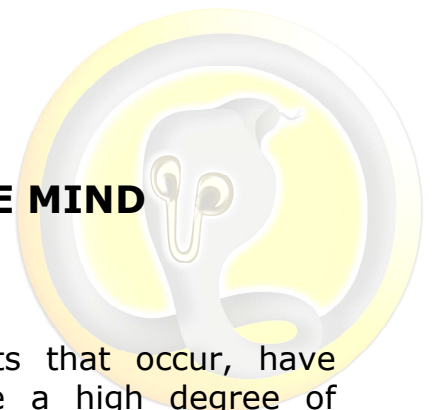


THE THRESHOLDS OF THE MIND

INTRODUCTION



At the time of analysing mental contents that occur, have occurred or will occur, we can clearly notice a high degree of coincidence between the *vedanta's* description of the functioning of the mind and the classical theory given by Patanjali. What I did at a given moment was to try to find the pedagogical mechanisms to make it easier to experience different states of consciousness, but at the time of undertaking this task, I came across an aspect which resisted analysis and thus could not be fitted into the guidelines that I had modelled thanks to my direct experience of the analysis of my mind.

The configuration of the Observation, Concentration and Meditation states was, from this point of view, totally coherent in that they could be related with Non-duality as seen through the way in which the subject-object relationship occurs in them, that is, through what is known as "particularity"¹, "totality"² and "Non-duality"³. Or they could be associated with different types of subjects³: entailing a specific modality of differentiation (dream, awake, observer or *eksin*), and non-differentiation (*saksin* and *atman*). Here we already had a type of primed mechanism that was very clear, that had no cracks in it anywhere.

When I explored the nature of my own mental processes and states of consciousness, I could detect the perceived state of consciousness at any time and know how my mind worked; I knew scientifically what was happening in the inner world except in precisely some instants where momentarily the change from one state to another took place, in the apparent space between one and another of any of the five states.

Going from Observation to Concentration or from Concentration to Meditation, there were certain instants where, strangely enough, I

¹ PARTICULARITY concerns the mental representation of any perceived content. By means of attention this interpretation leads Consciousness, to recognise the entity it knows; the subject. That is, the tendency for the cognitive unit to successively split until what remains is the sense of the subject.

² TOTALITY concerns the mental representation of any perceived content. This interpretation makes attention, the dynamic act of consciousness, go on to integrate the cognitive unit in such a way that the priority of what is known tends to be the Object of cognition.

³ As the name suggests, states of consciousness require different perceptors for each of them. Thus the perceptors of the five states differ from each other just as perception when asleep differs from when one is awake. The only thing that unites and links the states of consciousness is consciousness itself.

did not know what was happening scientifically; and I'm not referring to the states themselves, but to the specific moment of the change from one to the other. For many months my task consisted in investigating what was there, what is there in this moment, in this "click" that appears just in the instant where you leave one state to enter another.

The way in which I analyzed this led me to give it a name: I called it "threshold", because it is a space where two situations converge, two realities; but the concept of threshold does not define it completely, it just indicates a kind of environment where two worlds coincide, intersect with each other.

THE NATURE OF THRESHOLDS (I)

Every time I tried to launch myself to this place and stay there to enable me to study it, the very instant I wanted to analyse immediately vanished. It is as if the threshold resisted being studied. Every time I tried to get close to it and tried to get myself to the point where one state ends for another to begin – at that very instant, what would appear would be a state of consciousness, but not a threshold. It was a strange feeling: I could recognise it, I knew it was there, but every time I wanted to hold on to it, it had gone. It was somewhat paradoxical.

Many months went by and my practice was based on detecting thresholds. Very often I would experience the Concentration state and then voluntarily come out to think, and then go back into Concentration again. I would open my eyes and look for whatever event from a different state of consciousness, and from there I would go back again to the inner Observation state; this is how I would manage transit from one state to another; this I did dozens of times everyday so as to analyse the nature of the thresholds between the states and to find laws to explain how they arise, to understand the reason why and how these moments between spaces of consciousness work.

As time went by the search became more and more difficult: paradoxically: the clearer the analysis and nature of thresholds became the more fleeting and harder to analyse it got.

I left off practical enquiry into the nature of thresholds some time ago. The nature of the thresholds changes to such a degree that they become almost unappreciable, just as for example with human thinking: between thoughts there are also thresholds, but they cannot be recognised or noticed, they cannot be apprehended, they just simply happen.

There came a moment when the states of consciousness came to me with such speed and intensity that it was impossible for my mind to understand the nature of the thresholds, as I could not even get close to them. Earlier, I could, it seemed, and I could see them; earlier on I could understand their nature although, when I wanted hold on to them and study them, they fled. It was like seeing a shadow on the wall and immediately shining a torch on it to understand its nature: on being illuminated, it would disappear and what was left was just the shine of the torchlight.

Nevertheless, I succeeded in defining a series of patterns and circumstances regarding the appearance of thresholds: on carrying out the practices, after a time I noticed that they not only appear between different states, but they are also participants of the movement of the states themselves, that is, between the state of Non-duality and those that operate in duality there are thresholds; also between the states of Concentration and Meditation, and in each of the processes of Observation. When it comes down to it, cognition itself is replete with thresholds.

The nature of thresholds has a lot to do with daily living: when people go to a place very often, for example they drive along the same road every day, there comes a time when they do not even notice the cognitive unities that make up their surroundings, they do not notice all the different little parts that form the landscape and their mind goes directly from one place to another. And so, depending on how often a place is mentally frequented the thresholds are lowered or lessen; and it is exactly this that causes the difficulty when it comes to analysing them.

I began to become aware that the thresholds themselves lack any specific characteristics. This is their first and strangest condition: inner thresholds, that is, the ones between states or within each state itself, do not have any specific condition, they are simply thresholds. They do not depend on time, or space, or anything different to themselves; therefore, there is no condition by means of which a threshold can be systematised. It just cannot be done.

I could understand the nature of thresholds' properties themselves, a few certain rules, but this field cannot be systematised, since thresholds depend on nothing, they depend on themselves; there is no exact reason through which they can be dealt with, there is no external entity which could allow their nature or dependency to be understood.

However, I began feel that the more differentiated the states separated by thresholds were, the easier it was to analyse their nature. To the point where I would go into a state of consciousness

and quickly launch myself into another very distant one, for instance, from Observation to Meditation, the difference between the two extreme strata made the nature of the threshold become much more noticeable.

It is as if thresholds were clearer when the extremes of the states were apparently further away from each other. For this reason, the thresholds in the state of Thought, the state that people are most commonly in, are not perceptible, because the end of one and the beginning of the other are so close together, that they are just simply not noticed; on the other hand, they can be noticed more easily between the states of Observation, Concentration and Meditation.

When it comes down to it, a threshold is the instant where a change happens or, to be more precise, it is the atmosphere that surrounds the change, it is the intersection between states or movements which arise between two cognitions within the same state; it is an a-dimensional place, without location or dependency. Seemingly, it can be noticed more when the extremes of the strata of consciousness which intersect in it are more distant to each other.

THE NATURE OF THRESHOLDS (II)

Apart from this first and strange characteristic of fleetingness, thresholds have another additional characteristic: they are catapults to anywhere, to any conscious region, as if we were dealing with a door leading to any and every place. Thresholds are like doors without time or space, from which it is possible to jump from Observation to Meditation, or Observation to *samadhi*, or from Dream to *samadhi*.

It is a condition that no one can access voluntarily because it is beyond human will, but it does allow us to situate ourselves in any place in existence; it is as if thresholds lack entrance doors, but had exits leading to any other place. When the nature of a threshold is experienced it is as if you take the lift (elevator) instead of going up the stairs, hence thresholds take us to any place in the building of consciousness.

Generally, in any study that implies the presence of attention, thresholds do not lead to places which are more dual (with more disorder, entropy), but always to more stable places. A threshold is a kind of door to absorption.

Usually human beings jump from one threshold to another but they do not recognise where they are or where they have come from;

thresholds are what connect one state with another, but their own nature is unknowable.

I was aware that I could enter a threshold consciously, but I did not know how I entered or to where I was sent. What I did feel is that, every time you enter consciously, when you leave, it is always, and in all cases, towards a Non-dual state; if the threshold is very intense and you go through consciously, immediately a state of Non-duality appears, always and under any circumstance.

Therefore, when I wanted to study a threshold, it became hidden, because I could not find any mental mechanism to enable me to investigate it. Nevertheless my concern to know them was always present. And given that in day-to-day living I found my investigation of them arduous, it was in my dreams where I found a field where I could experience highly antagonistic ones, thanks to the fact my systems easily prepared and projected states of physical death: falling from a building, choking, etc.

So, it was in the oneric world that I underwent my apprenticeship due to the feat of being able to voluntarily surrender myself to death, to go consciously and without psychological effort to my demise. In the instants following loss, my mind always immediately catapulted me to a Non-dual state. The less egoic features were produced in this surrender, the further I was catapulted.

SUMMARY

After having defined the different states of consciousness and the way of representing them at an inner level, I set about understanding the nature of the space between them with the idea of obtaining a key that would open the door to any state at will. My eagerness and interest was always lay in systematising knowledge, finding clear and ordered rules which provided a scheme of how different cognitive processes came about.

As I could systematise the inner process, and this coincided with *Patañjali* and the *vedanta*, I set about finding something sufficiently stable to use as a bridge between the states, and imagine my surprise: I never experienced two states at the same time. There are never two simultaneous states of consciousness, which happen at the same time, for instance, Observation and Concentration; it just does not occur in the mental make up of human beings.

I noticed that if I wanted to go to the edge, to where a state of consciousness comes to an end, there was always more information to be known at its limits. When I arrived again at the next extreme

limit of the state, again I would find more information to be known, and so on and so forth. It is as if the universe I was perceiving and investigating were growing in accordance with my own needs and it became as infinite as I wanted it to be or needed it to be. The universe of cognition became infinite when necessary, but never had perceptible boundaries, fixed limits. In the end I became aware that the states of consciousness had no boundaries or limits, in such a way it was impossible to try to go to the far end of a state to enable to join it up with the next, since even if the states themselves are finite and they happen one after another, they are at the same time unlimited. The states of consciousness are delimited but they do not have any knowable limits whatsoever.

For this reason it is presumed that this universe is unlimited and it is in the process of expansion. The most commonly used model by science is that one which resembles a balloon. Astrophysicists compare the universe with an inflating balloon which is constantly growing. They assume this model because celestial bodies, absolutely all of them, are constantly moving with respect to each other; they do not move towards each other they move away from each other. In this same very instant all the galaxies, constellations and heavenly bodies in the universe are moving away from each other. How far does space extend?, How far away can it reach? The answer is that there is no limit. In the instant there was a limit, going back to the subject of states, it would make it possible to extend bridges, and that cannot be done, since it would entail a mind that knew this and then a bridge would be extended to the unknowable, an event that would be beyond detected boundary itself.

The reason for the previously stated impossibility is that the bridge on the limit with another state is not a "place". Here we are dealing with a threshold. The strange thing is that once past the threshold, the next state that appears is also infinite... and with no detectable boundary. For instance, when you jump to the state of Concentration from Observation you do not perceive recognisable limits either. Does this perception have limits? Of course it does, as it is possible to leave one state to enter another different one. However, are any of the extreme reaches that limit the constitution of the state itself detectable? The answer is no!, you cannot detect such boundaries, as they are only thresholds.

Once again this paradoxical issue crops up: you leap from one state of consciousness to another but they do not intersect with each other. In other words, it would seem that the intersection between them or what they have in common are the thresholds, and this is what allows us to be able to flow from a threshold to any of the states of existence.

Nevertheless, when it comes down to analysing the nature of thresholds, what we find is a state of consciousness, and never a threshold. When we look for laws that control them, we become aware of the fact they do not have any, and it is as if they were a-dimensional intersections in which various infinities come into play. And these infinite values are not similar but different.

That is why it always gave me such pleasure to study the nature of thresholds, and seemed such an excellent idea to try to plunge deep into various of the possible conscious existing universes. Sometimes when I see futuristic films such as Star Trek and the like, where they talk about time and space warps or worm holes where they enter and come out 50 years in the past, or 100 years in the future, in another part of the universe, it strikes me as being odd how thresholds transform into a-dimensional doors to unimaginable cognitions.

QUANTUM PHYSICS AND VEDANTA

I tried to be sufficiently conscious to be aware of the demarcation of the threshold, but in the instant I noticed it, I had already changed states. It is something similar to what in quantum physics they call "the tunnel effect": an electron is hurled through a sort of tunnel under certain conditions so that it can be observed. As you are waiting for the moment in which it should be detected, you find it has already gone past. The most similar thing to the transit through thresholds is the tunnel effect in quantum physics, for this reason, this discipline has so many theoretical coincidences with the vedanta. Many of these theoretical coincidences can be extrapolated to the analysis of the nature of the mind. The excellence of quantum physics precisely bases itself on the fact that all its theories will lead us to the necessity of the expression of Non-duality as an exceptional event, the root of all things.

In the world of Quantum physics all processes are guided by "the uncertainty principle": it is not possible to exactly relate one element with another, or we could say, you cannot analyse different qualities of sub-atomic particles at the same time. When any characteristic of a sub-atomic particle is detected, for example its angular velocity, it is impossible to simultaneously detect its spatial location. It is as if in the sub-atomic world we can find events but no clear interrelation between their causes, as if the conducting thread of processes could not be located; however, events do happen although occurring as they do across a sort of threshold, they leave no sign from one to another.

When a sub-atomic particle, for instance, an electron, changes orbit after absorbing energy, no sign can be seen of where it left one orbit to go into another, but rather it passes from one state to another through a quantum jump. We do not know what it did, how it did it or where it gave the jump. The only thing we can know is that the electron is now in another orbit, because it can be measured there. However, when we want to measure its velocity there, in its new orbit, the uncertainty which makes it impossible to know its position arises. The universe is an ocean of uncertainties, that is, thresholds which relate all the information.

When proceeding to determine the location of an electron, the option of detecting its angular velocity at the same time becomes lost, because there is no real nexus of integration between the objects and less at a quantum level. It is precisely because of this, at this sub-atomic level, that it is easier to study the absence of continuity between two objects, since what there is between them is only a threshold. This modality of threshold in quantum physics is known as "uncertainty". Therefore, between any two given processes, there is never continuity but always an uncertainty, both at physical and psychological levels; there is no continuity between states of consciousness, what there is, is a threshold jump, by means of which a different state to the previous one is reached.

Quantum physicists have a very odd example when it comes to the measurement of their systems: to measure the weight of an electron they use a process similar to taking a quantity of coins at random and throwing them at it; some will fall on the electron and others will not, those that do not are collected. On knowing the quantity of coins that did not land on the electron, they can know how many did, therefore making it gain weight, but they do not obtain the magnitude of "weight" itself, but rather the "quantity". That's how it is in the uncertain world of quantum physics: When something is measured, the result is a manifestation of non-connection; if you try to join two specific characteristics of the same nature it cannot be done, because one always leads to the other across thresholds or uncertainty.

You cannot measure the energy of an electron, because to do so you have to illuminate it and that is modifying its nature: now its energy has increased due to the action of photons on it. In this way, in the sub-atomic world, if you want to measure weight what you get is quantity; if you want to measure quantity what you get is an approximation of weight; if you want to measure distance or time, the energy is not known, and so on. Objects in the universe as a whole, both in the sub-atomic world and the mind, are not continuous but sequential, they are momentary appearances of existence surrounded by a gigantic world of thresholds. You only have to

analyse and understand the nature of thresholds and they immediately transform into something unconnected to what came before.

I never really found out if there were various thresholds or only one, as there comes a moment where you just cannot tell. That is why I understand those who devote themselves to quantum physics, since you get to a point where it becomes absurd: things are measured by theories, not by realities; everything is theorised, and there is no essential basis that can underpin the reality of things.

THE NATURE OF THRESHOLDS (III)

And so therefore, when I began to analyse the nature of thresholds I was aware it was an impossible task. When I thought I had one within my grasp, it had already changed from a threshold into "something". When I tried to join two states together consciously, when I investigated the nature of the threshold separating them, I could not stay in this place, I was moved on into one of the two states.

As I have already mentioned, for some time I experimented with the idea of maintaining the sensation of the threshold, allowing me to immerse myself in it up to a certain point. I could feel that the threshold can manifest itself as a feeling of dizziness or timelessness; it is a place where you cannot tell if objects "are" or "are not", if there is or is not one "who sees them". I certainly was aware of a sensation as I entered or I came out; but when I wanted to define this threshold, its condition immediately transformed into something else. And for trying to stay longer each time, my systems got to be so used to them that each time I was there for a shorter time and sometimes they would not even appear/ be reached. It was as if my interest in the thresholds made them lose interest in me.

Thresholds do not only appear between different states, but also within each state. It is as if they were floating in an a-dimensional world; that is what reality is, but we perceive it in a dimensional form: one dimension appears, then another, and then another one, and so on, and so on. We perceive spatial and temporal moments of things that happen and we believe there is a certain sequentiality in them, because there is a process of *karma*, a sense of continuity in action, but both the event and the sequentiality are illusory, unreal and inexistent.

When we analyse the atom we note that, if we made a mould of an atom's nucleus of the size of a football, its electrons would appear forty kilometres away from it. Between the electrons and the nucleus

there would be an enormous emptiness. In the same way, when you delve into inner worlds and into the limits of the states of things, what is perceived is an immense emptiness that, when it comes down to it, is a a-dimensional world with the potential for existence. The cognitive sensation of being "particular" is intertwined with the feeling of being "total", and this repeats itself over and over again. When experiencing a threshold, there is also sometimes the sensation of being not-something. For this reason, Non-duality is the closest thing to thresholds: they have a distant relationship and a very similar structure, as they both surround everything, and they are everywhere.

What I did not get to find out is if the states were between the thresholds or the thresholds between the states; whether the states produced the thresholds or vice-versa. In accordance with the strictest of logic, thresholds are much more coherent and stable than states, because thresholds are always the same and states are always changing. So it seems that the states arise from the thresholds and not the contrary. By the rules of coherence and intelligence, that which is more stable "in itself" tends to have the capacity of creation in relation to what is unstable.

Consequently, we do not know if an atom is a "not-empty" region or, in other words, if the void is the cause of matter and matter is the materialisation of the absence of emptiness. If the vastness of things in the atomic world is manifested as being empty, is matter "the intermittency of void" or is the void "the intermittency of matter"? There comes a point where it becomes absolutely impossible for the mind to continue probing, which is the reason for my giving up my quest and now I do not indulge in these practical queries. But they have been of great use to me in understanding something really important: there are thresholds between states. I believe the cause to be the thresholds and the symmetry that corresponds to them is Non-duality. I believe that Non-duality, being a world of thresholds, constitutes a symmetry which is more stable than dual reality, which is a world of differentiated states.

Almost certainly, we would have to come to the definitive conclusion that uncertainty is present in all things that exist and that are dual which the mind tries to detect, and I am referring not only to physical uncertainty but also the cognitive. There comes a point where it is impossible to mentally recognise things and where the only way out is to surrender to the lack of logic of the void.

Perhaps this is the element that divinity left behind to stop us from feeling too proud or too smart: this indication that it is completely impossible to find its most intimate secrets.

The following collaborated in the transcription, correction and editing of this text:

MERCEDES FERRER, AMAIA AURREKOETXEA, JOAN FERRER, ENRIC FERNÁNDEZ, FÉLIX ARKARAZO Y JORGE ROJO.

This text has received final revision and authorisation by Sesha.

