

## CHAPTER ON THOUGHT AND KNOWLEDGE

In this chapter, we will explore the fragmentation nature of thought and the importance we have laid on the independent fragments as a model of “what the world is” rather than merely convenient ways of description and analysis.

Thought is one of the most used faculty of a human being and informs most of our actions in the world, however, we seem to know very little about how it works and or make little effort to understand it. The objective of this chapter is to address the questions that we generally do not ask ourselves concerning our thinking process, knowledge, review the common assumptions of the mechanics of thought, and open it for inquiry. One such assumption, for example, is thought neutrally reports on the outer world we live-in and our inner world like a mirror. However, not understanding the participatory nature of thought in our perceptions, our sense of meaning our daily actions is the blindspot of our civilisation. Our hypothesis here is we are unable to solve our daily problems as the means through which we are trying to solve (thought process) is, in fact, the source of the problem.

As we read the chapter the exploration is by a simple method of observation and paying attention to thoughts in our very lives instead of engaging with them.

Few of the common assumptions of thought

1. We attribute a higher order of intelligence to thought even though we do not understand its working clearly
2. It neutrally reports on what is happening in the world, when we perceive things or objects in the world
3. It has a very important place in our culture and is assumed that thought can solve all problems

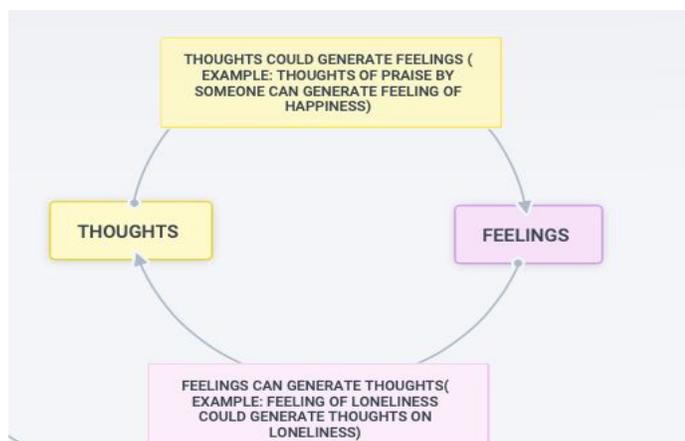
4. We are thinking and our problems are out there independent of us and the thinking process is telling us about those problems as they are.
5. The education system does not talk about thought and its working. Although the general belief is that if we acquire enough knowledge we will make sound decisions because of our thought process.

The simplest definition of thought is that which comes up in our mind now and then during the day. Sometimes we are aware of it coming up, sometimes we may be so close to it that we may not notice it but act by it. If we move from the simplest definition and pay attention to the content of our thoughts most of it seems to be a function of our memory. Everything we have learned, experienced, knowledge we have accumulated seems to be the content of the thought. It helps us navigate the world we live in by presenting it to us in a manner we can inform our actions in the world. Thoughts are verbal and non-verbal. The verbal thoughts are the ones we think in terms of language. If we know many languages we could be thinking in any of those languages as well. The non-verbal thoughts can be in the form of images of actions, experience, even imagine things that don't exist. If we look deeper we can observe most of our thoughts are repetitive and similar to what we would have experienced previously. However, they could be presented to us in different arrangements like different combinations of a Kaleidoscope. This gives room for us to observe that thought is a mechanical process.

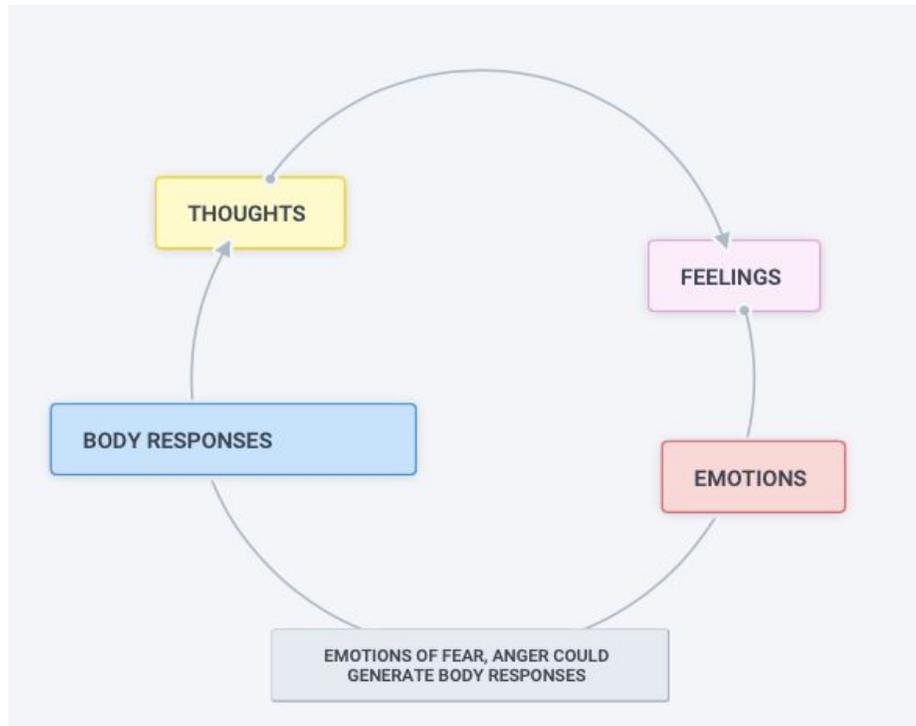
If we look at thought and its substance concerning our body it's a tenuous movement in our brain firing certain synapses which results in us taking actions. There is a subtle movement within our brain when thought comes up that is not physically visible but we engage with it nevertheless like our physical movements or reflexes. But we do not attach the same mechanical connotation we attribute to other body parts but we see thought as being of the more intuitive or intelligent kind that differentiates us from others in terms of success, intelligence, and so on.

Let's open this for examination: What is the process of thought?

Thought is, in essence, the active response of memory in every phase of life. We include in thought the knowledge we have acquired, emotional, sensuous, muscular, and physical responses of memory. All these are one process of the response of memory to each actual situation, whose response, in turn, leads to a further contribution to memory, thus conditioning the next thought. If a happy childhood memory or a thought crops up, we feel the same happiness so there is an association of feelings with thoughts and images. Further, if we are feeling sad, sad thoughts come up (we all have a taste for our feelings to differentiate between sad, happy, loneliness etcetera). I am sure most of us have experienced situations where you have a bad day with a bad feeling and delve on it, there are series of other thoughts that come up like "where my life is heading?" "I am so sad". There is an association of feeling for a thought, certain feelings also bring about thoughts. The intense feelings which I refer to here as emotions may result in biological change like anger, panic attacks where you could have a physical reaction to your thought and feelings. So essentially this is the whole system working within us as shown in the diagram. Thought, feeling, emotions, and body reactions are usually viewed as independent of each other.



*Figure 1a. Thought and Feelings*



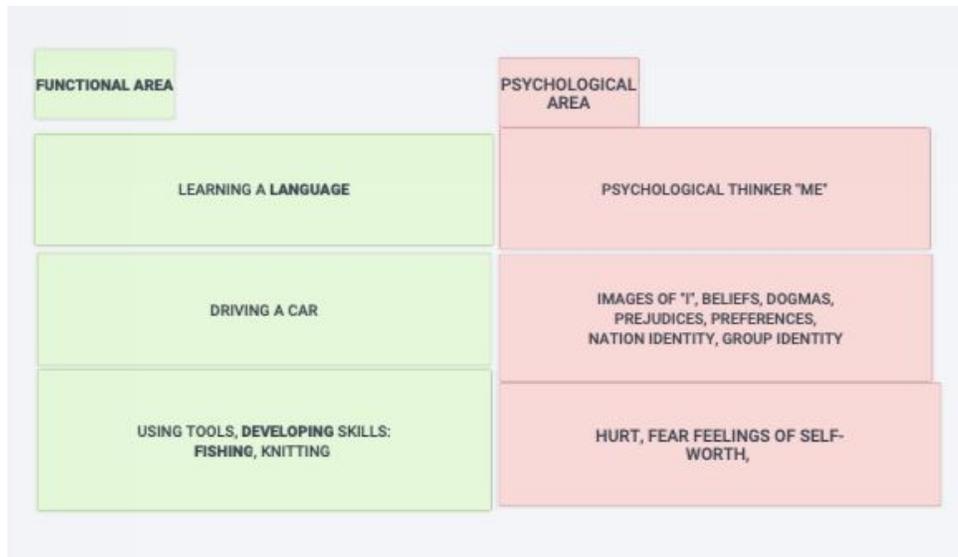
*Figure 1b: Thought as a system*

One of the earliest and most primitive forms of thought is, for example, just the memory of pleasure or pain, in conjunction with a visual, auditory, or olfactory image that may be evoked by an object or a situation. It is common in our culture to regard memories involving image content as separate from those involving feeling. It is clear, however, that the whole meaning of such a memory is just the conjunction of the image with its feeling, which (along with the intellectual content and the physical reaction) constitutes the totality of the judgment as to whether what is remembered is good or bad, desirable or not.

It is clear that thought, considered in this way as the response of memory, is mechanical in its order of operation. Either it is a repetition of some previously existing structure drawn from memory, or else it is some combination arrangement and organization of these memories into further structures of ideas and concepts, categories.

While the combinations may seem new essentially they are just new arrangements of the same content.

If we now review the influence of thoughts in our daily life there are two aspects. One is our functional operations and the other in our psychological operations.



*Figure 2: Operation of thought*

Functional here means using thought to drive a car, learn a language, perform physical activities that involve invoking those brain cells which have been trained on a particular skill, and applying it. The complicated aspect of thought is the psychological function. We will be focussing on the psychological aspects as this is where thought has changed the way we live and perceive our lives. The extension of thought from the outward to our inward self explains many things we see around the world. Our inquiry will explore both the generic function of thought and more importantly highlight how in the psychological realm it has confused us.

The culmination of the psychological self “me” the “i” we have of ourselves, our beliefs, identities, our image about ourselves for example low self-confidence,

unattractive, victim, and so on are a bundle of thoughts. I am a “Hindu” there is no tangible way of saying that but just as a thought in our mind. In no manner physically one can prove they are a Hindu. One can learn Hindu scriptures to prove they are Hindu so anyone can learn that too and be a Hindu. No matter the importance we associate with it, it is a concept and not a fact like the moon, the sun, or the tree. All of this is linked to the assumption of “thought is just telling you the way things are and not doing anything” but the “i” the one inside is deciding what to do with the information and in control. While in fact, the mental “i” is a thought which is running us and gives the false information that we are running it. We will be reviewing these aspects in this chapter.

## CHAPTER ON LANGUAGE

In this chapter, the main emphasis will be to inquire into the role of language to bring about the fragmentation in thought. For this inquiry, we will review some of the works by Sri Aurobindo on the structure of ancient and primitive languages to get to the embryonic forms of language as it would help to suspend many of our notions and fixed forms we attribute with the modern language today<sup>1</sup>.

Let us take the word “wolf” for example why do we use this word and not any other word? The Sanskrit word for wolf “vrka” means “tearing” which provides us important insight on the development of language. While in the modern language we have fixed parts of speech; noun, adjective, verb, adverb as different words, when we look at earlier tongues it strikes us that the single monosyllable did service equally for a noun, adjective, verb, and adverb and humans in the earlier usages made no difference to its use. We are prepared, therefore, to find that in the simplest & earliest forms of the Aryan tongue the use of a word was quite fluid, that a word like *cit*, for instance, might equally mean to know, knowing, knows, knower, knowledge or knowingly & be used by the speaker without any fixed idea of its employment. Again, the tendency to fix in modern tongues, to use words as mere counters & symbols of ideas, not as living entities creates a tendency to limit severely the usage of words to its external form and not to the thing it is describing.

It is also evident that for the ancient man, he had fewer ideas of the wolf in his mind, no preoccupation with ideas of scientific classification, and much preoccupation with the physical facts of his contact with the wolf. The ancient man did not think “ here is a grey carnivorous animal, hunting in packs, related to winter and snow” let us find a name for him. The important physical fact that he is a tearer distinguished the animal from the earlier human mind.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aurovillelanguage.org/pdf/sri-aurobindo.pdf>

If we examine the structure of modern languages the subject-verb-object structure of sentences implies all action arises in a separate entity (subject) and action take place on to another separate entity (object). For a sentence like “ he moves” the activity here is considered as a property of the subject or an action of the subject. This structure tends to divide things up into separate entities fixed and static nature arriving at the worldview where-in everything consists of independent entities of fixed nature. The inappropriateness of this structure can be seen in the sentence “It is snowing” where is the “It” that is doing the snowing? There is no entity snowier which is doing the snowing more accurate to say “Snow is going on”.

After considerations of the implications of the sentence structures, the rheo-mode language structure proposed by Dr. Bohm provides an excellent template to review the fragmentation mentioned above by providing a primary role to the verb than the noun. Since the verb describes actions and movements which flow into each other without separations or breaks, this approach fits into the worldview of wholeness in which movement is primary and separate existent things are states of continuing movement. The general requirement worked out by Dr. Bohm was to take the verb as the primary function and not to think in terms of a set of separate and identifiable objects as basic.

This chapter will further build on these aspects and the function of language(and thought) itself and how it is being invoked from moment to moment sustaining and propagating fragmentation.

## CHAPTER ON SCIENTIFIC WORLDVIEW

Getting at questions about the nature of reality, and exploring the observer from the observed, falls into the boundaries of neuroscience and fundamental physics.

On one side we have mechanistic philosophy of the world as containing entities existing independently in different regions of space and time with interactions only through some kind of external contact. On the other side are quantum physicists, looking at the strange fact that quantum systems don't seem to be definite objects localized in space until we observe them whether we are conscious humans or measuring devices. Experiment after experiment has shown defying common sense that if we assume that the particles make up ordinary objects, observer-independent existence, we get the wrong answers. As quantum physicist John Wheeler once said "Useful as it is under ordinary circumstances to say that the world exists 'out there' independent of us, that view can no longer be upheld."

Despite the advent of science in revolutionizing the description of reality even today our social lives are built on the assumptions of the mechanistic view embraced by each one of us, made stronger in our relationships, institutions, and so on.

The theory of relativity was the first to question the mechanistic order. Einstein with his unified field theory proposed that the particle could no longer be taken as primary but the reality is constituted of fields obeying laws of the requirements of the theory of relativity. The field theory did retain the features of mechanistic order as the fields were seen as entities existing in separate points of space and time connected only through external relationships. However, quantum theory with three key features presented a serious challenge to the mechanistic order a. Movement, in general, being discontinuous, b. entities such as electrons show different properties depending on the environmental context, c. electrons seem to show a non-local relationship. We will review the inadequacy of the mechanistic view in-depth in this chapter. Thus, if all actions are in the form of quanta, the interactions between different entities constitute a single structure of indivisible links, so that the entire universe has to be thought of as an

unbroken whole. In this whole, each element that we can abstract in thought shows basic properties (wave or particle) that depend on its overall environment. Further, the non-local, non-causal nature of the relationships of elements distant from each other violates the requirements of separateness and independence that are basic to any mechanistic approach.

While the theory of relativity and quantum theory contradict each other, Dr. Bohm's work in his book unified them on the common ground of undivided wholeness that each of them strongly proposed. We will review the contradictions and explore the new notion of the order proposed by Dr. Bohm in his work for the bulk of the inquiry in this chapter<sup>2</sup>. We will also explore how the mechanistic assumptions have assured conflict and fragmentation in the form of self, family, nation, ideas, beliefs in the world. Informed by these assumptions we have been engaging in sustaining these identifications and defending them for millennia. Shedding light and changing the worldview to be of wholeness instead of the prevailing fragmentary view we can inquire about its implications to our actions and society in general.

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<sup>2</sup> Theoretical physicist David Bohm book "Wholeness and Implicate order"