

Management of Will-Power

Previous discussions shed light on the ultimate perfection, the destination of the process of development and the principal trend and policy progress and development. Determination of its minor and minute trends is vested with ethics and *fiqh*. The final part of this discussion is about regulation of the soul to tread the path of development, i.e. recognition of how we can prepare grounds for a decisive determination and serious will-power to tread the path of worship and perform the duties related to servitude.

We know that each living being possesses the two principal features of understanding and voluntary movement. According to a logical interpretation, the combination of these two reflects the essential distinction and privilege of the animate being.

In man, who is a distinguished living being, these two features exist in a more extensive, complex and profound form. They make up the two joint psychological systems: the system of perception and the system of will-power. These two systems are so related and interdependent that they at times confuse even the exact scientists.

To realize the quality of development of will-power and its relationship with perception, it is apt to primarily cast a glance at various types of perception, as well as attractions which lead to the emergence of will-power.

For long the philosophers and scientists have engaged in analyzing man's perceptions and instincts. They have classified them in various forms. Irrespective of common scientific discussions and philosophical conclusions, we will embark on a speedy survey of man's psychological functions with regard to perception, the sources of will-power, the quality of its emergence and the development of a voluntary action, so as to acquire the needed recognition for self-cultivation and for giving a sound and divine direction to our actions.

The System of Perception

In man, perception has various forms to which we will briefly refer:

Some perceptions are coupled with specific physical, chemical, physiological actions and reactions of external factors and sense organs. These include seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching.

Another group of minor perceptions develop without contact with external factors. These include hunger and thirst.

Yet another group of our perceptions develop in the mind with particular psychological forces which have various forms. Research on the types, features, forces related to them, as well as their relationship or lack of relationship with the nervous system, is beyond the scope of this discussion.

In our own being, we see that external sense perceptions somehow remain in the mind even after sense organs cut off (their) relationship with the external world. After ignoring or forgetting them, they can once again come to mind and are reflected in the consciousness. The same holds true for internal sense perceptions, passive conditions and other matters related to perception.

Another mental activity is related to understanding general concepts which takes place due to the analysis of minor perceptions or in some other form. It is similar to making up specific concepts known as "secondary contemplative sciences" such as the meaning of existence, non-existence, *wujub* and *imkan*.

Another mental activity is about composite perceptions and development of propositions. This creates a form of unity among various concepts. In like manner, combination of two statements under specific conditions leads to the perception of a third proposition known as "the conclusion of reasoning."

At this point, it is fitting to provide a brief explanation on the propositions:

Mental propositions could, in one sense, be divided into apparent and acquired ones and in another sense, into theoretical and practical propositions. Normally, theoretical perceptions are related to "theoretical reason" and practical perceptions to "practical reason". They introduce practical reason as the power which gives order and stirs will-power. At times, it is conceived that will-power is related to practical reason or is its effect. This is while it has been proven that theoretical and practical reason are not separate faculties and that practical understanding is not substantially different from theoretical understanding.

The function of reason with regard to practical understanding is exactly the same as that of theoretical understanding. That is to say, reason perceives the relationship between action and its result just as the cause-effect relationship. When this perception turns into valid concepts with the aid of the mind's conceptualization faculty, it turns into orders issued by reason, else reason, in fact has no role other than

understanding. It does not have direct relationship with will–power, motivation and stimulation. The do's and don'ts of man's activities attributed to reason are similar to the do's and don'ts applied by scholars of natural sciences and mathematicians in stating the rules.

There is also another form of understanding for all and sundry. This is one's speculative knowledge of oneself, one's deeds, physical means and impressions produced by the nervous system, likewise there is a speculative awareness of the sublime source. At the beginning, this is an unconscious awareness for ordinary people and should be promoted to the level of consciousness with effort and endeavour.

Apart from these general and known perceptions, there are other perceptions such as telepathy, sciences drawn from jinns, spirits or those in the state of hypnosis or mania, information revealed to the ascetic, satanic temptations and angelic and divine inspirations.

Above all these perceptions is the *wahy* of *nubuwwah* revealed unto the prophets (AS) by Almighty Allah. It is similar to the inspiration and narration provided for other chosen servants, just as the mother of Prophet Musa (AS) received tidings of her child's return and his elevation to the level of prophethood. The same holds true with respect to Lady Maryam (AS) and to the Imams' (AS) inspiration with sciences. The truth of these is not clear for all but those who have personally realized them.

Moreover each understanding and perception is not coupled with its logical and philosophical interpretation, just as we are all involved with satanic temptations and visibly see their impacts on ourselves but cannot express their nature. The general way to confirm the source and explain the emergence of such perceptions is, apart from observing their outcomes to obey the words of the Infallible Imams (AS) or to quote those who have reached realization and whose statements are reliable.

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In man, there are inclinations, drives and attractions which serve as the source of will–power and voluntary actions. Psychologists have analyzed various forms of natural and inherent drives and have divided them into various groups. They have differences of views in the number and quality of classification. At this point, we will mention the inclinations and drives which we substantially find in ourselves (without following the terminology and principles of a specific school of thought).

Some drives have a clear relationship with the chemical and physiological body functions, such as the urge to eat and drink which is with man from birth to death and which is stimulated when the body requires food and water. The same is tenable for sexual desire which develops at the age of puberty due to the secretion of specific hormones.

Another group of motives give rise to specific bodily functions. Those lacking insight believe that psychological motives are the same as body function such as the desire to defend or take revenge which becomes apparent in the form of anger and which turns the face red and makes the veins on the neck

swollen. This is similar to the urge to escape from danger. This is deemed as a form of defense mechanism. Another group of motives comprise "feelings", the most important of which is feeling for one's relatives and community. Another instinct is curiosity and quest for the truth which prompts man to discover what is unknown and to learn about the realities.

The quest for power, domination, mastery and extension of one's zone of activities is another instinct. Another form of instincts is related to the attainment of titles of importance, such as rank, status and personal independence. Another type of innate drives relates to spiritual and moral beauties and perfections. This incites man to attain various forms of obtainable perfection and beauties, to establish relationship with perfect and beautiful objects and finally to show humility towards the genuine perfection.

All human instincts are rooted in self-love. This has two main branches of "preservation of one's (integrity of) being" and "attainment of feasible perfections". Preservation of one's (integrity of) being is related to an individual or to the mass, to the elimination of needs and dangers to the satiety of hunger, thirst, sexual desire, to the fulfillment of the instinct to defend, escape and take revenge and to the satisfaction of familial and social sentiments.

In like manner, attainment of perfection comprises the instincts of curiosity, quest for power, search for status and love for perfection and beauty.

You must not conceive that what we set forth means a restriction of all human instincts and desires. Likewise it must not be assumed that classification of instincts means that they are separate in terms of the effects they produce. It might be that several instincts have a share in a single action.

Another point which must be kept in view is that the separation of drives and desires from sciences and perceptions does not purport a denial of their quality of being based on intelligence. Without doubt, these attractions and psychological conditions are not like magnetic attractions which take place without understanding and intelligence. The point however, is to differentiate the system of absolute perception from the system of will-power, as the latter requires stimulation and motivation while the former does not entail these. Also the relationship between these two systems is to be studied so as to provide greater awareness of psychological phenomena in order to regulate and control them.

The Connection between the System of Perception and the System of Will-Power

Stimulation of each desire depends on a specific feeling which is in accord and is harmonious with it. For instance, appetite is dependent on hunger. This link is so strong that normally both states are regarded as a single state.

Satisfaction and satiety of instinctive desires and demands depend on proportionate perceptions. At this stage, the contribution made by the system of perception to the system of stimulation is so clear that it

requires no explanation. Satisfaction of one desire requires the extensive cooperation of various powers of perception. For example, the care taken in modern cooking, points up to the extensive perception activities, ranging from sensory to imaginary to mental, having a share in it.

The relationship of these two systems however, is not exclusive to these two functions. There is rather another form of relationship between them which is of utmost importance in our discussion. This refers to the effect of some perceptions which have no natural relationship with a particular drive in stimulating desire, will, hatred and aversion. For instance, seeing a scene, hearing a sound or smelling something could stir one's appetite or provoke sexual desire of other drives. Or concern with colour and a specific condition could bring about aversion towards and reluctance for another type of food or object.

The impact of some of these is so common and obvious that one conceives that they have a natural link with the stimulation of desires, such as smelling food and becoming hungry. On the contrary, some others are hidden and insignificant such that one conceives that some desires are stirred by chance or without cause or stands at awe in explaining their causes. Recognition of such relationship is of utmost importance for our purposes because concern with them indicates what a tremendous effect a glance or a sound can at times have in man's fate and how it could stir a desire or decision that could lead to his prosperity or adversity.

The secret behind this relationship is in association of perceptions and ideas. That is, the formation of man's mind is such that repeated synchronism and perception would bring to mind something upon experiencing another thing related to it. For instance, upon smelling a food, whose taste, colour and smell is known to man, he will recall its taste and have appetite for it. If we investigate the causes behind our decisions, we will realize that sense perceptions, especially those related to visual and auditory matters, play a significant role in our imagination and reflections and in turn, in our voluntary deeds. Thus we conclude that one of the best means to check our desires and demands and filially to establish greater self-control and to curb carnal desires and satanic temptation is to control the perceptions and foremost to control the eyes and the ears:

“إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا”

"Surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that (17:36)."

Likewise one of the best means to stir beneficial decisions is to meet virtuous people, to hear their tales, to recite the Qur'an, to study advantageous books, to go on pilgrimage to shrines and sites which would make man mindful of Allah (SWT), of His chosen servants and of the sacred goals and objective which these servants have pursued:

“فِيهِ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ مَّقَامُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ...”

"In it are clear signs, the standing place of Ibrahim... (3:97)."

This elucidates the philosophy behind many *wajib*, *mustahabb*, *haram* and *makruh* decrees of Islam, such as going on *hajj* pilgrimage and the sacred sites or abstaining from looking at sensual scenes or showing aversion towards sitting in a seat which has been warmed and which still holds the warmth produced by a strange *ghayr-mahram* lady. It also elucidates the role of a friend in one's prosperity or adversity:

”لَفَدَّ اضْلَيْتَنِي عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَنِي ۖ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِلْإِنْسَانِ خَدُولًا

...“وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا

"O woe is me! Would that I had not taken such a one for a friend! Certainly he led me astray from the reminder after it had come to me... (25:28-29)."

"Whenever Allah has a good turn toward His servant, He will grant him a virtuous friend, If he forgets (Allah), the friend will remind him and if he remembers (Allah), the friend will assist him."

"The disciples told Jesus Christ: With whom should we associate? He said: With one who would remind you of the Lord, whose words would enhance your knowledge, and whose deeds would make you inclined towards the world to come."

The same holds true for the effect of our words and deeds on others and for the role of our acts as a model for the prosperity or adversity of (our) family and society. Thus we shoulder another form of responsibility:

"Call on the people without words (i.e. with deeds, set an example for the people.)"

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