

## Thinking and its gradations

### Beliefs and the glamour of acquired conviction

A belief is an unchecked allegation: it can be true or false, we have not the means to check everything neither to know everything. In the course of our education, we admit a great quantity of facts, hence of beliefs; we could check some elements such as calculus, physical and chemical experiments or anatomy. As we grow up, we believe that adults know, then authorities know, then experts know. Sometimes we discover that scientists do not know, are seeking or ignore yet: they are the true researchers. We discover sometimes that some people talk assuredly and do not know or even lie. Hence whom can we trust?

In this beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, intellectual confusion is growing, for everything is called into question; there is always someone for saying that products are toxic, some interests are hidden or merely these products are not worthwhile 100% but only at 90%, with side effects, and so on. This confusion sends us back to ourselves and to a basic choice in knowledge management: must I acquire the knowledge myself or trust an external source? Which effort has to be spent to be sure I understand? Or inversely, how can I economize the research for comforting my view?

Thus temptation is great to take only the facts or arguments, which are going along the already acquired side. I have not more effort to think. It is thus for an economy of thought and for emotional comfort that is easy to stay within the fold of already made choices, of already built vision, of my world conception. To question this view is painful and costly. Need I to think anew the world every morning? Need I to think anew? It is life, but to stay with what I know is so relaxing.

By mental laziness, by emotional comfort, a trend is to keep back on the cocoon of well-known arguments. This comfort supports an affective mechanism which distorts reality and inhibits to see the disturbing facts: it is a glamour and we could name it the glamour of acquired conviction. A glamour is acknowledged because it distorts vision but makes see the non-existent things; it entertains ego's comfort for a glamour produces always an affective profit.

Beliefs are then maintained against all odds; arguments arise for justifying my position or I borrow them to others, without verifying their competency or the validity of their author. Psychoanalysis called them rationalizations: a reasoning decorates a position chosen for an affective motive, in short thought serves desire.

So it matters to study thinking and mind. Thinking, as we mean it here, is a process dealing with general and impersonal matter, thought expresses a law – generality – coming with the age of reason. At that age, one has not to talk in special circumstances even less personal, but to get an overview, to take a distance out of any particular interest. If a thought is general, it must apply to any case or one has to explain why an exception happens.

Mind is the faculty of understanding, to find the meaning of what is happening hence to explain the phenomenon – that which appears – and not only to reproduce it or to simulate it. To understand to stand under, to read within or *intelligere*.

### Concrete mind: a 6-pointed star

The concrete mind depicts the mind with its contents, hence the thoughts as forms and their author: the one shaping these thoughts. We'll see that mind has also a part called abstract or formless. The theosophical tradition illustrates the concrete mind with a 6-pointed star [CF:400 et LMO:6, CF:396, MB:553, R1:262], How can we understand that?

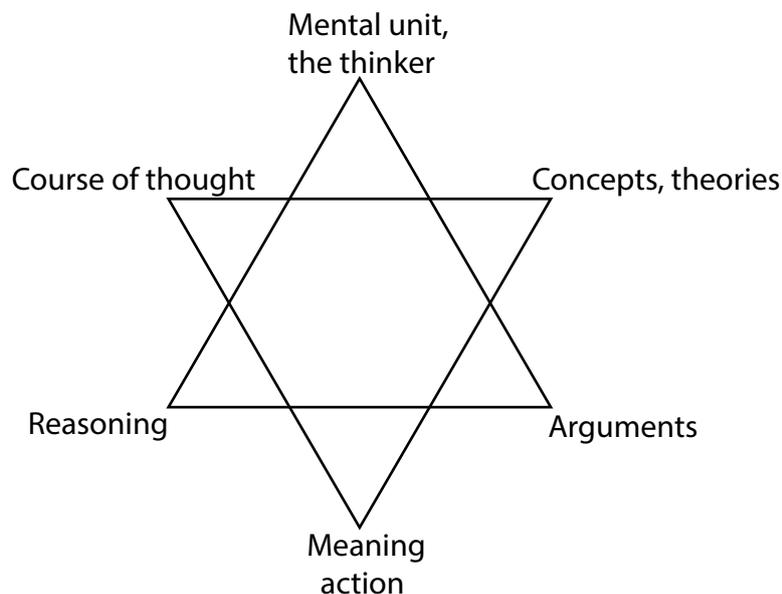
A 6-pointed star is made of 2 interlocked triangles, one triangle upward and the other downward. The downward triangle brings about a concrete product expressing the above duality, this lower point grounds, concretizes and leads the action resulting of the pondering. The upward triangle points out the abstraction unifying the pair of opposites, it is the common factor, may be the origin of these denser factors. Let us study then these 6 points.

The upward triangle has at the top the mental unit, the thinker in its wake consciousness, the deciding one. It is the subject of the attention, that which rules the personality, including the affective and the senses with their corresponding actions. This unit handles the duality between dynamics and statics, that means between reasoning and arguments or notions.

The downward triangle is based on meaning, for it is the basis of the mind. This meaning assumes movement, it is related to an action, either physical or intellectual. Both summits of this triangle represent the dynamic – static polarities, one is close to the subject, the other to the object. The dynamic pole may be called course of thought, discursive thought or thought vortices, citta-vritti according to Patanjali; the static pole represents the concepts, beliefs or theories. The courses of thought is unfolding in the consciousness of that thinker, with insights, or ideas, reasoning, which are conductive threads or conclusions.

On the star, the course of thought is not linked to the active unit, that means that, quite often, the so-called thinker assists to this course; it has not wanted it and not built it: this course develops independently of the thinker who observes it, as the mental substance is active by itself and moves forms emerging in its bosom. This thought course may be motivated by a feeling a memory or an intellectual element; this course may then ruminate, rehash and decant this memory or refine the intellectual element.

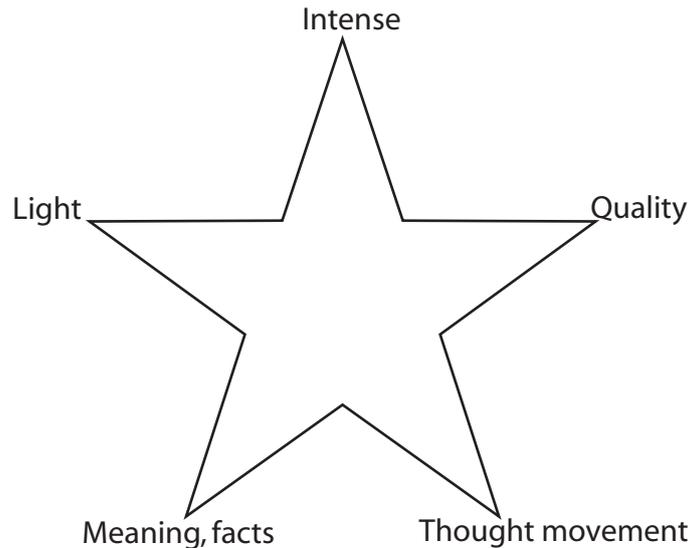
Yet the effort to be provided by the thinker will be to direct one's attention, to orient this course and to choose, that is to accept or reject the ideas or facts that are presenting to itself. Jung describes the process of individuation that consists in free oneself from social educative or familial conditionings. Here it means, in the present time, and not in the individual cycle of incarnation, to come back to the one who thinks, who observes and decides; it means to go to the thinker, the self, personality and not yet to discover the Self, focus of the psyche, which includes, guides and animates the little self.



## Thinking: the whole mental substance

### First approach

Mind is the instrument of understanding, but one may consider it as a substance to which we cooperate actively or to which we are submitted sometimes when we let it get restless in ourselves. Patanjali studied in depth the mind and though his stanzas are brief, they are witnessing a great penetration of spirit. The yogic, cabalistic and theosophical tradition associates the number 5 to man, Manas or the Thinker. The 5-pointed star represents man feet apart, arms extended and head in unity at the top.



On the figure above, duality is found at the feet at the star; such concept is opposed to another, the static or the meaning is opposed to the dynamic i.e. the thought move. At a finer level, the consciousness of being oneself, an individual, fades away for letting place to a radiation passing through us. Jung, Assagioli, Rudhyar were talking of the transpersonal Self, that which passes through the persona - *persona* meaning mask. The radiation inscribes itself in the horizontal branch of the 5-pointed star; one end depicts the light produced by the registration of attention by oneself, emission and reception fuse, consciousness resounds with its source; the other end being quality, either the quality emitted by oneself, either the quality captured in others; there is not any more question of people. At the top, the tension-to-be feeds the attention or tension to the world: the intensity of the jet of attention comes from it.

The whole mental substance includes formal levels with contents - as we have seen - and formless levels, luminous and radiant. At all these levels, substance is receptive, moving support but it includes also action and the actor within. This actor emits attention, perceives the quivering of thought; one could compare it to a swimmer in the ocean: acting amidst a much vaster element.

#### Levels and functions in thinking

One can spot several levels: the lowest is meaning the basis of all mental activity. The fact of naming things, to give them a name, and hence to spot notions - a word that seems the most appropriate - constitutes the base; these notions are basic elements as stones in the thinking process.

A finer and subtler level is reasoning which starts from a departure hypothesis to reach a conclusion: deduction, induction, comparison, etc.

An already more abstract level concerns the nodes of significance which one may call concepts. Reasoning around these nodes constitute a network; often a theory is called according to this concept, such as the theory of general relativity, or universal gravitation, or the myth of Oedipus, DNA for genetics...

The mental unit, the I who perceives in the present time, the center of the waking consciousness is located at a finer and more penetrating level; it stays separated from other units, founding the identity of the subject, sure of itself in the jet which is passing through. Yet it is already receptive to impersonal values or ideas.

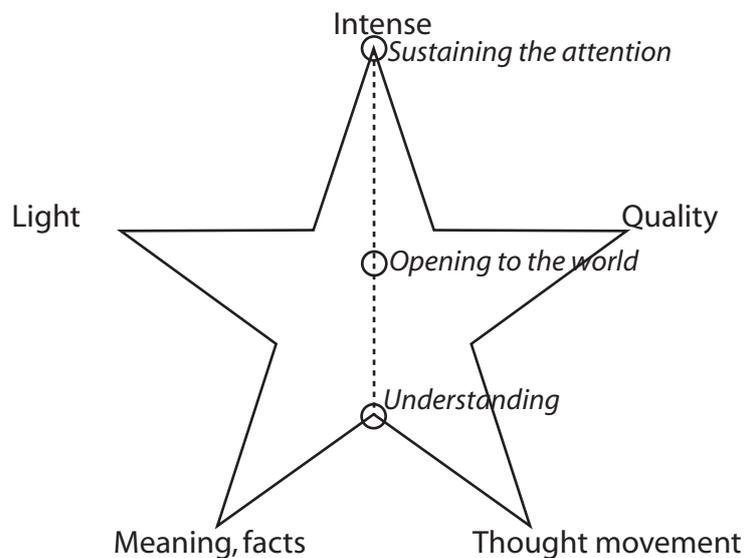
These four levels correspond relatively to the 4 levels represented by the 6-pointed star of the concrete mind.

As said Heraclitus: "The logos of which the oracle is at Delphos does not say and does not dissimulate, it points out." Language evokes yet remains a veil.

With the concrete mind, the thinker in its waking consciousness understands handles thought, follows it and discriminates; it works within duality between various concepts, ideas, notions: its reasoning goes from one to another. At this level, it is absorbed in its

pondering, it takes to itself this flow of thinking. To think, to follow the course of thought and change it as one shifts from images, movies or TV channels, it is to locate oneself at the meeting point of the 2 points at the bottom of the star.

The observing I, simply present, the mental unit the decider assuming its choices and orienting action, is close from the horizontal branch: consciousness already raised, it opens to the world, it is awakening, waking consciousness; consciousness clears up, enters in some clarity though this light is not yet fully perceived, contacted or emitted. "I understand" depicts the author taking to oneself the concept, assimilating it, yet overcoming it: the thinker realizes that he or she understands, it supervises the perception of meaning and takes it to oneself; this pulsation between the thinker and meaning, between the thinking individual and understanding produces the light of understanding, this light one may see brighten in the eyes, reflecting the joy experienced at this moment. Thus in reading a book, I understand the text –I am following its meaning – but light flares up when I catch the idea of a sentence or a paragraph.



Behind this jet of attention making us present to the world, is found a source of attention, which registers the perception, a source of consciousness both emitting and receptive. The observer could observe its thought, to know oneself thinking; here at the source, it supports this activity, feeds it and provides energy. The thinker then knows oneself as a source of conscious light in the center of one's being.

In this center, the tension-to-be arises in attention; it stimulates finely, broadens and illuminates the waking consciousness. The image of the light in the head when an idea arises is expressing a reality; one may train to this contact and it becomes a presence subsisting at the background whatever the activities.

In a vaster perspective than the present moment, the subject - under the jet - acknowledges itself as the Thinker of incarnation, the one who decides to enter in this cycle, in this world, and this Thinker attunes to the tension-to-be feeding the attention.

Then the point of consciousness settles in the center of the star unifying the 3 levels, integrating the whole star, radiating its brightness. Understanding sets in, in the cognitive sphere. The matter is to align these 3 functions; indeed the Thinker of the cycle or tension to be has no means without handling thought. The observer remains open to everything without means, without discrimination if it does not grasp a conception. The matter is thus to unite the 3 levels, then the Thinker becomes operating, it comes to the world, opens itself and orients the attention.

### Broadening to 7 levels

According to the theosophical tradition, any level of substance is divided in 7 subplanes. Notions, naming things, constitute the base, level 7 of the mind; reasoning, this fluid activity establishing a path between hypothesis and conclusion constitutes the level 6.

Concept - from the Latin *concepi* taken with oneself – is the thought taken to oneself, a node of the network of significances; at this stage, it is to handle thought to understand, 5<sup>th</sup> level.

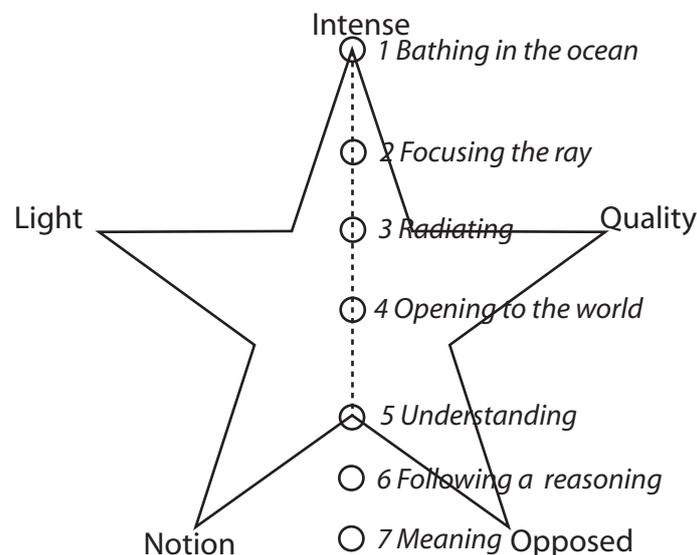
The mental unit, the I simply present observing, opening to the world, is located at the 4<sup>th</sup> level, intermediate between formed levels with contents and formless levels, more abstract finer and more luminous.

The source of consciousness supporting the attention radiates light as a sun, and one finds again the image of the light in the head when one understands at last, yet this light of the source is more vivid, as it is not veiled by any restriction. It is the 3<sup>rd</sup> level without form, without opposition, for various suns can radiate without disturbing one another.

Yet this sun spreads out an incoherent light, disordered in direction as in phase. Thus it exists on a finer level, more intense (2<sup>nd</sup> level) of coherent light analogous to the laser beam. For making coherent this light synchronized in frequency, phase and direction, one has to intensify the emission; this tension is perceived as a will. Of course, it is not a muscular will neither determination, but a factor arising in the center of one's being and supporting the attention.

Eventually the radiation spreads out in space, there is thus an impression of distance from the emitting point and the horizon. But space underlies any radiation and the 1<sup>st</sup> level is the level of mental space; some thought currents may then be propagated in that space, one's being is a relay, a receptor; then instead of thinking to radiate in space, it is rather space which is thinking through us; as a swimmer in the ocean, we evolve amidst this universal thought without particular subject, we realize the arising of a thought, we are carried on in these currents, yet the individual can focus, then express and formulate that which is coming in its mind; the individual never loses itself neither drowns, always conscious and responsible of its deeds it captures the inspiration then transmits its understanding.

In the beginning, the I, the mental unit, perceives a light located at the top in the unit. With training the contact becomes regular and a greater intensity comes to light. The source of consciousness appears radiating, at the level of the extension on the horizontal branch, then intensity unveils still greater. The levels in the star take another relative position.



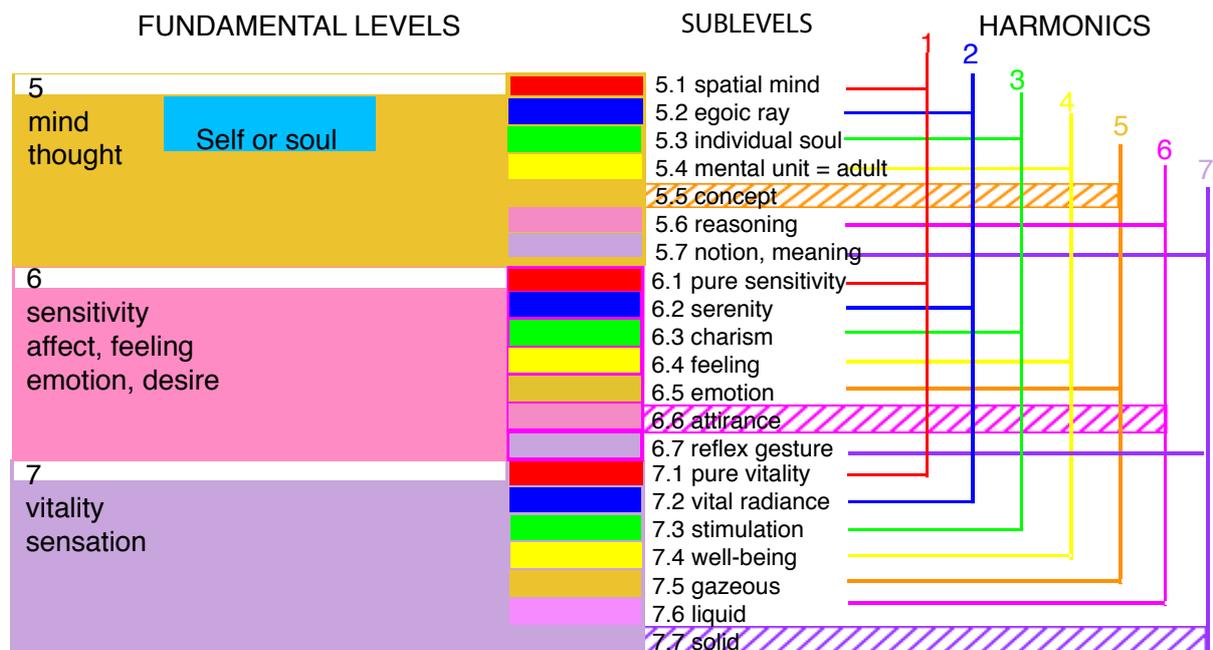
### Usefulness of harmonics

Since a level of substance is divided in 7, one may spot a correspondence between each of the subplanes. The levels of thinking can be confirmed by a sensation of vitality or by the affective state. We have seen it, the 4<sup>th</sup> level marks a balance between the 3 above, finer and more intense, and the 3 underneath, coarser and heavier. The I simply present, "in full consciousness" according to the fashionable expression, is in an emotional poise, calm, balanced and its body is relaxed.

The individual absorbed in its thought has a heavier breathing, more restricted and the feeling to be filled or loaded by this concern; inversely it may be invaded by an emotion or loaded by a feeling of which it may sometimes perceive the weight, thinking becomes heavy, it does not take off; this corresponds to the 5<sup>th</sup> level.

At the 3<sup>rd</sup> level, in the contact of the inner light, tiredness disappears, an invigorating freshness is being felt and joy presses one to go toward other people.

One may thus start from the state of mental consciousness, the thinking frequency, for observing vitality or feeling or start from feeling and sensation for spotting the level of thinking.



## How different is an inspiration from a course of thought?

By course of thought, we mean here the contents – thoughts or images –scrolling in one’s head. Inspiration surges in consciousness such as a new current that will get clearer and formulated later. Both comes from outside of the consciousness, yet one has a content, the other appears formless. One has a form, illumination is a light, inspiration is a breath.

A marine illustration may help to clarify these points:

- Inspiration is a breath pushing forward the boat
- Illumination shines over the calm sea
- The mental unit is at the helm
- The course of thought is a current that drives or makes drift the craft
- The concept is a rocky islet or a beacon

Course of thought	Moving form
Concept or theory	Content
Mental unit	Decider, knows itself to be an individual
Illumination	Radiating light
Inspiration	Guiding idea arousing a research

These concepts may be some cultural archetypes (Anglo-Saxon, Latin, Celtic, Arabian, Asiatic), or national, social archetypes.

These courses of thought constitute currents, whirlwinds or undertows that shake the boat; they do not make think, they are imposing themselves. They may come back as a

jingle, such as a mantra many times repeated or a novena with 108 "Hail, Mary", that 's the past.

Hence let us notice that which appears in consciousness, how are shaped our opinions and our talks. Prejudices, beliefs are unavoidable, yet they are collective and dangerous. Let us try to think.

## **Conclusion**

Knowledge management has dealt with intellectual contents and its evolution. This document shows a stratification of levels of consciousness – in the mind. It remains much to be explored, studied and assimilated at these levels. It is in the light that can be made any advance, always more vivid more conscious, more stimulating. The whole aspect of progression via methods, protocols experiments remains to be developed, though these strata lay and suggest implicitly some experiments. Let us use our abilities for moving forward in the light, for understanding that which is happening in our act of thinking.

## **References**

Here are some of them.

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