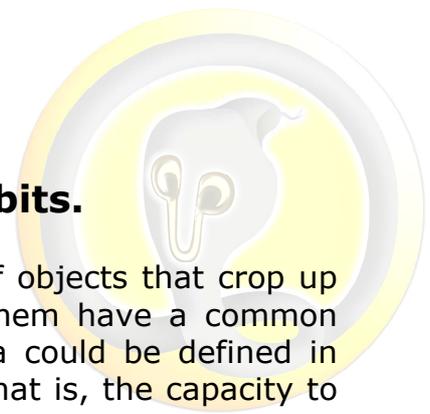


## Inertia and mental habits.



If one pays attention to the characteristics of objects that crop up in perception, it can be appreciated that all of them have a common denominator which we could call "inertia". Inertia could be defined in ideal as the principal of conservation of identity, that is, the capacity to endure and maintain in being themselves.

For instance, when a physical body is thrown into the air it has an inertia, in the absence of friction, it tends to keep on moving. This same inertia is what makes any mineral remain as it is for millions of years until determined atmospheric conditions like, for example, pressure and temperature, transform it into metal or a metalloid. Independently from the process of transformation, whether it be mineral or metal, it possesses an inertia through which it tends to make it stay the way it is until there are apt conditions for it to change into something else arise.

Absolutely everything is subject to this inertia. It is a variety of survival mechanism that all things have in common, a tendency to remain and continue existing. This goes for all contents in a field of cognition<sup>1</sup>. In addition to this, in order for any content to be itself and be different to the rest, it needs to have boundaries<sup>2</sup> that identify and delimit it, conferring a discontinued, unstable and variable nature on the cognition.

It is precisely in this prior affirmation that the problem of understanding our perceived reality is located as everything has the tendency to remain in being, but is simultaneously subject to instability and change. To ultimately structure any kind of knowledge, human beings devise laws to view the content they perceive as having greater inertia, with greater stability: laws of electromagnetism, gravity, conductivity, relativity, etc. However, when dealing with mental contents, it is considerably more difficult to define their characteristics with any accuracy. Some psychological theories have been formulated to the effect that with all mental content, like attracts like; opposites attract their complement, but it is difficult to establish universal laws in this field regarding perfect content as it has a very unstable nature, and little inertia.

Continuing with the field of mental content, there is an issue we must consider: if it is established that inertia is what tends to give stability to things, what is the tendency that manifests itself in human

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<sup>1</sup> **FIELD OF COGNITION:** Is the ambit where a cognitive relationship is established and all assumed/adjudicated existing information there is potentially conscious. Any element that can be known could be a field of cognition.

<sup>2</sup> **BOUNDRY:** Is information capable of delimiting and differentiating things enabling them to be something

beings, with most continuity and capacity to maintain itself – so much so that it precisely characterises them as individuals? It is the egoic condition or “I” which recognises itself as an individual and differentiates itself from all other things; the “I” is the perfect content that has most inertia in human beings.

Going back to the nature of physical phenomena, we can use a practical example that illustrates how boundaries and inertia relate to each other. All objects which are suspended at a certain height possess potential energy depending on mass, gravity and height with respect to a given system of reference; when an object falls its potential energy is converted into kinetic energy, defined as the measurement of mass times height<sup>2</sup>. By direct experience it is known that this model of behaviour is comparable across all closed systems, inferring that energy is neither created nor destroyed, but rather it is transformed. The “inertia-boundary” binomial inherent in all mental content operates in a similar way, analogically speaking, that is, when intensity increases in one it diminishes in the other and vice-versa. Therefore, on raising the intensity of content through habit, the inertia itself will become increasingly solid, it will be amplified, and this in its turn will diminish the intensity with which its boundaries are manifested, making them more tenuous and penetrable.

In common perception the omnipresence of the “I” is understood from this perspective: its inertia, constantly nourished by habit, is extremely high and therefore its boundaries are very tenuous, and this circumstance explains why its presence pervades everything. In contrast, it is difficult to place yourself in deep inner states, for instance, concentration, and stay there as, due to a lack of habit of remaining in these states, inertia is very low so therefore their boundaries are very firm and not very penetrable.

To sum up: It can be said that common habits have intense inertia but minimal boundaries. All mental content is supplied with inertia and thresholds. The greater the threshold the lesser the inertia and the greater the inertia the lesser the threshold. For this reason, intense content has great inertia and less defined threshold and here we return to the initial question: What is the content that has most inertia and least threshold? “I” What is the content that most commonly appears? “I”: “I am so and so”, “I am here and I am there”, “I do this”, “I think that”, “I feel the other”. “I” turns up everywhere and mixes with everything. It is as if it were a transparent pane of glass through which you looked at everything, your vision always being conditioned by it. Therefore, the stability of “I” induces boundaries so penetrable, that it can associate to all the elements in cognition, in this way, absolutely all content is tinged with “I”.

However, not all mental content has the same inertia as the "I". All perceived objects are classified mentally, differences are established between them and they are given names to identify them. We do not have the habit of thinking about those things which have not been given names but on the other hand we do think about those which have. They are much easier to think about and therefore they have created greater inertia. For example, it is easy to think about things such as houses, forests, countries, cushions and arms but nevertheless it is difficult to think about contents such as a cushion/arm. The cushion and the arm which holds it are not perceived as one unit and therefore are not given a specific name, so that it is difficult to think of, and its inertia is very low. Intellectually, our system recognises that one thing is a cushion and the other is an arm and generates perception of boundaries between them; what the *vedanta* states is that there are no boundaries between objects as, at bottom, boundaries are variable and conceptual. In the *vedanta* what exists is a continuum of "not-object", "not-something", that is, what really exists is Non-duality.

Moreover, when an object apparently without consciousness is perceived as "not-something", it becomes evident that not only does it have consciousness, but it is non-differentiated from Universal consciousness; from the viewpoint of states of consciousness such as *samadhi*, objects are perceived within "not-name" and "not-form" parameters, without any disassociation from all the rest of the contents.

Going a little more deeply into the process of differentiation, when listening to the chant *Sarvandiyanam nitiasam karmaquindam sanyasim ahim aishvatam nianam*", means nothing to someone who does not know Sanskrit, because the mind cannot associate it with a name and a given form – or to put it in another way, the mind cannot in this case place boundaries when listening to these words; so the chant lacks inertia since it cannot be referred to anything or be compared with anything.

When the World is perceived without being analysed and without any kind of dialectic interpretation, in the absence of psychological depersonalisation, there arises a perception related to a new state of consciousness. Perceiving mental content, observing feelings and thoughts from this state of silence leads the perceptor into the prime status of Non-duality. However, what usually happens is that when contents are perceived they are compared to something previously known and assimilated to something that has boundaries, giving mental names to the forms and mental forms to the names. We are used to delimiting things that have names and thoughts, If something does not have these characteristics, we try to redefine them, just as in the previous case, where if we have to delimit something like cushions and arms, the word "cusharm" is invented, so that on the next occasion the mind would have a clear reference of what is defined; to the extent that inertia is reinforced through habit and repetition, their boundaries will

weaken and it will be much easier to be situated vis-à-vis this new appreciation.

This is precisely the function of languages. Languages being sound forms representing previously defined concepts, they create an association through habit of repetition between names and forms so that there can be easy recognition

It is established, then, that absolutely all content has a threshold and inertia and its corresponding grade of stability. In the physical World, it is said that protons and electrons are the most stable contents: their duration can be estimated as ten raised to thirty-two seconds and, to give an opposite example, there are particles with such little energy that they last for ten raised to minus eight or ten raised to the minus twenty seconds; their stability is minimal. Exactly the same occurs in the mental world: there are habits with boundaries which have very intense thresholds and on the other hand others that operate with very simple, penetrable ones as they are maintained by high inertia. This is comparable to the principle of conservation of energy; the intensity of thresholds converts into intensity of inertia in some cases, and in others precisely the opposite.

From the point of view of the subject a similar process occurs: when the subject's attention is placed on external objects, they acquire a special relevance that we may call "evidence", and when attention is directed inwardly the sensation of self-consciousness of the individual or "self-evidence" gains power. Here we also have to apply the same principle: greater evidence lesser self-evidence and greater self-evidence lesser evidence. That is, in the world of cognition the principle of conservation which operates in all systems is similarly fulfilled.

This same principle is what gives a certain stability to the states of cognition; if it were not so, there would not be the five recognised states, Dream, Thought, Observation, Concentration, Meditation, but rather many more, although the latent instability in all of them precisely makes the leap from one to another possible. The only thing that is not subject to this type of oscillation and remains absolutely stable and self-evident is Non-dual consciousness, or *brahman*.

We have already talked about habits being the generators of inertia in content, but when dealing with human beings as just another content, it is easy to come to the conclusion that what they fundamentally "are" as individuals consists of their deepest rooted habits manifested in life after life, which in Sanskrit are known as *vāsanās* and *saṃskāras*.

All individuals have their own *vāsanā*, each and every one of us has their own. In my case the deepest rooted *vāsanā* is to be a teacher and my greatest inertia would be to be in the present. Following the principle of conservation, *vāsanās* cannot be diluted although one can be transformed into another; one cannot expect to eliminate a *vāsanā* and

imagine that nothing would be left. In any case, the *vāsanā* which wanted to destroy the other would still remain, for example. In reality, the only thing that can consume them is *samādhi*, since a *vāsanā* always lives in relation to other content. It is enough to eliminate the link of causality (the "I" in effect), for nothing to be left that differentiates the observer and the observed, only the deep appreciation of truly being *brahman*. *Samādhi* dissolves the link that egoically relates content and succeeds in eliminating any possibility of associating names and forms as differentiated entities. Such differentiation is pure illusion, it is *māyā*, the only real thing is *Brahman*, that is, the reality of a non-differentiated object for whoever knows it.

All content tends to remain being what it is owing to the inertia that operates on it, but the mobility of its boundaries makes it be constantly changing at the same time. Everything moves in cognitive process because inertia is transformed into threshold and threshold into inertia, that is, that any perception of their being is subject to constant instability. Nonetheless, nothing is lost in this process as it simply transforms, and thus it is also valid to say that, from a certain perspective, things are stable.

This permanent process of transformation of objects into something different in which, however, contents continue to appear to be "something", is what makes it evident that things "are", but at the same time "are not". There only has to be a change in the condition of cognition for this to shift to being represented in another fashion, with its corresponding relative stability and continuity. However, since the new concept is provided with inertia and defined boundaries, it is potentially subjected to a new and continuous state of change. This is why it is said that this world is illusory, a wonderful illusion in which everything is truly false and falsely true.

Things "are" from the perspective of the moment they are known, instants afterwards they are not. It is also worth stating that from the perspective of a certain sphere of consciousness, they do not even exist since, where is the building you dreamt about after you wake up?, where is the building you are in when you slip into a dream? The same states of consciousness are subject to the same process: they operate within certain stability through the inertia that is present in them between threshold and threshold and, given that nothing is lost in the successive changes, the universe is provided with apparent stability.

Human beings perceive stable moments within apparently stable boundaries, and in the next moment they perceive other stable boundaries via a difference of reality between threshold and inertia. Momentarily, everything which is perceived has a threshold and inertia and in the next moment it does not have the same threshold nor the same inertia. Nothing in this world has this, not even the stars: they consume millions and millions of tons of atomic material at every instant, that is, with every instant they are continually changing.

Human beings recognise themselves as being continuous because they have a continuous memory of themselves. If not, they would live like animals that do not have the sensation of egoic continuity. The sensation of continuity only comes about owing to personal history, that is, apparently stable events with certain mobility of their boundaries, traces of momentary perception that have a certain continuity. This certain continuity of the traces and this causality between apparently individual events is known as *karma*

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