Sufi Principles of Meditation

Lecture 15: Certainty and Insight

“The man of spiritual insight hits his target with the first shot. He does not turn to interpretation or opinion or calculation.”

—Husayn bin Mansur Al-Hallaj
The Divine Law and the Way

“The divine Law is doing what you have been ordered to do. Haqiqah is bearing witness to what He has determined and ordained, hidden and revealed. I heard Abu Ali al-Daqqaq say that God's saying [in the Opening Surah, Al-Fatihah of the Qur'an] iyyaka nabudu—'You we worship'—preserves the outward practice, the divine Law. Iyyaka nastain—'to You we turn for help'—establishes the inner reality, the Way.”

—Al-Qushayri, Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism
I shall turn away from My signs those who wax arrogant upon the earth without right. Even if they were to see every sign, they would not believe in them. And if they were to see the way of sound judgment, they would not take it as a way, but if they were to see the way of error, they would take it as a way. That is because they denied Our signs and were heedless of them. As for those who deny Our signs and the meeting of the Hereafter, their deeds have come to nought. Are they recompensed for aught save that which they used to do? —Al-Ar’af 7:146-47
Discernment is direct perception of the truth without the process of reasoning. Discernment is comprehension without the necessity of reasoning. We must change the process of reasoning for the beauty of comprehension. [...]

We must only extract the golden fruit from reasoning.
The golden fruit of reasoning is comprehension.
Comprehension and imagination must replace reasoning.
Imagination and comprehension are the foundation of the superior faculties of the mind.
—Samael Aun Weor, *Igneous Rose*

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—Husayn bin Mansur Al-Hallaj
“Certainty is contemplation (mushahadah, witnessing).”
—Al Hasan al-Nuri
Certainty is assurance free from delusion. Certainty is of three kinds: knowledge of certainty (‘ilm al-yaqin), the eye of certainty (‘ayn al-yaqin), and the reality of certainty (haqq al-yaqin).

Knowledge of certainty is the knowledge based on reasoning, the eye of certainty is a knowledge based on perception, and the reality of certainty is real and true. Knowledge of certainty is achieved through studying, the eye of certainty is achieved through visionary disclosure of reality, and the reality of certainty is achieved through witnessing the reality.

Knowledge of certainty is the result of audition, the eye of certainty is attained as the result of inspiration, and the reality of certainty is the result of truly seeing what is evident (ayān).

Knowledge of certainty consists in the recognition of causes and causation, the eye of certainty consists in gaining liberation from causes and causation, and the reality of certainty is emancipation from all false expectation and discrimination.

—Abdullah Ansari of Herat, Stations of the Sufi Path
Abu Said al-Kharraz said, “One who sees with the light of spiritual insight, sees with the light of the Truth. The very substance of his knowledge comes from God, unmixed with either negligence or forgetfulness. Indeed, it is a judgment of Truth flowing from the tongue of a servant.” Abu Said’s expression “looking with the light of the Truth” means seeing by a light with which the Truth has favored him. Al-Wasiti said, “Spiritual insight means the rays of light that gleam in hearts and the solid establishment of a spiritual knowledge that conveys secrets of the invisible realm from one hidden place to another. Thus the possessor of insight witnesses things in the way that the Truth brings him to witness them, and he speaks what is in people’s minds.”

–Al-Qushayri, Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism
The Insight of Students and Gnostics

It is said that the spiritual insight of students is a thought that demands verification, but the insight of the gnostics is a verification that demands a reality. Ahmad bin Asim al-Antaki said, “When you sit with the people of truthfulness, sit with them in truthfulness, for they are the spies of the hearts. They will enter and leave your heart without your feeling it.” I heard Muhammad ibn al-Husayn say... that Abu Jafar al-Haddad said, “Spiritual insight appears as a spontaneous intuition that nothing can challenge. If contradictions arise, it is a simple thought, an event of the ego.”

–Al-Qushayri, Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism
Insight

From the field of Certainty the field of Insight is born. God, the Most High, says, ‘...when they remember God, they see’ (7:201).

Insight is being able to see, and it involves three things: having insight into God’s acceptance, having insight into whatever is required in respect to obediently following the Prophet, and having insight into Reality.

—Abdullah Ansari of Herat, Stations of the Sufi Path
Qur’anic Verses on Insight

Having insight into God’s acceptance lies in finding familiarity (āshnā‘i) with God, as we read in the Qur’ān, ‘Now proofs have come to you from your Lord, proofs to open your eyes, if any man will see, it will be for the good of his own soul’ (6:104).

Having insight into following the Prophet is being firm in following the Prophetic tradition, as we read in the Qur’ān that, ‘I do invite unto God, on evidence clear as the seeing with one’s eyes, I and whoever follow me’ (12:108).

Being insightful into reality is seeing your Lord with the eye of your heart, as we read in the Qur’ān that, ‘...the earth... mountains... and beautiful growth are to be observed and commemorated by every obedient servant who is turning to God’ (50:8).

—Abdullah Ansari of Herat, Stations of the Sufi Path
Having insight into God’s acceptance springs from contemplation of one’s experiences, and the signs and proofs of God in creation.

Having insight into following the Prophet lies in the Scripture [the Qur’ān], and the Tradition of the Prophet and the writings of the pious followers of the Prophet.

Being insightful into reality may be likened to the light illuminating the heart that calls upon you saying: ‘this is it,’ an echo in the ears singing: “I am here,’ and a clear sign on the path of declaring: “I am with you.’

—Abdullah Ansari of Herat,

*Stations of the Sufi Path*
Concerning the saying of God Most High, “Or one who was dead—we have brought him to life” (6:122), a Sufi said, “Someone who was dead of mind, but God Most High brought him to life with the light of insight, and set for him the light of divine manifestation and direct vision—he will not be like someone who walks, unconscious, with the people of unconsciousness.” It is said that when insight becomes sound, its possessor progresses to the level of contemplation (mushahadah).

—Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism*
1. Each day, develop your self-observation or inner accounting (muhasabah) from moment to moment. Also, extend your mindfulness: the length of time you are aware of yourself.

2. Every day, develop your meditative visualization. Adopt a meditation posture, relax completely, then focus 100% attention on your visualized object.