

Giving Direction to Innate Desires

Man possesses numerous instincts, feelings, sentiments, desires, motives, spiritual qualities, psychological activities and reactions which have been, more or less, discussed by philosophers, psychologists and psychoanalysts. Different views have been expressed about the recognition of the truth, the classification and distinction of what is genuine from what is not genuine, the quality of development and growth, and the relation of these with bodily organs especially with the nervous system, the brain and the glands. Recounting and interpreting these ideas are not compatible with the nature of this discussion.

Here we will consider some of the most genuine innate desires which come to our mind without confirming or rejecting a particular philosophical, psychological or psychoanalytical movement. We will endeavor to survey their manifold manifestations and the trend of their development, as well as the efforts of man to satisfy them in various conditions and facets of his life, that we may thus seek a way to recognize man's true perfection and ultimate goal; this is because innate desires are the most genuine powers gifted by the creator in man's being, so that he would engage in movement, action, effort, endeavor as they require and would tread his path towards perfection and prosperity by using inborn and acquired powers, as well as external facilities.

Thus the direction or directions specified by these desires could lead us to the ultimate goal and path as the needle of a compass would provide us with the direction. As a consequence, it is apt to study and consider them meticulously and patiently and, by abstaining from hasty prejudgments and judgments, to derive a sound and decisive result from our reflections so that we would take hold of the key to the treasure of prosperity.

Perception and Its Degrees

Man bears an innate desire to know, become aware of, and encompass the realities of existence. This desire emerges in the early stages of childhood and is not taken away from man to the end of his life. The continuous questions posed by children are indicative of the presence of this inborn desire. The more talented will be a child, the vaster and more profound his questions will be. The more knowledge

and learning he acquires, the greater unknown matters he will face and new issues will come up for him.

So the direction of sense perceptions, which are devices for the fulfillment of this innate desire, is towards a complete and all-embracing awareness of the world of existence. The sphere of this desire is so vast that no being falls outside it. Now we will study the scientific progress of man from the starting point. We will follow it up step – by – step to see where it will end.

Man's awareness of the world starts with the external senses and the contact of body organs with objects around him. By specific actions and reactions, each sense organ transfers first to the nerves and then to the brain impressions of light, sound, warmth, smell, taste and the like. In this manner, man becomes aware of such qualities and features which are related to material objects on the surface and which are located at a particular radius around him.

But for several reasons, sense perception is inexpressive and insufficient to satiate man's curiosity and instinct to seek the truth because firstly, it applies to particular qualities of the surface and form of palpable objects and not to all their qualities, their essence, their substance and not to impalpable objects. Secondly, the range of sense perception is limited and dependent on particular conditions. For example, the eye can see the rays whose wave length is no less than 4 % micron and no more than 8% micron. For this reason, ultra – violet and infra–red rays are invisible.

Likewise, the ear can hear sounds whose frequencies are between 30 to 16000 vibrations per second. In like manner, other sense perceptions also require specific conditions. Secondly, their duration in time is very short. For instance, the eyes and the ear can hold the effect of light and sound for only a second. And when sense organs lose contact with the outside world our perception is barred. The issue of slips of perception is another story which further clarifies the inadequacy of sense perceptions.

However, the means of awareness and recognition is not confined to sense perceptions alone. For example, man possesses another faculty which, after the body's contact with the material world is cut off, can preserve in a special form the signs it has received and can remember them when needed and can reflect them in the consciousness. Similarly, there is another faculty which can understand general meanings, which can prepare the mind for confirmations and propositions, and which can make possible the reflections and mental deductions, be they empirical or theoretical.

Through these internal faculties, man can expand the zone of his awareness and draw conclusions from innate and palpable experiences and perceptions. Development of philosophy, sciences and industries is indebted to these inward and mental faculties, with this difference that what is in mind in other sciences (apart from philosophy) is the recognition of features and effects of creatures so as to exploit them for better living. But the main objective in philosophy is to recognize the intrinsic qualities, as well as the cause and effect relation of objects. Complete recognition of a being is not feasible without recognizing its existential causes:

‘Ash–Shaykhur–Ra’is has expressed this rule in detail in his Kitabush–Shifa. As the chain of reason

leads to the Almighty Allah (SWT), it can be concluded that man's rational movement leads to piety.

Many philosophers believe that man's scientific development ends at this point. For this reason, they regard man's perfection – or to put it more precisely, man's scientific perfection – limited to the mind's all-embracing awareness of the world of being. But further consideration of innate desires indicates that man's instinct to seek the truth is not fully satisfied with this degree of awareness and demands an objective awareness, as well as a speculative and intuitive understanding of the realities of existence. And such an understanding could not be reached with mental concepts and philosophical discussion.

No matter how extensive and clear the mental perceptions and concepts are, they cannot show us the objective realities. The difference between these and external realities can be compared to the difference between the meaning of hunger and its inward reality. Our conception of hunger is a state coming over man when his body is in need of food. But if a person has never experienced this state, he cannot understand it through this definition. In like manner, for (showing) the realities of being, ranging from Allah (SWT) to matter, philosophy can provide us only with such concepts while the recognition and realization of objective realities is far different from such definitions.

What thoroughly quenches our thirst for seeking the truth is the speculative knowledge and intuitive awareness of objective realities which is inseparable from understanding their existential appraisals and connections. And if all existing beings are viewed as dependent on and connected to the Almighty Allah (SWT), then in fact, all objective knowledge goes back to awareness of one independent and genuine reality, as well as His reflections, manifestations and signs.

Power and Its Manifestations

Among man's innate desires, mention can be made of the desire to wield power, to be capable of performing deeds and to have control over other beings. This desire also emerges in childhood and endures to the end of a person's life. Of course, this desire has degrees depending on age differences, period of life and external factors. A healthy infant's motions and movements of hands and feet and the untiring gamboling of children are indications of this innate desire. By and by, range of man's quest for power increases, extending to infinity.

At first, performing various deeds, establishing power and extending strength, occur by means of stimulating nerves and by muscles with the aid of natural powers alone. These constant movements made by the child on instinct help increase his physical power, by and by, his muscles become stronger and more ready to perform greater and more laborious functions.

This goes on until he reaches the peak of youth and the climax of physical power. From then on, he faces the period of stagnation and inertia. Then comes the period of senility and old age, gradually the physical powers are exhausted but the zest for power never dies down in man.

To extend the domain of his power, man does not suffice with natural powers. By the help of sciences and industries, man endeavours to find better devices to conquer the world and subjugate the universe. It goes without saying that scientific discoveries and inventions, especially in recent times, have greatly contributed to the satisfaction of this inborn desire and will later do so as well.

Man does not even refrain from using the power of his fellow creatures. In far as conditions and facilities permit, man uses others for his own benefit. Effort to reach social positions and to be honoured nationally, as well as the nation's demand for superiority at the international level, are manifestations of this desire which at times, appear in a correct and sound form, while at other times, it appears in the form of aggression on the rights of others in various shapes of oppressive colonization and exploitation. The quest for increased power does not stop at this level. Rather it even embraces imperceptible and metaphysical powers as well.

Various branches of exotic sciences, spiritism, and different forms of sensual mathematics are all indicative of man's wondrous efforts to develop his abilities.

But supposing that man masters the perceptible and imperceptible forces, does his ability reach utter perfection then and is his thirst for power quenched in full? No matter how extensive and variegated these powers are, will they not finally be finite? Will they not intrude on the workings of similar powers? And will they not be doomed by more superior powers? With these limitations, how can they fulfill man's boundless demands?

It is crystal clear that this inborn desire cannot be fulfilled except by taking hold of an infinite source of power. Efforts made by people of high aspirations would not end without it.

Love and Worship

Man possesses another inborn desire which is not of the same form as the demand to know, to have ability, or to be aware of and to conquer the world. The desire to attract, to be attracted and to unite is related to existence and understanding. As this desire has not become clear for the psychologists and psychoanalysts, and a sufficient discussion and research has not been made with regard to it, it is difficult to clarify and explain it.

Deep inside, each person finds that he likes something and someone as though the latter constantly draws his spirit toward itself/himself like a powerful magnet. This attraction and drive has various degrees and signs. Differences of degrees are so much that they create doubts in their substantial unity.

The most salient manifestation of innate affection can be traced in a mother. Its sign is that a mother enjoys embracing, caressing, and taking care of her child. Motherly affection is one of the most glorious manifestations of innate love. Its manifestations have always been described and praised by poets and writers. The same holds true for father's love towards his child.

A similar form of affection exists among children, parents, sisters, brothers and other family members who are tied together with a specific natural bond. Another manifestation of this can be viewed among fellow creatures that are linked by the general relationship of human beings. This affection is increased in intensity in other forms of human relationship, such as being fellow city people, being neighbours, being of the same age, being man and wife, being of the same religion and of the same ideology, etc are added to it.

Another expression of affection is in man's attachment to objects which he uses in his material life and to which he is linked by the way they can fulfill his living requirements. Examples are attachment to property, wealth, clothes and place of residence.

Another demonstration of man's affection appears in man's love for beauties, exquisite objects and especially beautiful human beings. That is to say, it is man's love for objects which satisfy his aesthetic sense and which establish contact with his psyche.

Similar to this is love for spiritual beauties, such as the beauty of concepts, comparisons, metaphors, and ironies, as well as love for cadences in verse and prose which is the passion of poets and of those with good taste. Or it can be spiritual and ethical perfection and elegance which is lauded by psychologists and moralists. Or it can be beauty of sensibility like the elegance in the order of the world of being which the philosophers marvel at. Or it can be existential beauty which is perceived by gnostic intuition. On the basis of this perception, existence equals beauty:

”الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ ۗ“

"Who made good everything that He has created...(32:7)."

The more powerful the status of being, the greater will its beauty be and the more enjoyable will be its seeing.

In other words, to the extent of his capacity, each being will show a reflection of Divine Light. The more perfect he is, the greater manifestations of it he will reflect.

On the whole, three degrees could be designated for affection in terms of intensity and weakness:

First – The weak status which requires proximity to the beloved in normal conditions. But there is no sacrifice and selflessness in it.

Second – The average status which, in addition to the desire for proximity, requires sacrifice in the way of the beloved but to the extent that it does not interrupt general interests and basic personal interests.

Third – The status of captivation and selflessness when the lover refrains from no sacrifice in the way of

the beloved. The lover regards the peak of enjoyment in following the will of the beloved's traits and deportment or rather in existential attachment or better say, in subjecting himself to perdition for the sake of the beloved. Its sign is taking pleasure in expressing humility and homage to the beloved. Another sign of it is that he unconditionally attaches superiority to the will of the beloved as compared to that of other beings and other objects.

Without doubt, the greater the love for something, the greater will be the enjoyment experienced in reaching it. But on the other hand, intensity of enjoyment hinges on the degree of desirability and the existential value of the beloved. Thus if a person develops the strongest form of affection towards the most precious of all beings and realizes that being's existential merit, he will experience the greatest enjoyment when he is united with that beloved. In case, this act of being united is not confined to time, place and other limiting conditions and in case it is possible at any time and anywhere, this inborn desire is fully materialized and it will suffer no shortage.

As a result, the infinite direction of this inborn desire is in a burning love for an infinitely beautiful and perfect beloved who has the strongest existential ties with man and whom man can find himself living and dying for, and linked and related to. In this manner, he will reach true union and no factor can separate him from his beloved.

Love for a being that does not possess these conditions cannot fully satisfy this desire and will always be coupled with disappointment, defeat, separation, disunion, etc.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/self-recognition-self-improvement-muhammad-taqi-misbah-yazdi/giving-direction-innate-desires>