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Recognition in the Domain of Thoughts

The Possibility of Recognition

The basic question that first comes to mind is whether recognition is feasible or not? Ancient Greek Mystics believed that it is impossible to discover facts. Their reasons for this include:

1- Errors of Vision: When the recognizer has different viewpoints, the recognized points will also be different from one another. A high mountain appears to be a mere hill seen from far away, the rotating blades of a fan look like a circle, and railway lines seem to meet in the distance, for our knowledge – as Laozi quotes from Niels Bohr – is the product of our watching and playing around in the universe; we gain knowledge via "the object for its own sake" to "the object for us." Such ways of reasoning are not acceptable, for a change in position or location would reveal the truth. By getting closer to the mountain, for instance, it will seem high to us once again. Sensory errors can be compensated for by the other means. If recognition is not feasible, the senses, mind and tools of experimentation must be used to acquire various viewpoints needed for coming to a concrete conclusion.

2- Conflicts in Findings: Those against the possibility of recognition believe that different people have various points of view when identifying facts, and achieving unity in this matter is impossible. Man may be appealed by something today, but disgusted by it tomorrow. What seems extremely valuable to him today may prove worthless later. Such a conclusion is not acceptable, for conflicts in identifications either lies in observable affairs or human imagination. If the dispute arises from worldly affairs, it in fact proves that identification is real, for without it the mind would never react differently towards various facts. Conflicts in mental and sensory discoveries also convey that recognition is real, for the mind and the senses create certain discoveries under certain circumstances and conditions.

3- The Variability of the Universe: Some believe that the constant changes and developments occurring in the universe and its components defies identification, for not only external facts, but also the human mind and senses undergo change, and thus cannot fully reflect facts.

The solution for this source of error is that change and progress in the two worlds –mental and physically

observable– alongside identification shows that the main factor is something beyond the mind and the senses, and therefore is not prone to change. The mind and the senses merely serve as to transfer the knowledge to the discoverer – the self, soul, character, or spirit.

4– What is reflected from the observable world into our mind is not well–defined enough to be able to be compared with the facts and have the mental concepts matched with the external facts. Thus, we are not certain what there is also in the mind – in other words, whether it is compatible with the world outside or not.

In response to this problem, we must say that the human mind is capable of absorbing facts from the universe and also process them. This shows how powerful and significant the human mind is, not its incompetence. Sophists, however, imagined that the mind should be like a mirror that only reflects the facts, with no external impression on them.

5– The intimate relationship and dependency among the components of the universe has brought some to believe that ignorance toward just one part will lead to total ignorance. Such reasoning is applicable only to those who claim they have knowledge of absolutely everything, not considering the knowledge they gain from their tools for observing the external world as relative. However, there are cases of absolute knowledge, which do not fit into any form of logic or reason – “the universe is real and follows certain laws,” to name one.

The Devices and Tools for Discovery and Gaining Knowledge

1– The Senses: Man's natural senses are his first tools for identification. His senses provide him with a means to gain facts. Phenomena that find way into the human mind by means of natural senses to not remain the same as they are outside. A smell we sense, for example, is not the same when it has entered us. Likewise, when we taste something sweet and the message about it is transferred to our nervous system, our nerves will not exactly feel that sweetness. Our nerves do not turn into different colors when we see different colors, either. When we lift a heavy object, our nerves do not become heavier. Therefore, we may conclude that having entered inside man, no phenomenon retains its identity. We undoubtedly have to eat something sweet to realize its sweet taste, but is the same sweet food passed on to our nervous cells? Furthermore, internal contents and conditions influenced by external factors can change the identity of the external factors, too. For instance, let's say we encounter a dead body. What we feel through our senses is the view of a dead person. If the dead body belongs to a close friend, it would cause sorrow, and if it belongs to an enemy it would delight us. Two different reactions to a single phenomenon; hence, how internal factors can influence our perception of external facts.

In fact, man's natural senses are justified through internal factors. In other words, phenomena that enter us through our senses are interpreted and accounted for by man's own wishes and knowledge.

2– Artificial Devices and Tools: Man has made tools and devices to help him explore nature and the universe. The invention of the telescope, the microscope, and many other devices has helped man discover phenomena he could never explore using his own senses. No matter how powerful these devices may become, they cannot eliminate the role of the senses and internal conditions; they cannot change the mind into a mirror which passes things into humans exactly as they are. The reasons for this are:

a) These tools and devices are man–made, so they are dependent upon man's selection or elimination.

b) What tools and devices reflect to man is limited to certain circumstances. For example, they reflect insect fur, the human body, mercury, leather and cement each in a different way. Any modification in the magnifying glass can influence the appearance of the observed phenomena.

c) Even if the artificial tools and devices reflect facts as they are, the internal passages they must go through will affect them, for they are being received by human senses and mind.

3– Man's innate talents and powers, such as intelligence, wisdom, imagination and thought can also serve as tools of discovery.

The Importance of Adjusting and Refining the Senses

Intellectuals studying identification and recognition have neglected the issue of adjusting and refining knowledge in both domains of the mind and in the real world. From the mental aspect, the function of the senses must be corrected, for any fault in the senses may deform the reality. Thus, man's internal management should take charge of adjusting the senses.

Apart from adjusting and refining the senses and tools that make possible the contact between man and facts, the mind also needs adjustment and refinement. Many powers are active in the human mind – imagination, memory, abstraction, comparison, aesthetic search, association of concepts, and others – which can, if not functioning correctly, damage man's process of gathering facts.

The Factors that Influence Recognition and Identification

Recognition and identification, like other phenomena, have a cause. As a mental phenomenon, identification and recognition can be caused by these factors:

1– The involuntarily natural, primary recognition and identification by the senses and the mind: Man's mental structure shows a variety of mutual influences to and from facts, and identification is one of them. In other words, once the mind establishes contact with the world outside, the phenomena are reflected into the mind.

2– The need to continue life: Human life is not possible without knowledge and discovery. Mental effort

is the key to feeling what life really is like. This factor is also fatalistic, however, for its necessity lies in the need to continue life.

3– Selfishness: Man's selfishness makes him go after knowing things that are not crucial to his survival. There are various forms of human selfishness. When one considers oneself as the end and others as a means to the end, such a viewpoint will infiltrate all of his knowledge. Likewise, if man regards his identity as dependent upon other people in the society, his knowledge will definitely be much purer. The highest level, of course, belongs to the one who moves along the path to perfection.

4– Innate enthusiasm: mind.Man is innately eager to know more, and this is not merely for his own benefit; it goes far beyond that.

5– Moral ethics: Moral ethics form one of the most important and most dignified factors in recognition. Moral ethics means activating every human aspect on the path toward the highest aim of life. It can make the truth flourish for man, which in turn can make gaining knowledge the means and the end of his life – as the means, discovering knowledge can help man gain the facts on his way to perfection; as an end, it involves the expansion of man's identity in the universe.

6– The arousal of love: Love can also cause knowledge and recognition. When love is the motive for the discovery, man will see the facts as beautiful. Discoveries based on love ignore all logical reasoning.

7– Belief: Belief refers to the mental state in which all events are considered in a special way. When one believes in the struggle for survival, for instance, it will make the knowledge of power his first priority.

There are two kinds of belief – dynamic and static. In static belief, man sees everything in a specific, fixed way. For example, if an intellectual considers man as virtually evil, he will also interpret everything else from this viewpoint, too. In dynamic belief, however, man does not interpret all facts from a single, inflexible aspect; his belief makes him able to accept other phenomena and facts as they really are.

8– Faith: Faith is accepting the truth that is the most active element of the human character, and accounts for every aspect of man's existence. The knowledge brought about by faith is the most soothing and motivating. Faith is a truth that shines on all of man's darkness in life like an immortal sun and can save his character from falling apart and multiplicity, and adjust his life by means of patterns of order and harmony. Faith makes every action carried out on the path toward man's desired ideal feel like life itself.

The Process of Recognition

The steps the human mind must go through in order to achieve discovery and recognition are:

1– Establishing contact between the mind and the fact: No knowledge can be gained without making contact between the human mind and the truth, whether we believe that all knowledge potentially exists

in the human mind, or believe that it is like a completely blank paper which can be affected by external facts. Physical phenomena, such as light, transfer facts from the outside into the mind. Facts pass through our senses and enter our mind.

2– Initial observation: The senses are exposed to many phenomena, but only some of them pass through the senses into the mind. In other words, the phenomena that we pay attention to can pass through the senses. Thus, purely natural reflection due to the openness of our senses cannot be a cause of gaining knowledge, for no conscious attention is included in it.

3– Attention: If man is appealed by what he notices, attention occurs. In other words, this step of the process is caused by either the attraction of the object or the person's own inclination. Furthermore, the deeper the attention is, the readier the mind will be to activate its forces about a subject.

4– Indirect understanding: In this step, we try to somehow gain an understanding of the subject; otherwise, its knowledge will never be possible. However, our understanding will be indirect, for all phenomena are interrelated. When we see colors, for example, we need proper light. Our distance from the subject is also significant.

5– Direct understanding: In empirical sciences, where the subjects are analyzed, researchers can gain direct understanding. In other words, the researcher can gain knowledge of the subject regardless of any relationship it may have with other phenomena. However, we must keep in mind that phenomena are interrelated, and each can be studied in different ways. The mutual interactions between phenomena reveal various identities for each, and a direct understanding of a phenomenon may not necessarily include its whole identity.

6– Direct grasp: Here, by “surrounding” we mean all–around understanding of subjects – it engulfs every aspect of the subject. However, in most cases of knowledge we are concerned with complete knowledge of one specific subject, not surrounding all aspects around it, too, for each field of science tend to study a particular aspect of a phenomenon.

7– Indirect grasp: Surrounding the effect by means of knowing about the cause. Usually, the human mind is influenced by the previous pieces of knowledge it has gained, and finds it quite hard to achieve a pure, absolute, direct grasp of the subject without being affected by the previous ones. Say, for instance, that we look at a bright light and then try to know what color something is; the difference in quality between the bright light and the color will affect our knowledge of the color.”

Different Forms of Knowledge and Recognition

There are various ways for knowledge and recognition to take place, for the human mind can make contact with the facts in different ways:

1– Purely Educational Knowledge: When knowledge happens in the mind in a purely educational

situation, not only is it an absolutely reflective process, but is also accompanied by two other kinds of knowledge: 1) the teacher teaches what he knows; 2) the truth is what I am learning. The risk this kind of knowledge includes is that the learner learns anything he is taught, without any consideration or thought. Learning different things from different scholars may throw the learner into confusion. The other risk is the weakening of the learner's own mental productivity. These are issues teachers must avoid while teaching.

2- Purely Developmental Knowledge: In this kind of development-included knowledge, the trainer inducts a series of concepts and realities to the trainee. If logical principles are observed during the training, the knowledge gained will also be deeper and longer-lasting, for it will be the result of change and contact with facts. For instance, when one correctly learns that telling the truth is necessary at all times, he will also be more profoundly interested in telling the truth, too. He feels the practical essence to tell the truth, which he believes will develop his character. The principles that say the practical element is more important than knowledge in human development does not mean that practical usage without knowledge is necessary; it means, in fact, that the important thing in human development is practical, knowledge-based development and change, not mere abstract knowledge piled up in the researcher's mind.

3- Imitational Knowledge: Imitation means accepting another person's words, actions, behavior and thoughts without any reason. Imitation consists of five elements:

a) The imitator

b) The imitated

c) The phenomenon or reality being imitated

d) The aim of the imitation

e) The credibility of the imitation

Some imitations are completely distinctive of original knowledge, whereas some others are not. Detectable imitations are harmless to human knowledge, but the ones not detectable can be quite dangerous. Some detectable imitations are, nevertheless, necessary, like consulting an expert.

4- Supposed Knowledge: In supposed knowledge, there is no observable evidence, and the researcher must take the relevant mental conditions and concepts into consideration.

5- Theoretical knowledge: Here, some of the knowledge is compatible with researchable items, but the whole issue cannot be interpreted by means of experimental evidence. These two forms of knowledge sometimes make scientific knowledge fade a little. Mixing suppositions and theories with scientific laws may cause little harm in issues concerning the observable world, but applying them to the humanities may bring about irreparable harm to human culture, as the theory of the originality of the sexual instinct

did in interpreting human life, inhibiting man's evolution and changing all human values.

6- Purely Descriptive Knowledge: This kind of knowledge tends to set light on the facts in order to provide a bridge between the initial contact with the facts and the stage of true recognition. In the initial step, man merely photographs the facts, but in descriptive knowledge, facts are described from all viewpoints. The descriptions are sometimes so interesting that the initial state of mind feels that the original knowledge is not necessary, and this can make human thoughts stagnant.

7- Worship-based Knowledge: This form of knowledge concerns issues for which man does not know the reason, although they have reasons. For instance, man follows the rules he is instructed on how to worship God, and the reasons behind them are not completely unknown taking the aim of human life into consideration; they use their intelligible contents to adjust the relationship between man and God.

8- Experimental Knowledge: This kind of knowledge is not limited to the phenomena and relationships in the world of nature, for rather than testing an observable fact by means of human senses or laboratory devices in order to study it, experiencing something means exploration efforts about facts, and can apply to the analysis of these issues:

a) The experimenter, who possesses healthy senses and mental activities and is capable of making contact with facts.

b) Accepting definitely certain principles, like the principle of causality.

c) The motive of experiment in order to identify phenomena and make use of them.

d) The phenomenon or relationship being experienced to identify it is real, not imaginary or baselessly assumed. Realities are far vaster than our senses and observations can handle. Today science uses radioactive research to explore galactic changes millions of years ago in space, even about things that have disappeared now. By experiencing effects, human knowledge searches for the causes he could not trace while experiencing. Experience can study the actions and reactions in human organs and behavior, looking for facts which he undoubtedly accepts, without making contact with their identity directly.

In brief, all phenomena in the world, even imaginations, hallucinations, will, pleasure and sorrow, beauties, obligations and other observable issues can be experienced and identified.

9- Logical Understanding: includes understanding resulting from preliminaries based on logical principles. Logical certainty is sometimes conscious and sometimes not. Many deductions and reasoning are done hastily and not consciously. Even many scholars and intellectuals come to logical conclusions about phenomena and their interrelations without sufficient attention, knowledge of logical principles and rules, but instead with much haste and uneducated omissions and selections.

The highly significant point here is that the formal logical method does not allow man to make direct contact with facts because it concerns general concepts (secondary rational ideas) and logical symbols

(including coded symbols and mathematical symbols in logical mathematics); thus, the abstract aspect of formal logic, in any form it may be, overcomes direct realism, and the certainty it causes does not include the relaxed state brought about by direct contact with facts.

On the other hand, changing concepts by means of jargon and transforming them into symbols may dry them up so much that they will resemble human fictional products rather than the facts themselves. Therefore, some philosophers do not consider professional logic as very worthy, especially since many discoveries, inventions and great works of art have been produced by minds that never fell into formal or professional logic. Edison never read any books on formal logic to use it in his inventions.

We must say that the most formal logic can do is accurately arrange the concepts and realities that have been actually observed, or potentially exist in human knowledge; it should never be given the duty of pulling the unknown from behind the curtain of human senses or laboratories.

10– Supreme Understanding: Correct usage of facts and realities by means of complete mastery and dominance over them, in a way that facts are acquired like the levels and the identity of the human self are acquired intuitively. In supreme understanding, the refined form of realities and facts flow into man, which he absorbs like his self and its powers and actions – intuitively.

11– Deductive Knowledge: Deduction is known as achieving results without going through the preliminaries. Some thinkers, however, have objected to this definition, believing that it is impossible to leap from one point to another without going through certain steps. Considering the level of compatibility between guessing and realities, we can categorize deductive knowledge into three groups:

a) Guesses that are compatible to all facts, in which the whole reality is suddenly acquired as it is. This kind of guessing is directly proportionate with increase in knowledge and taste.

b) Guesses that agree with realities to some extent, in which a fraction – not all – of the facts are acquired.

c) Guesses that are compatible with realities, albeit in another form. We may assume, for example, that the society may be able to resist tyrants without the leadership of a powerful political figure, but in fact it happens in the presence of such a leader. We had guessed correctly about the people's resistance against atrocities, but not about how it was going to happen. The identity of guessing and deduction is not limited to the speed at which the preliminaries are gone through; the subject to be guessed about is also obscured from the mind.

12– Knowledge by Assumption: Here, indirect premises or inadequate facts lead to some form of acquisition of knowledge. It differs from guessing, because firstly, guessing moves so rapidly from the premises to the results that the preliminaries are ignored, and secondly, the subject is hidden.

In some people, assumptions are stable mental activities, but most assumptions are scattered,

temporary and unpredictable. Some judges, despite the legal information and evidence at their hand, have a special taste for legal judgment. Some politicians have a good sense of politics apart from all the political authority and expertise they may have. Some people have an instinct for art or business. However, none of them say they make guesses.

13- Intellectualism: Here, we mean understanding facts without any illusions or mistaking them with superstitions or established traditions. Such knowledge is quite clear, like the clarity in seeing a physical phenomenon. On the other hand, there is decadence, which means being rigidly fixed with precipitated knowledge acquired before.

An intellectual – or "clear-minded" – person may therefore be considered as somebody who, having gained knowledge of the present and future, tries to make the ideals of his society embrace reality. The true intellectual is a person who has logically adjusted his relationship with vast facts during the course of time, and having achieved a correct understanding of causes and effect, and the changeable and unchangeable, feels himself responsible for making intelligible life become a reality in his society, and will undergo any sacrifice he must make to achieve that.

14- Intelligence: Confirming a theorem about which we know more than 50 percent but less than 100 percent has been called intelligence, idea, or opinion. Such conclusions and confirmations are frequently used in science, artistic analyses and complex affairs of daily life. "My idea is..." does not convey certain knowledge, but a knowledge that calls for further study.

15- Knowledge by Discovery: A quality consisting of a mixture of mental activity and reflections in an area free of the mind. The truth about this kind of knowledge is still unsolved; we can only identify the discoverer's state of mind prior and subsequent to the discovery. We do not know how the discovery actually takes place. There are a few points that can be observed about discovery:

a) The researcher's endeavor along with his devotion and eagerness about the concerned fact.

b) Gaining new knowledge about the concerned subject.

c) Hope for achieving the facts. Some discoveries happen without a certain goal, like X- rays which Roentgen discovered without having aimed for previously.

d) The most mysterious thing about knowledge by discovery is a kind of mental freedom. When making a discovery, the mind is released from all chains, laws and rules, and finds itself suddenly facing a true light.

e) Evidence shows that when making a discovery, the mind uses an unknown factor, which cannot be intelligence, talent or great knowledge, for many people possess them, but do not make any discoveries.

f) Having made the discovery, the discoverer experiences huge freshness and joy. Maybe it is because the discoverer sees some aspect of his discovery in himself, too.

16– Illuminative Knowledge: In this kind of knowledge, “the facts and the truth shine on the human mind without needing any previous sensory preliminaries or formal thought.” A form of mental enlightening occurs upon the facts. An example is when man realizes that the universe has meaning, and each component in it influences the general harmony and flow of the universe. Knowledge by illumination can happen in everyone, but getting drowned in desires and wishes can prevent it.

17– Intuitive Knowledge: The direct contact between man's inside and facts non–observable to his senses – naturally or intellectually – is called intuitive knowledge. It differs from knowledge by illumination in the fact that intuition casts light on the subject itself, not the facts concerning or surrounding it. In intuitive knowledge, man uses his internal insight to see facts with a clarity far superior to his sensory sight or his intelligence.

18– Knowledge by Revelation: Revelations here are internal flashes. This kind of knowledge is similar to discovery, except knowledge by revelations has vaster domains, and can cover a great variety of realities. Discovery calls for a great deal of mental effort, but revelations can happen with a very meager background of knowledge.

19– Knowledge Based on Divine Revelations: In this form of knowledge, God reveals realities to a human being that deserves them. Holy Prophets of God had this attribute. Sometimes the prophet can directly receive the realities from God – through a certain power of recognition he has gained – and sometimes an angel is responsible for delivering the divine revelations to him. These are pure realities and truth, and convey what is useful for man's prosperity. Divine revelations are absolutely undoubted and certain.

Supreme Forms of Knowledge

Supreme forms of knowledge are not those supernatural activities of the mind that cannot be logically interpreted or justified; actually we mean the knowledge that man gains by means of purifying his inside of desires and wishes. In other words, man can achieve very high forms of knowledge having purified himself of selfishness. These forms of knowledge can be categorized into four groups:

1– Knowledge: Here, we mean all–around, dominant knowledge of the facts, the kind of internal light that is caused by making contact with reality. If a thinker studies man from not a purely one–dimensional point of view, but from various aspects, achieving the internal light that is the result of establishing contact with the identity and aspects of man's existence, he will accomplish knowledge. Kinds of science that serve selfish motives or self–benefit–seeking and are created by fatalistic factors of our senses or mind cannot fit into this definition.

2– Supreme Amazement: We may categorize amazement into seven groups:

a) Initial, Superficial Amazement: Here, the human mind wants to discover and identify the things it

encounters, but with the previous knowledge it has, it cannot do so, and thus falls into amazement. The more we know about new facts, the less this kind of amazement will be in us. Children do not experience this form when they find something new, for they have no background knowledge about it.

b) Amazement due to Ignorance: When man encounters a phenomenon that amazes him, two things may happen: a) man may know nothing about his amazement; he may not realize that he is amazed because of his own lack of knowledge. b) His mind may recede, and ignorantly fight the amazement.

c) Amazement Caused by Doubt: Some people are infatuated by their knowledge, and have absolute trust in what they know. Thus, if they face something unknown, the doubt and uncertainty they will encounter puts them into a very disturbing state of amazement.

d) Amazement alongside the Known: There is some amazement alongside what man already knows about. It prevents him from becoming overconfident and arrogant about his knowledge, preserving his modesty.

e) Amazement far beyond Science and Thought: If the thinkers who are engaged in one or several fields of science or philosophical issues do not fall prey to mental arrogance and overconfidence and prevent themselves from being infatuated by their own knowledge, they will achieve a special kind of amazement, which can be of two kinds:

● Negative, static amazement, where one feels at a mental stalemate, and the progress comes to a total halt. Such people believe that all knowledge ends in uncertainty and doubt.

● Dynamic, positive amazement, which is a powerful force in discovering what we are amazed about. This form of amazement is a phenomenon full of feelings of greatness and attraction toward issues far beyond formal sciences, laws and principles. At this high state of knowledge, the contradictions and conflicts one observes in science and knowledge are replaced by supreme forms of unity.

As Jalal-addin Muhammad Molawi (Rumi) says:

گه چنین بنمایـد و گه ضـدّ ایـن جـز که حیرانـی نباشـد کار دیـن

نه چنان حیران که پشتش سوی اوست بل چنین حیرت که محو و مست دوست

Things change with time; indeed,
religion is merely creating amazement.

This amazement, however, is not absolute; it does not lead to a dead-end.
Rather, it makes man fascinated by God's love.

f) Supreme, Ideal Amazement: This form of amazement is neither a sort of doubt or uncertainty, nor direct abstracts of sciences and experiences. Here, man feels the divine light of God's beauty and greatness radiate into him.

Thus, he achieves immense dominance over facts, drowns in the universe and enjoys peculiar pleasure and fascination. This is why the Holy Prophet of Islam asked God to increase his amazement. This form of amazement is far superior to all sciences and knowledge. As the renowned Iranian poet Attar Neishabouri describes it:

مرد حیران چون رسد این جایگاه در تحیر مانده و گـم کـرده راه

گم شود در راه حیرت محو و مات بی خبر از بود خـود وز کاینـات

هر که زد توحید بر جانـش رقم جملـه گم گـردد، ازو او نیـز هم

گر بدو گویند هستـی یا نئی؟ سر بلنـد عالمی، پسـت کیـی؟

در میانـی یا برونی از میـان؟ در کنـاری یا نهانـی یا عیـان؟

فانیی یا باقیـی یا هر دویـی هر دویـی یا تو نئی یا نه تویی؟

گویـد اصلاً مي ندانم چیـز من وین ندانـم هـم ندانـم نیز مـن

هر که در دریای کل گم بوده شد دائماً گم بوده و آسـوده شـد

(*When man feels the light of God, he can even go far beyond that, and reach the truth about God, and if he is asked, 'Do you exist or not? You are a highly developed being, why do you degrade yourself so much? Are you mortal or immortal? Or both? Are you both of them, or are you you, or are you nothing at all?' He will reply, 'I don't know who I am, for anyone who drowns in the ocean of the whole, is lost forever, and thus has reached eternal tranquility.*)

3– Mystical Knowledge: In this form of knowledge, man accomplishes an understanding of the universe with all of its components and interrelations that is truly crystal clear; he sees each component as a

symbol of God's greatness.

4- Wisdom: Wisdom conveys knowledge of the components of the universe and their interrelations as a harmonious whole, which depends upon the Creator of the universe. Man acquires this form of knowledge by means of moving on the path of evolutional development. When he achieves it, he will see all human beings moving toward God, and anyone who deviates from this path has in fact fallen astray from the way to perfection and greatness.

The Various Forms of Practical Relationship between the Mind and the Phenomenon to be discovered

These forms of knowledge involve the activities of the mind itself, not pure contact with the outside, which includes reflection. Having made contact with facts, the mind does certain operations on them, which we will take into consideration here. There are three differences between mental activities and reflective activities in the mind:

a) The non-reflective activities of the mind are generally conscious.

b) Science has not yet found the internal factor that causes non-reflective activities.

c) When non-reflective activities take place consciously, definite aim becomes necessary.

The Activities of the Mind

1- Confirmation: In this mental activity, imaginations and speculations are related and associated. An example is the theorem of the spherical shape of the sun. Several units face us: a) the sun, b) spherical shape, c) the relationship between the sun and spherical shape, which is the claim or deduction that makes the contact between the subjects. We see two mental actions here:

- First, there is no external relationship between the sun and being spherical.

- Second, the claim or deduction we make about them is mental.

2- Confirmation with Abstract Units: This kind of confirmation consists of abstract concepts, like mathematical theorems which involve numbers and symbols; they are not symbols of real cases in the real world.

3- Abstraction: Abstraction includes the omission of the characteristics of an identity, like a whole circle, or man as a whole. When we say that man is a talking animal, every word in our theorem is an abstracted concept, caused by omitting observable characteristics and qualities.

4- Recall (Reminding): Recall means searching the contents of the human memory or the subconscious

in order to remember things that have been kept there in the past. This incredible mental activity has several elements:

a) The elements stored in the memory or the subconscious.

b) The motive to find and remember the concerned elements.

c) The mental factor that finds the stored elements.

It seems that there is no relationship between the strength or weakness of recall and the little amount of contents in the memory or subconscious. Observations and experiences show that any unit considered as crucially important or put inside man by stronger influences also has stronger retention and recall.

5– Analysis: This kind of mental activity consists of analyzing a series into its components and units, and then studying them.

6– Combination: Here, the mind collects the components and discovers how they are interrelated in the whole series. Some philosophers, like Russell, consider the analytical method as extremely important, and name their method “logical atomism.” Both the analytical method and the combination method should be taken into attention, as both are necessary to recognition and knowledge.

7– Understanding the Relationship between Mental Activities and the Subject: Occasionally, mental activities take place without complete awareness, but since mental activities are objective, sometimes man can become completely aware of them, and they can happen consciously. Such awareness allows the mind to adjust the relationship between the mental activity and the subject.

8– Careful Thought: This term conveys careful thought and prediction about the eventual and ultimate consequences, which is essential to those who wish to achieve ideal amazement; a balanced relationship between the past, present and future is necessary in order to move toward perfection. There are a few conditions that must be provided to accomplish correct states of careful thought:

a) curate identification of the laws and principles of life.

b) Studying the possibilities about events.

c) Taking unpredictable, unexpected events into consideration.

9– Harmonizing: This mental activity involves logically organizing affairs and things that help us reach our goals. Harmonizing the components, basic parts and the fundamental activities one must carry out are quite crucial for some goals; sometimes it is so important that it can indicate the individual's genius or mental advantage.

10– Logical Thought: There is a distance between the state man is in and the goal he must achieve. Without logical mental activity, filling that gap will not become possible. In other words, logical movement

means starting out from the initial phase and going through the path to the goal. Man must also select and omit some of the items to do so.

11– Supreme Thought: The objective mental process that flows in the fundamentals of man's supreme relation with the universe, and the basic identity of the two, is called supreme thought. Here, the general basics and results of logical thought are formally put to use. With supreme thought, man's knowledge advances far beyond observable effects in order to reach the truth. For instance, man may see a small bird and realize things about the goal of the universe; observing the limited laws concerning a small part of the earth can help him understand the general laws dominating the universe – in fact, realize how harmoniously orderly the universe is.

12– Reasoning: This involves putting logical thought to work, together with awareness of thought units. Here, awareness and attention to the laws and principles of thought are necessary, whereas in pure thought the mental activity may take place unconsciously, although thoughts start to work according to the laws and principles. Awareness and objectiveness are quite crucial in reasoning.

13– Supreme Reasoning: What we mean here is that there are other supernatural concepts far beyond the issues and laws concerning the superficial natural world. Formal logical reasoning is merely making a relationship between man and nature and other human beings; it does not deal with the good, evil or responsibility concerning it. Supreme reasoning, on the other hand, always takes justice, supreme responsibility and real unity among men into consideration, and is concerned with logical interpretation of the universe. Avicenna has discussed supreme reasoning in the eighth and ninth part of his ***Esharat***.

14– Dominant Understanding: Here, it seems that a special kind of “smell” guides the mind toward understanding the relationship between the general facts and all the details. This penetrative understanding of all details can apply to various domains, like *hadith*, law and politics, where one can reach the level of jurisprudence. Those who have not achieve high levels of science and knowledge cannot reach dominant understanding. Some people, however, have a quite penetrative, analytic understanding of life and the fixed and variable principles about it.

15– Imagination: This form of mental activity makes the observable facts about the world undergo changes in the mind, and the identifier considers these changes to be the same as the real facts in the world outside, and accepts their characteristics and effects. When imagining things, sometimes the mind makes up things that do not exist, and sometimes it destroys things that exist. For instance, on a mountainside on a dark night, where no living thing is in sight, man may imagine seeing a wild lion, and run away as fast as he can. Imagination consists of several steps:

a) The first step includes the imaginer's mental background about the fact. If he has not ever seen a lion, for instance, he will never be able to imagine one.

b) External circumstances must be ready for the imagination to take place. For example, one cannot imagine seeing a lion in the middle of a crowded city, or inside his house.

c) The mental state of the imaginer, like the factors of fear or keen interest in the fact being imagined, is also important. These mental states sometimes show the weakness, and sometimes the power of the imaginer's character. Those imaginations that arise from man's weaknesses generally lead to harmful results, whereas imaginations based on his powerful character put positive mental activities to work. All works of art arise from the latter.

When imagining something, two conflicting phenomena take place simultaneously:

a) one is the imagination action, which considers what is not to be and what is not to be, and

b) the other is the knowledge that what has been imagined is in fact false and wrong. For example, when we watch an actor play the role of a hurt, oppressed man, we know that he is only acting and is not really hurt, but still we may weep because we feel pity for the hurt, miserable person. Making a distinction between these two opposites – knowing that the actor is not really hurt, and feeling sympathy for him – is truly one of the most amazing and greatest functions of the human soul.

Various Relationships between the Mind and the Subject

The human mind can make contact with facts in different ways, which vary in their perfection or imperfection. As we know, knowledge has two aspects. First, the influence of external facts on the mind, which makes mental pictures. Second, the mental activities done on the reflected forms in our mind or in our imaginations. The human mind is influenced by external facts in different ways. For instance, the colors and the heaviness of an object leave different influences on our mind. Even various colors influence us differently. Red and green have different effects on us.

The various ways of mental contact can be categorized as:

1– Possibility: If we assume that a hundred percent contact with the subject means complete contact, less than fifty percent contact will mean possibility. If it reaches more than fifty percent, it is called doubt and uncertainty. The power to intrigue possibility also depends on the importance of the subject. In other words, the more important the subject, the more powerful too the intrigue of possibility.

2– Presumption: When our contact with the subject is more than fifty percent, our knowledge of it will be a presumption, and the higher it goes, the closer our knowledge will be to certainty.

3– Certainty: Here, we have a hundred percent contact with the subject. Two factors influence certainty:

a) Discovering the truth by means of man's reality–seeking exploration, industrious struggle with doubt and uncertainty and eagerness to reveal the unknown. This is called logical certainty.

b) The induction of the facts into the human mind by means of omitting any causes or motives for doubt. The weaker the human mind, the more it can be influenced, and the stronger the character of the

inducer, the faster and better his ability to influence others.

c) Sometimes, social circumstances provide the grounds for removing any doubt or uncertainty about a particular subject, in a way that even the common public can reach certainty about it without much careful thought. This kind of certainty is called seasonal or mortal certainty.

4- Quiescence: This is much like certainty, except that here man feels ready to decide to act in accordance with the discovered realities.

5- Knowledge: Various definitions have been presented for knowledge. Some have called it the reflection of facts in the mind. For a subject or theorem to be included in knowledge, omission, selection, secondary knowledge about facts reflected in the mind, imagination, making them dependent upon laws and principles, and also paying attention to the possibility of it breaking up due to newer discoveries, are all elements that should be taken into consideration when interpreting and justifying scientific knowledge.

Three levels can be mentioned for knowledge to take place:

a) Initial Level: At this level, the mind faces many certainties and doubts. Any phenomenon the human senses face shows a truth independent and separate of other phenomena. At the initial level, the certainties and doubts that enter the human mind are like influences that come and go, and any conflict or contradiction between them is unimportant. In addition, man makes decisions based on his own knowledge.

b) Intermediate Level: At this level, man faces different aspects of facts, and realizes any conflict his perceptions may have. This is where the human mind falls into doubt and uncertainty. However, in the case of those of weak character, these doubts hinder the discovery of the truth, whereas in those who have a strong character, increased curiosity is most advantageous. All in all, knowledge has to go through doubt and uncertainty at this intermediate level, which is quite crucial to man's knowledge.

c) Supreme Level: The human mind is at the peak of knowledge at this level, and the universe expands in his eyes, and man feels quite confident.

6- General Knowledge: This kind of knowledge involves exploring an indefinite fact which is applicable to more than one individual, or can be considered as part of a whole. For instance, we may know that one person in the group of people we are facing is a teacher and the rest of them are students, but we are not sure which one is the teacher. The mathematics of probabilities involves inexact knowledge, which is also quite essential in discovering the laws and principles of the universe.

7- Detailed Knowledge: If a fact is identified with a hundred percent certainty in the human mind, its knowledge can be called precise knowledge, like knowing exactly who the teacher is among the group of people in our previous example.

8- Certainty: At this level, man (the one who becomes certain) seems to see the truth. This kind of

knowledge is more effective than the three previous steps, for if the opposite of what man feels certain of is proved, it will deeply affect him mentally. Certainty is divided into three steps:

Step One: Here, certainty is like a mirror, showing facts crystal clear.

Step Two: The subject is explored in a way that all of man's mental levels are deeply impressed by it.

Step Three: The subject man is certain of becomes a part of him.

9- Gained Knowledge: A reflection of facts occurring in the mind is called gained knowledge, like the reflection of facts in the mind.

10- Intuitive Knowledge: Intuitive knowledge involves human knowledge of the human nature itself, along with its internal effects, like pleasure and pain, will and decision-making, thought, imagination, speculation and association of meanings. We can thus classify intuitive knowledge into several levels:

a) The known is an unknown nature. In other words, it is a nature that we know about in the observable world. This level of intuitive knowledge is merely a raw awareness. Undeveloped minds know nothing more about themselves than the collection of organs that make up the human body. They think that the limbs, the eyes and the ears, etc, are the "self."

b) In the next level, the "self" is considered as a truth that is in charge of human life in nature and its various interrelations. Man's behavior is based on correct goals, and he attempts to put all of his potentials and abilities to work in order to advance his character by using all laws and principles of life.

c) The "self" becomes independent of anything apart from the "self." In other words, at this level the "self" realizes its own independence. This is where the highest possible level of intuitive knowledge occurs.

11- Passive Knowledge: This kind of knowledge has two meanings:

a) It can mean the reflection of facts in the mind, which is related to factors and motives beyond the human nature.

b) It can be any dependent kind of knowledge, even if it does arise from the human nature, for the knowledge that is caused by the human nature – albeit seeming independent and beyond being influenced by factors and motives – cannot be totally independent, for its nature is dependent upon God, who does not depend on anything at all. Those who have developed themselves along the path to discovery and knowledge realize this kind of dependence quite well, both in its initial steps and final levels.

12- Active Knowledge: This kind of knowledge is not dependent on any factor or motive, and although it can cast clarifying light on everything we know, it does not depend on any of them. This kind of

knowledge undergoes no change or development. It is only God who possesses such knowledge; just some levels of it can intuitively occur in man in the form of knowledge being present in the human mind.

The Relationship between the Mind and the Observable Facts in Discovery

The Relationship between the "Self" and "Other than the "Self" in Cognition

Recognition is based on two pillars:

1– The "self," the innate pole, or the recognizer that discovers facts and realities.

2– All apart from the "self," which are the observable facts of the universe; the target of discovery.

The human self has some tools for making contact with facts. The question here is whether these two pillars mutually influence each other or not – in fact, they do. To find out how, we must first study the factors affecting each pillar.

Pillar 1: The "Self" and the Factors that Influence the Process of Gaining Knowledge

There are nine factors that must be taken into consideration about the first pillar:

1– The "Self," the "Ego" or the "Personality:" The self is in charge of man's life, soul and cognition. Any disorder or disturbance that affects its various aspects can definitely influence its management of the cognitive factors. The human ego serves two purposes in the process of cognition:

a) Managing the factors of cognition and bringing them on the way to the adapted goals.

b) Refining the cognition that infiltrates man through his means of gaining knowledge.

The active elements of the self, which are like the refining factors of the self, influence the functions of the self and the knowledge it gains. Optimisms, pessimisms, reasoning, being influenced by emotions, haste, patience, tendencies toward knowledge or stupefaction, are all factors that can indeed influence the domain of the self, and color knowledge, particularly regarding theoretical and receptive facts in the humanities.

2– The Behavior of the Characters: The internal active element that determines how one acts is called his character, his behavior, like artistic character, political character, legal character, etc. Sometimes man's character is so influential that it affects man's knowledge profoundly. If one has artistic character, for instance, "influences the basics, characteristics or results of the knowledge he gains with his artistic feelings. By discovering one's behavior, we can guess what his viewpoint is regarding facts.

3– Various Factors of the Brain: Factors like imagination, confirmation, memory, thought, speculation, abstraction, allocations, the conscious and the subconscious, intuition, and revelations can play an active role in the human mind. They affect our knowledge and viewpoints. Any disorder in our conscious, subconscious or unconscious domains can influence our scientific outcome. If one of man's dearest relatives dies in a terrible incident, the grief of the incident will affect his mind when making judgments about it. As Jalal-addin Muhammad Molawi (Rumi) says:

چـون تو با پرّ هـوا بر می پــری لاجرم بر من گمان بـد میبــری

هـر که را افعال دام و دد بــود بر کریمانــش گمـان بـد بـود

چون تو جزو عالمی پس ای مهیـن کل آن را همچـو خـود دانـی یقیـن

چون تو برگردیّ و برگردد سـرت خانه را گــردنده بینـد منظرت

ور تو در کشتی روی بر یَـم روان ساحــل یم را همی بینـــی روان

گر تـو باشـی تنگدل از ملحمــه تنـگ بینـی چو دنیــا را همــه

ور تـو خوش باشی به کام دوستان این جهان بنمایـدت چون بوستان

(*Since you see everything as serving to fulfill your whims and desires, you become pessimistic about me. If one behaves like wild beasts, he/she will become suspicious about great human beings. Man, as generally a part of the whole universe, sees the universe similar to himself. If you turn your head, it will seem that the world is revolving, too. If you are in a ship, you may think the shore is moving away from you. If something distressing happens, the whole world will become miserable to you, and if you are happily spending time with your friends, it will be like a paradise.*)

4– Natural Senses: One of man's channels for establishing contact with facts is his senses. Man's natural senses comprehend objects and actions in a particular way. Man's eyes or ears cannot, for instance, see or hear all sounds or scenes. The natural senses can make contact with certain phenomena in accordance with their special structure, and the slightest change in their structure will affect man's knowledge.

5– The Secondary Effects of the Natural Senses: Illnesses and changes that occur in man's natural senses are some of the secondary effects of the natural senses. In some diseases, for instance, man may see everything in a particular color.

6– Sensory Activities that Affect the Conscious: Continual contact between the human senses and natural phenomena makes the mind unable to make direct contact with them. When man encounters a phenomenon like sunlight, for instance, he is affected in a way that his subsequent contact with sunlight will be influenced with it. As Farabi says, the human eye gets the light from the sun, and uses that light to see the sunlight.

He adds, “Each of our senses is affected by what it observes, and the influence is similar to the quality of the observed facts. If the effect is strong, it will remain for some time after the direct contact with the observed fact is over, like the human eye looking at the sunlight. If man stops looking at the sun, the effect will remain for a while. Also, if the ear hears a long, tiring sound, it will keep hearing it a while after the sound goes away, too.”

Jalal-addin Muhammad Molawi has also pointed out man's manipulative role in his famous story about the elephant:

پیل اندر خانــة تاریــک بـود عرضـه را آورده بودنــدش هنــود

از بــرای دیدنـش مردم بسـی اندر آن ظلمت همی شد هر کسی

دیدنش با چشم چون ممکـن نبـود انـدر آن تاریکیـش کف میبسـود

آن یکی را کف به خرطـوم اوفتاد گفـت همچـون ناودانـــش نهـاد

آن یکی را دست بر گوشـش رسیـد آن براو چـون بادبیـزن شد پدید

آن یکی را کـف چو بر پایـش بود گفت شکل پیـل دیـدم چون عمود

آن یکی بر پشــت او بنهاد دست گفت خود این پیل چـون تختی بُدست

هم چنین هر یک به جزئیکاو رسید فهم آن می کرد هـر آن مـی تنیـد

از نظرگـه گفتشـان شــد مختلـف آن یکی دالش لقـب داد آن الــف

در کف هر کـس اگر شمعـی بـدی اختلاف از گفتشــان بیـرون شــدی

(*An elephant was brought into a dark room, and many people came to see it. But since the room was dark, the people touched, and each person came to a different point of view. One who had touched the elephant's trunk said the elephant is like a drainpipe. Another, who had touched the ear, said it resembled a big fan. One man touched the elephant's leg, and claimed the elephant was like a pillar. Another touched the elephant's back, and said it was like a bed. Each person expressed the knowledge he had gained based on what he had found; the ideas were quite diverse. Had they candles, however, their remarks would be united, and accurate.*)

Thus, men have diversities due to several factors:

a) Limitations in their ways of contact with facts

b) The reflections in the mind – each man, having discovered one part of the elephant's body, interpreted it merely based on that one part.

c) Being content with the initial impression. If one man touched the trunk, for instance, he said it was like a drainpipe. Another, who had touched the elephant's ear, said it looked like a fan. In other words, each of them remained content with what they had initially found.

7- Tools Used for Expanding Knowledge: The tools and laboratories man uses in order to expand his knowledge definitely affect his ways of discovery. Each machine shows facts in accordance with its own particular structure; a telescope, for instance, is by no means comparable with man's senses in showing heavenly bodies, and any change in its structure will also influence our view of space. Each object has different characteristics. If the temperature of a room is 27 degrees, for instance, each object in it, like the carpet, the windows, wooden objects or woolen clothes will have different temperatures.

As Max Planck says, "The physicist's ideal desire is to discover the real world outside. Despite all the tools of discovery he has, his measurements will never tell anything about the real world. Measures are merely somewhat uncertain messages; as Helmholtz says, they are signals transmitted to the real world, from which man attempts to get conclusions, like a linguist trying to decipher documents dating back to an ancient civilization.

The linguist must accept the fact that the document has some meaning if he is to succeed. Likewise, the

physicist must believe that the real world follows laws and principles that we cannot fathom; he may even have to abandon hopes of totally discovering them, or determine their identity with any certainty."

Man's tools and devices of discovery lead to two forms of manipulation on man's behalf. If he looks at tiny particles through a microscope, for example, the particles are revealed to him having gone through two tunnels: the machine itself and man's own senses.

8– Man's Methods and Goals: How man tends to discover and identify things and his goal both influence his process of discovery. When man focuses all of his senses and thoughts upon a certain goal, his knowledge will be limited to that particular end. If a man heads for a mountain in search of firewood, he will not pay attention to anything else on his way, and if asked whether he saw anything else there, he will say "No." If one studies facts in order to achieve a certain goal, he will not understand the facts accurately. Basically, scientific fairness implies that if studies with a certain goal fail, the scientist should not claim that he studied but could not find anything; they had better say that he was not able to find what he needed with the tools he had.

9– The Various Situations Facts Have: Farabi believes that since knowledge and the known are correlated, if the existence of the known is complete, the knowledge about it will also be complete. Likewise, if there are any contradictions about the known, its knowledge will not be complete, either, such as movement, time, infinity and oblivion.

The truth about movement is gradual exit from potentiality to activity, and each moment of it involves proof and defiance. The dependency of movement upon the moving subject and its relationship with the cause brings about contradiction. If we could gain knowledge about any kind of motion from the moving subject and its cause, our knowledge would be more complete.

Not all of the above nine factors influence recognition at the same time. One or several of them usually affect the knowledge we have of a subject.

Pillar 2: Other than the Self, or the Realities about the Universe

This pillar includes the identification of all creatures and phenomena that are to be recognized by the self. The self can, however, also be recognized by the selves of other human beings. There are two important points here:

1– The more the mental development the human ego makes, the less dependent it will be on factors, tools and imaginations outside the human nature for its discoveries.

2– Intuitive knowledge concerning the self does not mean that man is able to discover every coordinate and characteristic the ego has.

The "other than the self" pillar is of three kinds:

a) Realities being discovered for their own sake, which includes all of the creatures of the world.

b) Tools and objects used for gaining science and knowledge.

c) Objects that serve as a transit between the recognizer and the recognized, like the light needed to see physical objects.

A Criticism of Idealism

External facts cannot be denied. What some people like Berkley say – "External beings arise from human cognition and the facts that can be mentally conceived" – is totally wrong. There are three reasons why facts exist independent of cognition about them; reasons that prove idealism is incorrect:

1– The Unity and Harmony between the Recognizer and the Recognized: Our eyes, as we know, see objects and shapes. When they see a table or a chair, they see its shape, and know that it is not a pencil, pen or anything else. If objects and facts did not exist outside our cognition, we could never have such understanding of different facts.

2– A fact cannot be in doubt between itself and other than itself. The reality is the specific object outside us, not an object uncertain about itself. For example, when we see an object in the distance and we are not sure whether it is a man or a stone, we still admit that the reality is only one of them – either man and not stone or stone and not man. No idealist will admit that what he sees is the doubtful object.

3– Man's Approaches to External Facts: Cold weather, for instance, forces man to put on warm clothes. He escapes wild animals. If he sees a hole on his way, he steers away from it, or searches for light to identify things. Such approaches we have in regard to facts are the best reasons to prove that they really exist.

Responding to a Point of Criticism

As we have already mentioned, the "self " – the discoverer – cannot make contact with facts and realities without certain factors, means and passageways. The question here is whether reaching pure, original knowledge is truly feasible or not.

Among western physicists, Max Planck believes that we are able to discover a great many facts by means of our senses and the scientific tools we have, and although the discoveries we make are increasingly expanding, we will never reach the end of it. Presenting the two following principles, we will achieve an even more convincing response:

Principle One: Both the "self" and the "other than the self" – in other words, the recognizer and the external word – are orderly and disciplined. The expansion of objects due to heat is a natural law in the external world, as is the sensation of warmth felt by our senses which is caused by a series of various

factors. The warmth our sense of touch feels on warm glass differs from what wool, wood or rocks feel in contact with something hot. There is no denying the discipline, order and harmony in the domains of the self and other than that; that's how physicists discover the laws governing nature.

Principle Two: Harmony between the recognizer – the mind – and the facts in gaining knowledge; in other words, cognition behaves equally towards all facts. For instance, the human eye always sees large objects small from a distance, or the rotation of the blades of a fan always seem circular, not sometimes.

This is how man has made a great many discoveries throughout history.

Because of scientific knowledge, we must say that purely scientific approach to facts is one of the highly significant and crucial methods for revealing facts; however, it is not the only way. Having accepted this point, and provided that we do not deviate from the truth, powerful minds may attempt to find other ways to discover facts, and even achieve better results. Doesn't the fact that spiritual witnessing of facts can lead to the discovery of thousands of secrets in knowledge prove that there must be ways to discover facts apart from formal scientific methods?

When discussing the relationship between the self (the recognizer) and facts we must keep in mind that if the subject of study is man and his various aspects, the self (the recognizer) and its cognitive tools and methods will be more influential. For example, when man thinks about will, he takes into consideration the will in him and what he knows about it, and even lets other humans know about it. Or if hedonism is the dominant element in the mind of an intellectual, he will use it to interpret the characters of other men, too.

This is why we say that when Machiavelli describes man and his moral, political and social virtues, he definitely does so based on his own beliefs and thoughts. Machiavelli cannot understand the character of a fair, just person who follows his logical responsibilities; Machiavellian accounts of such a man's character would be purely based on selfishness.

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