

Perfectibility Movement and Its Causes and Conditions

Perfection and the perfectibility movement of a being consists of gradual changes coming over it as a result of which its potential power to obtain an existential feature (perfection) is made active. These changes occur by way of powers deposited in the nature of the perfectible being and by the use of external conditions and facilities.

For example, when grain is planted and when water, wind, warmth, light and other required conditions are provided, it is split and then it develops stem and leaves. Then it becomes a cluster and finally about seven hundred seeds are produced from it. The changes which occur in the grain from the very first to the emergence of seven hundred perfect seeds are termed as the perfectibility process. The powers, which exist in the said grain and by which the required material are absorbed and the harmful material are discharged and through which the absorbed material are turned into similar seeds by action and reaction, are called the causes of development. Water, wind, light and other external factors are called "the conditions of development."

Evidently, recognition of the amount of development and, in other words of the extent of the zone of existence and sphere of perfection of a being, as well as the causes and conditions of development, is usually possible by way of experience, even though the possibility of reaching recognition through other means cannot be negated.

Certain questions arise at this point: Do all beings undergo change and transformation or are there beings among those that we know or those that possibly exist without our awareness which are essentially unchangeable and which undergo no change and transformation at all? Is any change in the substance, in the appearance, in the attributes, in the proportions and in the additions an actual and real change? Or is it that change in proportions cannot be classed as an actual change? Would any actual change lead to the development of a perfectible trait or is it possible that the outcome of a movement be the loss of a group of existential traits? These are all relevant questions but as our discussion does not

revolve around their answers now, we will abstain from answering them.

Scientific and Non – Scientific Movement

In the case of the vegetable seed, the changes which result in the division of a seed into several seeds are not due to scientific understanding and finding. The same holds true for changes which occur in an egg until it leads to the hatching of the egg. The difference is that the perfectibility process undergone by the chicken to become a developed hen hinges on perceptions without which the chicken cannot reach its befitting perfection.

If supposedly, the chicken could not sense hunger, thirst, warmth and coldness, and if it could not differentiate grain and water from stone and wood and if cold water and fire were the same for it, then it would not undergo any growth and development.

Rather it would, by no means be able to carry on living. Thus we get to the conclusion that perfectibility processes can be divided into two main types: perceptual and natural or scientific and non-scientific.

Instinctive and Non – Instinctive Perception

The perception required for a group of perfectibility movements is at times naturally and inherently present, even though the creature (possessing it) is not fully aware of it, such as the instinctive perceptions of animals. At times, this is acquired gradually and by way of learning. Naturally, the creature is fully aware of it, such as sciences learned by man.

At this point, some questions arise which must be answered elsewhere: Are plants devoid of all forms of perception or is it possible that some type of perception exists in a group of them? Are all animal perceptions instinctive or do some of them reap benefit from acquired perceptions? Supposing that animals possess acquired perception, does it have any inherent difference with man's acquired perceptions or not?

Voluntary and Involuntary Movement

At times, the development movement occurs spontaneously and involuntarily as soon as the required conditions are met for the being possessed of sufficient capacity for a particular form of development. In certain instances, it depends on the implementation of will and authority, as we explicitly realize our optional activities and clearly differentiate them from natural and involuntary acts.

Obviously in the voluntary processes, the rate of progress and development depends on the will and choice of the mobile creature. In other words, inability to reach the desired perfection is not due to the deficiency of innate faculties or to the presence of unfavorable external conditions and possibilities. It rather depends on the will and choice of the being as well.

As choice and selection is not possible without knowledge and awareness, good choice hinges on sound knowledge and recognition. The vaster the range of knowledge and the greater the possibility of acquiring positive learning, the greater the possibility of soundly using them for voluntary developments will be, as voluntary acts will be more freely carried out with a vaster range of action and a variety of external conditions.

This provides a solid reason for the necessity of recognizing the objective as well as recognizing the correct path (of reaching it) because, as already pointed out, choice hinges on knowledge and awareness and man's development – or at least, part of it – is voluntary. Of course, if Allah (SWT) willing we will discuss the emergence of will power and elements conducive to it.

Another question comes up here: apart from man, are there any other beings possessing free choice? And supposing that there are such beings, is there a more perfect being than man among them or not?

But it is clear that a positive or negative response to such questions bears no impact on the discussion underway.

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