

Recognition of Perfection before Attaining it

It is obvious that man's actual perfection, i.e. moral perception and intuitive knowledge, is possible only for those who have reached it. But as the attainment of voluntary perfections depends on knowledge and awareness, it is necessary that these perfections be somehow recognized beforehand, so that they would become favourable and voluntary, and be obtained by choice and will-power. If the means of recognizing them was exclusive to findings, their acquirement would never be possible.

Thus, the recognition needed beforehand is not of the intuitive type. It is rather the same subjective recognition and is termed as 'acquired knowledge' which is obtained through reasoning and deduction from rational premises or inference from indisputable historical principles. Basically, this discussion is for researchers who intend to recognize perfection and to find a way to reach it. One who has reached true perfection is no longer in need of such discussions.

Therefore, expecting to recognize the truth of human perfection prior to reaching it in the same way that we recognize our own moral perceptions is totally out of place. We have no choice other than finding a subjective, and not an intuitive knowledge towards it by way of reasoning and realizing its specifications by the aid of reason and tradition.

Of course, we will try to select the preliminaries of reasoning from the simplest and clearest positive and moral teachings, so that both the conclusion would be clearer and more assuring; and the benefit would be more general. But, in the meantime, we will also refer to some traditional reasonings or to more complex rational proofs well.

[Can Man's True Perfection Be Recognized by Experience?](#)

One might possibly reflect that in the same manner that the perfection of a tree or an animal can be recognized through experience and experimentation, in the case of man too, the issue can be solved with the help of scientific experimentation.

That is to say, can a large number of people be subjected to experimentation at various times and in

different places so as to see what perfection they reach and what their ultimate limit is? And with this very means, one can retrace the criteria of development and the way of reaching ultimate perfection.

But a little deliberation indicates that the issue on man is not so simple because primarily all kinds of vegetations and animals are inferior to man in terms of existential perfections. For this reason, all human beings could recognize and investigate their perfections, but those human beings who have not attained true perfections could not basically understand the origin of these perfections and the ones who possess them. In this respect, they resemble children who want to test a perfection exclusive to mature people. Rather only experts who have, at least realized the primary degrees of man's true perfection can have a share in this investigation.

Secondly, the perfection of every type of vegetation and animal has a specific and limited boundary which can be easily learned and recognized. Over the centuries, no difference in terms of type of perfection and its ultimate limit has been seen among the members of one species. In this way, by examining a number of them, one can become confident that their typical perfection is that which has been recognized so far; for instance, the perfection of an apple tree is to bear a fruit with a specific flavour, colour, fragrance and size. Or the perfection of the honeybee is to live according to a particular system and to produce a sweet and fragrant fluid called honey.

Of course, it is possible that apple and honey possess properties and advantages which man has not realized as yet. But whatever these advantages are, they belong to the apple and the honey which this tree and animal have (respectively) produced all through the centuries. But when we glance at man – this strange and mysterious being – we find that despite his relatively small size and his similarity with other animals in many material ways, he has features which make him completely distinguished and distinct. It is man whose existential secrets are diurnally unveiled and who divulges a new facet of his skills. It is man who has not stopped moving and changing for a minute since creation.

Each day man makes more apparent the various manifestations of his teachings and industries all over the world. Still these salient and astonishing developments are all the material fruit of this wonderful tree; yet the recognition of its moral fruit is not so easily possible. It might be that man's spiritual and moral wonders are greater than his material ones as those who tread the world of spirit express matters which cannot be understood by others and perform acts which cannot be justified and rationalized with material laws and which can in no way be denied. With all this in view, can one say that recognition of man's existential limits is thoroughly practicable in the same way that the perfection of vegetations and animals is realized?

Thirdly, only sense perceptions can be directly put to examination while spiritual perfections and moral virtues cannot be directly experimented and weighed. Even if the signs of many of them can, to some extent be experimented, indeed the recognition of the spiritual source from which these signs originate and the evaluation of its perfection cannot be experimented.

With respect to the afore cited points, it is not strange that philosophers and scientists are in disagreement over the recognition of man's actual perfection.

Views of Philosophers on Man's Perfection

With regard to differences which philosophers and thinkers have in their world views, it is natural that they should express different views about man. But analysis of all these views and of their relationship with various isms renders no significant benefit. For this reason, we will suffice with only mentioning a few basic views.

(1) Man's perfection is obtained by ever more enjoyment of material pleasures. To reach them, one must employ learning and technology to reap benefit from natural resources and riches, so that a more peaceful and enjoyable life would be procured. This view is based on materialism, Epicureanism and individualism.

(2) Man's perfection rests on the collective enjoyment of natural blessings. And to reach it, effort must be made for the welfare of all classes of society. The difference between this view and the former one is that this view is based on socialism.

(3) Man's perfection is in spiritual and moral progress which can be attained through mortification of the flesh and struggle against material pleasures. This view is the exact opposite of the preceding ones.

(4) Man's perfection is in intellectual progress which is obtained by way of learning and philosophy.

(5) Man's perfection is in intellectual and moral development which is attained through learning the sciences and acquiring virtuous habits. The last two views, like the third one, are inconsistent with materialism with this difference that in the third view, man's body is considered an enemy which must be fought and by victory over which (one can) reach human perfection. In the last two views, however, the body is deemed a device which must be employed to reach perfection. The difference between the fourth view and the fifth one is obvious but at times, the fifth view is regarded as the interpretation of the fourth view.

Evidently, each of the aforementioned views, as well as other views not put forward here, are based on particular philosophical principles which must be considered beforehand, pursuit of them requires a series of profound philosophical discussions which are not in tune with the trend of this discussion. As we noted in the introduction, the method of discussion here is to use the clearest moral and positive learning and to abstain from complex reasonings which necessitate a great deal of preliminary arguments. In this way, the discussion will be more advantageous, that is to say, people who are not too familiar with philosophical issues and traditional reasoning, can reap benefit from it.

Moreover, in the twists and turns of reasonings in which naturally, inclinations to a particular philosophical movement and a specific principle are found, we would not face the reaction of the

proponents of other philosophical movements and the bias of the opponents. Furthermore, so long as there is the possibility of (going on) a short cut and a direct path, there is no use in treading crooked and inconvenient paths.

For this reason, we will try not to conduct the reasoning for the recognition of man's true perfection on specific philosophical bases which are accepted by only some movements or on specific verbal views which are acceptable for only a particular group. We will rather start the discussion from the simplest and clearest of our own learnings with regard to man. It is evident that the requisite of starting off from such preliminaries is not that in the course of reasoning and deduction no confrontation with some philosophical views would occur and that the conclusion drawn from the discussion would be accepted by all movements and religions. Such an expectation is principally like expecting the agreement of contradictory things which is necessarily impossible.

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