

The Role Played by Desire and Inclination in Perception

Using the faculties and means of perception is, to a large extent, within our own power. For instance, whenever we desire, we would set eyes on a scene and watch it. Whenever we do not want this, we avoid looking at the scene or shut our eyes. It might be conceived that when the eyes are open and when enough light is available, there is no longer a specific condition required to see the object before us.

This is while experience has proven the opposite of this conception, because many a time, we do not see an object even though its visible form is reflected in the eyes and we do not hear a sound even though sound waves bring about the vibration of the eardrum. And this is when we are concentrating on something else.

This reflects that perception is not solely a physical phenomenon or a physiological function. It rather is related to the soul. By paying attention, perception develops and by ignoring, perception is lost. Material actions and reactions provide the conditions and requirements of perception.

In most cases, paying attention or not, doing so depends on man's personal desire and inclination. That is to say, when man desires to have a specific perception, he will focus attention on it. And with the necessary conditions available, perception will take place. On the contrary, when man has no inclination (towards something), he will not focus attention on it and will not perceive it. For example, a baby's cry might be heard by the mother alone. Even at times, a mother starts out of her dream upon hearing her baby's cry while she might not be awakened by a louder sound produced by someone else. The reason is nothing other than the psychological factor and the mother's affection for her child.

The influence of willingness and inclination in perception is not exclusive to sense perceptions. It rather exists in various forms in the imaginations, ideas and even rational deductions: For instance, people have better memories for the things they like. Intellectual affairs in which the thinker is interested proceed better.

More surprisingly, from their reflections, people derive the conclusions which they have already approved and with which they have been inspired, even though they might conceive that it is a natural conclusion derived from logical reasoning. This is while their personal interest has been effective in selecting the prerequisites of a reason or in the quality of regulating the prerequisites. It might even lead to fallacious reasoning:

“بَلْ يَرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ”

"Nay! Man desires to give the lie to what is before him (75:5)."

Explanation: Man's unwillingness to derive a conclusion that is contrary to his own wishes would at times, lead to neglect and inattention towards the subject. At times, it would bring about neglect toward the preliminaries. In case due to external factors, he passes these stages against his wishes and reaches an undesirable conclusion, he falls into doubt and misgiving. If the reasoning is so clear that it leaves no room for misgiving, then it is time for a failure of memory. In a short span of time, man will forget it altogether. If a factor reminds him of it, he will refrain from wholeheartedly accepting and believing it. He will obstinately deny it, as previously indicated in expressing the difference between knowledge and belief:

“إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمُ الْهُدَىٰ...”

"... They follow naught but conjecture and the low desires which (their) souls incline to; and certainly the guidance has come to them from their Lord (53:23)."

As a consequence, a person who is immune from the domination of opposing desires could be confident of his mental deductions; else so long as carnal desires wield control over man and so long as concern for material goods, sensuality, status, position and other unbridled demands attracts the soul, there will be no hope of reaching sound conclusion from mental and intellectual activities in related fields.

With regard to speculative knowledge and awareness of them, mental desires and attachments play a significant role. For example, the conditions and states of the soul would at times become unconscious and neglected due to concern for another object. In philosophical terms, in such a state, there is no awareness of knowledge. In like manner, the soul's speculative awareness of Almighty Allah could be neglected due to concern for material objects. The soul will not become aware of it unless, willingly or necessarily, it cuts off concern for material means.

Consequently, correct enjoyment of the powers of perception will be feasible when the heart is purged

from material and carnal desires and when the mind is cleared of prejudgments and is adorned with *taqwa*. Progress in the stages of *taqwa* prepares man for the rays of spirituality and heavenly and divine inspirations:

“إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرًا لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ”

"Most surely there is a reminder in this for him who has a heart or he gives ear and is a witness (50:37)."

“ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ”

"This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide to the muttaqun (those who guard against evil) (2:2)."

“قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا. وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا”

"He will indeed be successful who purifies it, and he will indeed fail who corrupts it (91:9-10)."

“...إِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا...”

"... If you are careful of (your duty to) Allah, He will grant you a distinction... (8:29)."

“يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَآمِنُوا بِرَسُولِهِ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ”

"O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and believe in His Apostle: He will give you two portions of His mercy, and make for you a light with which you will walk... (57:28)."

On the contrary, following carnal desires and having attachment for the world would lead to fascination, deviation and deprivation of sound understanding. It would bring about the domination of Satan, enhancement of ignorance, deviation and combination of unawareness and inward blindness:

”أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ
عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ...“

"Have you then considered him who takes his low desire for his god, and Allah has made him err having knowledge and has set a seal upon his ear and his heart and put a covering upon his eye. Who can then guide him after Allah... (45:23)?"

”كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ مَنْ تَوَلَّاهُ فَأَنَّهُ يُضِلُّهُ وَيَهْدِيهِ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ“

"Against him it is written down that whoever takes him for a friend, he shall lead him astray and conduct him to the torment of the burning fire (22:4)."

”وَمَنْ يَعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ. وَإِنَّهُمْ لَيَصُدُّونَهُمْ
عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ“

"And whoever turns himself away from the remembrance of the Beneficent God, We appoint for him a Satan, so he becomes his associate. And most surely they turn them away from the path, and they think that they are guided aright (43:36-37)."

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