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# Recognition of the Learning Process based on Sadra's Theosophical

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**Abstract:** Theorization of learning process is a function of the philosophical analysis that one offers of the relationship between man and the world and every philosophical approach has provided a particular theoretical framework of the relationship between man and the world. Transcendent Theosophy as an evolved revision of Islamic wisdom contains a special explanation of the relationship between man and the world and it is evident that the description of the learning process will be different from this point of view. Thus, the current essay seeks to provide an answer based on the Transcendent Theosophy to the question: how is the learning process? It struggles to provide a theoretical framework for the experimental observations in learning psychology using the deductive method and answering this question based on Sadra's philosophy. The result of this research was that Transcendent Theosophy has a special view of the relationship between man and the world and enumerates certain principles for this relationship: harmony of world and man, interactive state of this relationship, unity based state of this relationship, personality dynamicity in the relationship process, and intuitive nature of this unity. In the light of this approach learning process is redefined as follows: harmonic interaction of man and world that becomes united with the transcendent realities and reaches intuitive truth through personality dynamicity and its result can be seen in the phenomenological (representational), ideological and behavioral aspects of human existence.

**Keywords:** Learning Process, Epistemology, Transcendent Theosophy, Unity of the Knower and the Known, Presential and Representational Knowledge.

## INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that psychology is considered an empirical science after 18<sup>th</sup> century but there is also no doubt that all empirical sciences particularly human sciences are of certain pre-empirical (a priori) foundations and frameworks (Kuhn, 1996). In other words, these empirical sciences have been grounded in such fundamental bases as methodology, epistemology, and philosophy, insofar as one of the main factors of the ideological differences in these sciences refers back to the different perspectives taken by the aforementioned fundamental sciences. Given the importance of this issue those who have discussed psychological problems also turned to its philosophical foundations. Likewise, in the domain of learning besides such consideration some scholars have spoken of an independent interdisciplinary sciences called philosophy of learning (Jarvis and Parker, 2005; Winch, 1998).

Regardless of its definition learning is essentially a type of relationship between man and the world and the use of the term change in the definitions of learning reflects this point (Pritchard, 2007). World in this context refers to all living beings save man. Thus one's approach regarding the relationship between man and the world can be deciding in determination of the framework of the study of the learning process and every philosophical school can adopt its own special perspective in the study of learning.

The necessity of recognition of the scientific heritage based on the indigenous approaches and the accepted philosophical perspectives is not hidden to anyone and this recognition can greatly help us in achieving a science that is in line with our basic beliefs and views. Thus the current study taking the analysis proposed by Transcendent Theosophy (as evolved revision of philosophy in Islam) on the relationship between man and the world as its point of departure seeks to answer the question that how one can describe the learning process based on the Transcendent Theosophy? Then Transcendent Theosophy is presented as the major basis of the relationship of the man and the world and accordingly the learning process is recognized using a deductive method.

### **Man/ World Relationship according to Transcendent Theosophy**

#### **Harmony of Man and World**

Sadr al-Motalihin considers man an example of God and in some points solves anthropological problems based on theology (Shirazi, 1999). Likewise, world as the manifestation of God is the macro-man and the totality of world is called macro-man in the same way that the Perfect Man is the manifestation of Divine Names in detailed fashion and is of various existential layers. In the same way the world of existence is also the detailed manifestation of Divine Names (Shirazi, 1999).

Divine perfections have been reflected in man and the world. The only difference is that man can be the manifestation of all existential levels as a whole while the world contains these perfection in separated way and this is why man is mediating the aggregation of the divine perfection of world in man and in the same way that the end of man is God the world is also seeking after God. However, the latter reaches its end via the former. Thus the book of human soul is a shortened version of the macrocosm and is an example for Divine Essence (Shirazi, 1999).

The world is the manifestation of God and this manifestation is called the descending arc and it is oriented towards God and this is the alternative ascending arc and man is located at the end of the descending arc and the beginning of the ascending arc (Shirazi, 1981).

Thus in the anthropological pattern of Transcendent Theosophy man is discussed in these two arcs (Khomeini, 2002). Accordingly, the end of creation that is the manifestation of Divine Essence turns meaningful with man and man gives meaning to this end in the course of his relationship with the World (Shirazi, 1981). Thus, man reaches a rank in which all creatures become part of his essence and his existence turns to the end of creatures (Shirazi, 1981; idem, 1975: 173; idem, 1984: 522-523).

According to this analysis, man and world not only are not in conflict rather all creatures in the universe are in harmony with man and they struggle to help man to realize all noble perfections in himself and this approach stands against the approach according to which there is a conflict between man and the world and seeks to overcome this conflict using certain psychological methods and in some cases propose man to prevail the world (Freud, 1961). Nevertheless, according to the approach of Transcendent Theosophy, world is already dominated by man and there is no need to the domination of man. The man should be able to achieve the ability for this kind of prior domination. In fact, these two approaches to the world represent two worldviews according to one of which man is in harmony with the world which according to the other, man lies in one hand and the world stand in the other hand and there is a competition between man and the world and all efforts of man is for preserving himself before the wild world.

Therefore, Transcendent Theosophy the primacy is with the existence in the outside world (cf. Shirazi, 1983). The existence is analogically graded (Shirazi, 1999). In the very base level of the world lies the material world that is consisted of the potency and actuality and is of material effects while at the top level of the world stands

the world of intellect where neither matter itself nor its effects exist. The perfections of the lower world exist in there and between these two worlds there is a medium world where there is no matter and it is not like the material world although it has the effects of the material world and is not like the world of intellect (Shirazi, 1981).

According to the transcendent perspective, man is also of three layers in the first one of which man had a material and sensible body while in the highest level man's has intellectual properties and in the middle level there is neither a wholly rational nor a wholly material property (Shirazi, 1999). Thus, the world has three levels and in the process of the relationship of man and the world these three levels become connected.

### **Interactive Relationship**

According to many mechanical perspectives of the universe, the world is a moving phenomenon without spirit and if there is any spirit it should be in the man and thus man's relationship with the world is one-sided and it is this man who has a will. Man is the acting subject and the world with which he establishes a relationship is nothing but a material object without spirit that has only movement. Even the thinkers who have sought to challenge the thesis of mechanical nature of the man in psychology have merely supposed the environmental factors to be mechanical and void of will (Baqeri, 2003).

It is correct that man is the agent of will but we should not have a merely mechanical notion of the world. According to Transcendent Theosophy, since the primacy is with the existence that is a simple hierarchically graded reality all attributes of existence including knowledge, power, and life are co-extensional with existence and wherever there is existence there is life too (Shirazi, 1981). Every material object that we see is of life and man does not establish any relationship with a material object rather this relationship is concerned with living aspect of that object and in fact even in sensory perception the external material object is not the direct object of knowledge and the real sensible object is an incorporeal non-material reality (Shirazi, 1999).

Since the world as a whole has a life of its own man establishes his perceptual relationship with the incorporeal part of the world. Thus the relationship of man with the world is the relationship between two living beings not the relationship of a living being and dead matter. Thus, material world is the embodiment of the noble world (Shirazi, 1981). Human relationship with the world is the relationship of an agent with another agent not the relationship of an agent with an environment. Then one can say that to establish a true relationship we need interaction and this relationship is essentially interactive.

### **Unity Based Relationship**

How is human relationship with the world? Does man have a relationship with the world based on the environmental provocations? Is man's relationship with the world a function of his personal thoughts? Or the social patterns are the structural basis (like language) and establish a relationship with the world accordingly? Sadra believes that man establishes a relationship with the world when he becomes united with certain aspect of the world and it is not so that man would separate the truth from the world in a differentiating way through which he can know the form of the world. According to the transcendent theosophy, the primacy is with existence that is analogically graded and the higher levels contain the perfections of the lower levels. Then soul becomes united with the object through establishing relationship with the incorporeal levels and in this way the perception is possible only when the knower becomes united with the known (Shirazi, 1999).

### **Transitional Relationship**

Some scholars believe that the external reality exists there and man takes a form of it and that form occurs on man. However, according to Mulla Sadra, beings have gradational levels and their own particular external reality regardless of man and this man becomes united with them by the assistance of some factors (Shirazi, 1981). Thus, relationship with various layers of the world depends on the existential initiation of man and it is human evolved existence that moves through higher levels of the universe (Shirazi, 1981).

### **Intuitive Relationship**

According to our previous discussions, man is not restricted to sensory existence and is compatible with different levels and these levels have life and interacts with them and gets united with them and this is possible in the

light of existential transition of man and thus due to this transition man establishes a relationship with the universe and intuitively it as a united object and the knowledge of existence is called intuitive and presential knowledge.

Sadr al-Mutalihi contends that perception is reaching and meeting (Shirazi, 1999) and this meeting is a relationship that man establishes with the world (Shirazi, 1999). Man is of two incorporeal and corporeal aspects and likewise the world has an incorporeal and a corporeal dimension. That part of human relationship that owes its existence to the sensory tools is not perception and knowledge (Shirazi, 1999). Knowledge is an existential entity in the sense that it does not belong to essence rather it belongs to existence rather to the existence that is purified of matter and potency. Then, in fact, the truth of knowledge and perception is meeting the incorporeal reality of matter (Shirazi, 1999). Thus, human perception occurs via abstraction due to his having an incorporeal soul and this abstraction is done in relation to something that is material (Shirazi, 1999). According to this analysis, knowledge that consists of the discovery of the outside world by man is not the form of reality rather the truth of knowledge is indeed the presence of an incorporeal entity by another incorporeal entity or something's presence for something else (Tabatabaei, 2002). Then, knowledge represents the intuition of something by an intelligent knower through an evolutionary union.

According to Transcendent Theosophy, man uses the sensory means to pass through the material level and reaches the material level and passes it until he reaches the intellectual and intuitive level that contains the truth of the thing (Shirazi, 1999). It is here where the true knowledge is reached and then this intuitive truth is presented in a variety of forms and thus the representational and formal sciences take form and the reason for this is that the primacy is with the existence. Thus, presential knowledge is of primacy and is in intuitive form. On the other hand, the essence is a mentally posited entity and is a function of existence while essential relationship is mentally posited and representational and essential knowledge is based on the intuition.

To put the matter otherwise, presential knowledge is the capital of all types of knowledge and all forms of knowledge are traced back to presential knowledge (Tabatabaei, 1985). Reason is the faculty with which all notions and judgments are built and they form propositions (Tabatabaei, 1985). Thus representational knowledge and textbooks are not relating us with the world rather they should be used as a preliminary apparatus to reach intuition and when we reach intuition we express the intuitions in the language of representation.

### **Learning based on the Transcendent Theosophy's Notions of Relationship**

Learning is one of the issues that have been discussed in past hundred years from various points of view and there are numerous definitions of it. However, the most important issue in relation to it is that its essence is a philosophical and not empirical or psychological problem (Peters, 2010). This important point can help us to determine the meaning and essence of learning and it is better to demarcate learning instead of offering a definition of it. There are a number of significant issues regarding the recognition of learning: process-like nature of change, the object of change, agent of change, quality and quantity of change. The existing definitions are different in respect to these aspects.

Some definitions depict learning as a process while some others define it the product of the process (Pritchard, 2007). Some definitions suggest that learning is a change in behavior while some others define it as epistemic change (Pritchard, 2007). Some speak of behavioral potency (Hergenan and Allason, 2006) and in some cases the change is in rationality, ends, inclinations, actions and habits (Shariatmadari, 1989).

Some are seeking for the cause of change in experience and practice (Seif, 2009) while some speak of education and teaching and some insist on the interaction as key element of learning (Shabani, 1995). Some have spoken of a wide domain of resources (Shabani, 1995) and in some definitions the change is presented as a general transformation (Seif, 2009). Some have also spoken of the formation and control (Seif, 2009). In some definitions,

change has been discussed in general form (Seif, 2009). Some highlight the stability and being stable (Hergenan and Allason, 2006).

When a psychologist speaks of learning he speaks of a phenomenon that can be measured and controlled with sensory tools. But this is not the reason that would convince us to restrict the truth of learning to empirical phenomenon and this phenomenon is itself the effect of a priori states that pave the ground for the emergence of the phenomenon. Thus in this very stage philosopher without denying this phenomenal aspect of learning creates a framework within which the psychologist of learning can presuppose certain extra-empirical truths as regards learning and think more realistic and one can thus speak of the revision of the process of the learning from a philosophical point of view.

### **Learning as the process of harmony of man and the world**

One of the important presuppositions which is effective in the recognition of the learning is the very point that man and the world are in conflict with each other and we need to dominate the object of learning. Man and the world are harmonious and share the same direction and end and tread the same path. Can this path lead us to learning?

Since the emergence of Darwin's theory of evolution it has overshadowed the human sciences and there is always a hostile notion of nature and even many educational scholars has struggled to design methods for domination and defeat of the laws of nature. Thus learning has also been defined as a solution for empowering man for reaching an undefeatable status in this competition either through harmony or through contention. However, in Transcendent Theosophy, such an idea is denied from the very outset and man is always conceived as a meaningful being and on the other hand, the evolution of the world is deemed to be contingent upon the evolution of man. Thus the end of universe is fulfilled through man. By promoting his own existential grade man reaches his own end and in no way man and the world has any conflict and the relationship between these two is established in a harmonious space not in a contentious context.

In the course of learning neither man is dominated by the world nor the latter is dominated by man rather learning occurs when the man tunes himself in with the world and this harmony can happen in the existential layers (material, ideal and rational) of their existence. According to the Transcendent Theosophy, the world is not restricted in the natural and material and the learning and human relationship are not meaningful merely in the context of the mechanical world and the harmony with the sensible nature cannot fulfill the end of human learning in the same way that learning should not be just interpreted in the context of socialization because human values can be realized in a higher space.

### **Learning as an interactive process**

Learning is not the process of the relation of the living being with mechanical and dead nature and man is related with the world that is all alive. Thus learning is an interaction between two organic beings that have their own conditions of life and activity and this organic world can reveal various sides to man in different conditions.

### **Learning as the process of union with the transcendent realities**

Man has an incorporeal nature and to this very reason becomes related with the transcendent realities of the world and feels these realities in his relation with them and consider them as part of his own existence and this occurs through union. Then, learning is not an interaction with a strange entity rather in a certain stage man becomes united with the reality and finds the realities inside himself.

### **Learning as the process of personality dynamicity**

The change that happens due to learning is not restricted to the cognitive, ideological and behavioral aspects rather human nature is transited from one world to another world and the result of this transition can be revealed in the form of change in the aforementioned phenomena. Then, according to transcendent theosophy, learning is the process of existential initiation of man from one world to another. In other words, the whole personality of the individual is involved in the learning.

### **Learning as an intuitive process**

Human experiences has a superficial sensory stage that becomes related with the external world but human inner experience is the intuition that man has of himself and intuits the realities in the world inside. This self-intuition is the basis of true learning and propositional sciences are just a report of learning not the learning itself in the same way that behavioral change is a sign of learning not the learning itself.

### **Conclusion**

The result of this research was that Transcendent Theosophy has a special view of the relationship between man and the world and enumerates certain principles for this relationship: harmony of world and man, interactive state of this relationship, unity based state of this relationship, personality dynamicity in the relationship process, and intuitive nature of this unity. In the light of this approach learning process is redefined as follows: harmonic interaction of man and world that becomes united with the transcendent realities and reaches intuitive truth through personality dynamicity and its result can be seen in the phenomenological (representational), ideological and behavioral aspects of human existence.

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