reconcile itself with the Mahat, the pure feeling of "I exist" which is eternal and pure and unconditioned by the external world. The "I-am" or ego is midway between the inner and outer worlds and so is in part socially conditioned. It is not really separated from the Mahat within, only limited definitions of the ego make it appear as such. Without progressive spiritual culture we are stuck in an imposed and warped definition of the "I am" that doesn't permit us to see the true "I" within.

The victims of cognitive dissonance imposed by the priests or the politicians are always ready, in their confusion and dissonance, to accept some story that makes sense. Weak and separated from inner truth, we are all too ready to believe in some explanation. The trembling masses accept the stories prefabricated for them that only further sustain the mental exploitation and control over them. This is the perfect state of control over a social body: we fear them, yet we simultaneously seek their approval and protection. With such a fear complex imposed by institutions it is no wonder that few people ever find a way out of this web of maya, or cosmic delusion created by errant human minds.

Dogmatic ideology would have that or mental development remain in the lower rungs of the Aham or ego, far away from the self-reliant and vastly intelligent qualities of the Mahat or true "I" within. This is a natural human duality that dogmatic ideology tries to exploit by keeping us enslaved to matter and the market, to class and color, or perhaps within some church with some savior. We become neurotic individually and collectively as a result. Some people may not be strong enough to protest and take a stand. This is unfortunate because the exploiters and perpetrators usually continue in their downward fall into even more gross and perverse actions which require even more cover-ups. Such is the self-condemning path of the lie; one has to keep lying to cover up previous lies until eventually one is trapped in an inescapable quagmire of psychotic non-reality.

If we combat these universal thought distortions of power and manipulation and understand how they work, then we will have taken at least a chunk out of the monstrous structures of power that we

humans create and carry in our mind-body system, in our DNA. Only by finding discernment, the perfect balance of universal love and reason, will we be able to remedy our frailty and lack of true faith in our inherent power of reason and love. This fault has permitted us to accept the lies and manipulations of others. The infinite Consciousness is beyond name and form, freely available to all. It lies with our own "I-feeling" or Mahat. These warped beliefs were created in our weak egos by spiritual schemers; they fermented there because we couldn't see an alternative, we couldn't conceive of something higher, or the belief gave a false sense of security. It is only in this confused mental space that the powers that be can impose their dogmas. Our pinnacle reason and moral responsibility must dissolve these false mental structures that only serve to make us all ill. As such we may begin to purify the collective consciousness of humanity.

To reflect and resound these lies back to them is the duty of all who love liberty and seek a better and more balanced world. Leaders play the game of psychological terror, as well as actual, aggressive terror. Should we not find a more subtle and intelligent way to return this package? Should we not rise above their petty little ideologies and feelings with the highest universal humanism and spiritual strength to reflect their hell back upon them? Make the mind a laser that penetrates through this darkness to send this mass of foul lies back to the perpetrators. This refined interior tantric light will protect you personally and help repel their attacks on our collective human society. We must tap our reserve forces in the deepest part of the mind to defend against this degeneration and impunity. Neurosis and psychosis is the natural result of most people who do not renounce the path of lies and destruction. Let them destroy themselves rather than others. The stronger you are as a universal human being, the more their own distortions fall back upon them. There is some good that torments this fragmented and sick state of existence. Their weakness is in the same point as their cognitive dissonance and false consciousness. What does the shrewd capitalist know of the greater forces in the universe, these brutes who exploit and kill for finite matter, poor ideology and petty ego? Perhaps some will change, but most eventually be devoured by their own psychopathology because of such internal distortion. They are cunning, but a deeper moral intelligence connects us to true power and knowledge in the universe. They do not know the power of Tao, of dharma, the universal moral

order of the universe. A mind without spiritual awareness is like a ship lost at sea, full of holes, and sinks slowly.

The leaders and also their followers also carry the burden of truth through the lie. Those who accept the popular lies also pay the price in the end. Although most are not aware that they are ultimately working towards truth, even through their own degeneration. The materialistic and narcissistic example of existence with all its psychopathology has given proof to the world of its non-sustainability and its inevitable madness. This giant collapsing on itself is teaching many lessons to the world of how not to live. Do people still perceive the subtle, yet inviolable law of compensation? The collective “karma” of a society affects all of its members. The universe holds all individuals accountable, those who live in conformity, pay taxes, and pledge allegiance to such a monster. Here I recall the stoic philosopher Diogenes who roamed about in broad daylight with a lantern saying he was looking for honest men.

There is very little moral order left in human society at this end of this capitalist era. The planet is being ravaged and is being coerced out of balance by human activity. The social order is descending into chaotic, brutal anarchy. The shrewd and powerful just do what they want and make laws to justify and implement their policies based on their exclusive interests. Corporations and governments become organized crime institutions under the hegemony of the global capitalist system. Multi-national corporations, federal reserve banks and their military industrial complex continue killing and/or controlling us all. Under the holocaust of globalization, the survivors are being forced to live off of the blood and sweat of others. Without great lies and psychological tricks of self-deception, very few people now live in good conscience. The first world is the parasite of the third world and the globalist legislation is but a low argument for parasitism. What is nature’s response to our civilizations downward slide? Will we be shrugged off of the planet by the protective forces of nature? If all is already brutal anarchy and the world only continues to slide into greater darkness and destruction, then why not consider a higher form of anarchy?

Advaita, the philosophy of Oneness, is pure freedom, spiritual anarchy. Not even the best ideas control the mind under this philosophy, much less governments or institutions. The idea of Oneness of spirit in all beings, an “Oversoul” behind all particular minds, reveals the greatest



inner freedom and bliss. At the same time this vision inspires a sacred duty toward ethical action in harmony with this common spirit. Instead of promoting and projecting an immature and selfish bourgeois freedom, one's conscience demands truth in all aspects of existence. Without the torch of conscience, lies and delusion distort one's freedom and make mundane, dualistic existence a cage for the soul. Congruence with one's deepest conscience and holding to it under all circumstances is the greatest defense against dualistic, separate thinking and all of its manifestations in our human world. Spiritual anarchy, the spontaneous, natural, and intuitive order and organization stemming from a state of social and existential chaos, has its roots in a profound respect for other beings that transcends name and form. Spirituality must be a truly unitive force instead of a divisive one. If it is true, then there are good fruits for all. If untrue, then it poisons the minds of individuals and creates disunity in the world. A newer, more conscious form of humanism may begin to evolve as Shakti, the divine force of nature, molds us into a higher form of being. Whatever doesn't evolve toward this practical ideal of Advaita, of essential oneness with the Infinite, is ultimately crushed under the wheels of the gods as divine mother nature (Shakti) reclaims all of these errant expressions through her destructive and regenerative forces.

Dogmatism and religion have little to do with dharma, which is the "essential" purpose of a human being. They are static containers of dead ideas, like garbage bins. Dharma is an ideological flow of evolution through thought and action and really takes you somewhere and causes a stir of movement deep in the soul. Dharma refers to the state of spiritual freedom whereby one is only capable of following nature's laws and a spiritual way of life. If one lives more by the laws of spirit than by customs, then religion, politics, and social conventions are mostly lies and weak prompts for desperate or blind mentalities that haven't found their place here on earth. Existential and social alienation create a state of spiritual ignorance which make one vulnerable to the many snares of dualistic thinking.

Our lack of mindful awareness makes space for a whole host of foolish ideologies. Egoism is for infants. Materialism is for brutes and Barbies. Racism and imperialism are for Neanderthals. Nationalism is but a reunion of Cro-mags. Religion mostly just keeps people from having to face hard truths themselves, and thereby take a leap of faith

by sheepishly following the established ideas of others. Spiritual anarchists like Thoreau, Aurobindu and Tolstoy could not be contained within the confines of social convention and corrupt substitutes for dharma. Instead, they sought a higher union with both Nature and society and offered something new and bold for humanity. In this day and age it is hard to have faith in “systems” that don’t sprout up from a natural order based on local necessity. Spiritual visionaries have always and will always respond to the needs of their local human and natural environments and offer a new vision for the world inspired by the genius of eternal dharma. These practical examples show how some great truths are implemented through the most practical and humane expressions.

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