

THE LIMITS OF INTELLECT

This culture encourages strong intellects—it offers respect to powerful intellects by conferring degrees or titles, by calling them experts. If we discourse at length about certain themes, use historical references, build logical arguments, we are considered to be people of substantial intellect. This is the way it appears outwardly, but we need to understand what things are like inwardly. Since the goal is to understand our relationship to God we need to ask ourselves, what is the importance of a strong intellect for someone who does not have one, what is its importance for someone who has?

When the intellect pushes and pulls us through certain situations, certain difficulties, we can become arrogant, the arrogance of ability, the arrogance of knowledge, the arrogance which says I can do this. Only if we lose this arrogance can we begin to understand that someone else is the doer. If we see that we are not doing the pulling and pushing, that the truth, if we are in touch with it, did not come from the study of history or logic, it did not come from the books we have read, it came because something let us bypass that arrogance of the intellect, bypass that part of ourselves which insists on being the doer.

An insistence on our own capacity creates veils for us, it subverts the belief that all responsibility for action belongs to God, creating a sense that I am the actor, I am the one doing things. To break with that way of seeing things, to break from the addiction of I can, I do, this is a lifetime of work, especially for those who have had success, much more difficult for them than for those who have not been successful. Worldly success

strengthens arrogance, it creates thicker veils which stop us from seeing the reality of God, it makes us see ourselves as the doers, the movers and shakers.

This is one reason why God said it is very difficult for a rich man to reach heaven, why Jesus said it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven. Wealth creates the impression for people that they can accomplish things, they can do things. On a worldly level money means they point their finger and things happen, or at least they appear to happen. For the person pointing it creates the illusion of power, he believes he is doing the moving, the pushing and pulling.

A strong intellect can be a blessing because it gives us the ability to do certain things in the world, but we have to consider how we use that ability, consider the consequences for our state of being. That blessing can be a curse if this tool given to us by God creates a separation between ourselves and our Lord, then it is no longer a tool, it is a veil. We should understand how this can happen, how our own ability can overwhelm us.

In moments when we are without the ability to do things, we draw on something we did not know we had, at such moments miracles occur, moments of reality occur, we are more capable of existing here and now. Suppose we have to provide a solution for a specific situation; if we are educated, studious, we go to our reserves of intellectual capacity, our computer banks, and pull out the appropriate response for that situation. We have used our mind to solve a problem, we have gone into the storage banks of what we know to deal with a difficulty, but when we deal with new situations which have no storage banks to refer to, we have to be in the moment, there is no past to turn to, we have no previous reference.

At that point of no reference, where there is no past to pull something from, we can pull from the source. This source can only be accessed from the place where we are, in that moment. The intellect does not live in the moment, it is an accumulation of things we have gathered, like a storehouse of food, a storehouse of gold. When we travel away from our storehouse we are in a different situation, we cannot use these things, we cannot use them because they are not available. When we are in a totally new situation we cannot use anything we have relied on because none of that is with us. It is not here because we are in a situation which is entirely new, something we have never experienced before, we have not made provision for, we have not made the necessary changes to deal with what lies before us.

This brings us to living in the moment. Curiously, here we might find a reason why travel is important. At home we have local arrangements, we have provided ourselves with storehouses in different areas which are never too far away. As we travel we keep finding ourselves in unfamiliar situations. If we are close to home we are not lost, but if we are far away we might be lost. When we are lost we behave differently, aspects of our character are revealed. We can see ourselves, see what we are like without the help of the world we are accustomed to, an entirely different situation.

When we are lost we call for help on something else, we have new experiences if we are no longer surrounded by the comfort of the familiar. To take ourselves from the comfort of the familiar, of being in control, we need to be in situations beyond our control—not that we are in control in the familiar, but we believe strongly that we are. As long as we think we are in control we will never realize we are not. The fainthearted of

this world will never know how lost they are because they stay close to home, close to what they know, they stay with what they think is safe.

We cannot stay forever with the things we consider safe, we have to travel to the edge of our understanding, to the edge of our existence, of our knowledge, to the edge of our intellect. We have to go to the edge, the precipice, we have to look at the precipice and jump. In that jump, that leap, we find out who we really are. If we do not do it we do not find out, we do not find out because we do not allow ourselves to find out. By defining our life and living within that unqualified definition we cannot find the truth. Every definition we accept is a veil separating us from reality, everything we define in this world, everything we give definition to is a veil separating us from reality. We define things and build our world with these definitions. Universities define things, professors define things, legal systems define things, everyone defines things.

There are things which have no definition, things which cannot be defined. Do we have the courage to step into the undefinable, a place where we deal with things we do not understand and do not know? Can we face situations without knowing what will happen, are we willing to step into places we have never been before, enter a world where we have never been before? The usual reaction is to back out, go back to what we know. But it is only by shedding the familiar that we can go to other places, yet we not only fear leaving what we know, we also seem to be addicted to all that, addicted to the definitions we have made of our world.

Just as any addict must go through withdrawal, we must also go through a period of withdrawal, pulling away from what we are used to. It may be painful or difficult, when we are in an unfamiliar place it can be uncomfortable, however we have to learn to

be comfortable with the unknown, on a new step or a new stage. Enlightened teachers lead us through new and uncomfortable situations, changing our way to approach things, introducing subtle layers of change. Our reaction to change is often no, why should I change, I like things the way they are now, I do not want to change. These are common responses, usual attitudes. If my mattress is comfortable why do I need a new one? Why should I sleep on the floor when a mattress is available, why should I sleep on a rock if there is a mattress? Why should I put myself in new situations so different from the patterns or routines I have established for myself?

The intellect deals with patterns, the stronger the intellect the sooner it sees the pattern and adjusts to it. Intellect does not like things without a pattern, it likes to say, *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, it likes predictability. We need to walk into an unfamiliar place where there is no predictability, where we have no habits and cannot see, where we do not know how to function. Until we develop the courage to go there we have placed limits on how far we will take this path, until we are willing to take uncomfortable risks we have limited how far we will take the journey to reality.

There is a decision to make, an analysis of the self is required: what comfort level do we need, what comfort level are we willing to let go? What level of discomfort are we willing to endure to move forward on the path? Which is more important, our level of comfort or moving towards understanding? These are basic decisions, basic questions we have to put to ourself.

Once we start asking such questions we notice that the things the world considers uncomfortable, the things the world tries to push away are the very places where individual progress on the path can take place, a reason why some say that God gives

those He loves difficulties. He is pulling us away from the known, pulling us into the unknown where we can rely only on Him. Only when we rely on Him alone can we be in touch with Him; as long as we rely on anything else we cannot, as long as we have an easy answer, an easy solution, one that we can pick from our intellect, that is as far as we will go.

When we do not have an easy answer, when there is no solution we are thrust into reliance on Him. Then we beg Him for help, we have lost the ability to help ourself, to find help in the known and familiar. In this place the veils are lifted, in this place we are changed, changed because we have no choice. When we think about it, about being pushed into a situation where our options are so limited we have to beg, we do not think this is what we want, but such moments exalt us. If we can live through such moments they change who we are, they make us new beings. These moments alter our essential Bible, how we see things, how we look at things, they can alter our world for the rest of our life. These moments can take us from the mundane to the holy. During these moments of not knowing we come in contact with the holy, we touch it because we have nothing else to touch.

We should think about this because it has a lot to do with the way we live our day to day life, going from one safe place to the next. Now long ago we had both agrarian and nomadic societies. Think about the difference between nomadic life and agrarian life. A nomad might not know where his next meal is coming from, he has to keep moving, driven by the need for food. He is driven in his search, there is no sitting still, a hard life. In an agrarian life we learn to depend on the sun, the rain and the temperature to make the crops grow, things we know are not in our hands.

We need to know what is not in our hands, respecting the One in whose hands things are. There is a difference, a reason why we need to pray and be obedient to our Lord. We need to know what He wants us to do and then do it, we need to stop thinking about ourself as we used to. We are all lost and the only one who can find us is our Lord.

Our Lord is looking for us. As long as we say here I am, here I am Lord, at your service, He will find us. We need to understand the state we are in to change ourself. May we be granted this understanding. May the veils be lifted so that we can know our Lord and know reality.