

Perceptive Faculties | Sense, Imagination, Estimation, Intellect, Heart

Introducing the Perceptive Faculties of the Human Soul

Do you remember your earliest childhood memory? Try to envision it in vivid detail. How does this memory make you feel? Joy, sadness, fear, hate, etc.? What are you feeling right now? What do you see now? What sounds do you hear?

The exercise above serves as our gateway into the realm of **human perceptive faculties**. Every action you did in this exercise stems from a unique source within our soul known as "faculty." Be it the love for your mother, hating injustice, or remembering past events, each originates from one of your **perceptive faculties**.

At birth, we have no perception of the material world around us, and we cannot establish a relationship with it. Therefore, we need some tools to decipher it. These tools are called perceptive faculties. As the name suggests, they help us know and perceive the world.

The sense perception faculty is the first one which becomes active, followed by imagination and estimation. And then the intellect and supra-rational faculty are actualized. As we grow up, we move towards perfection at each stage. The ultimate perfection happens when our supra-rational faculty is activated. However, some individuals remain trapped within the realms of imagination and estimation, so their supra-rational faculty and even their intellect do not mature. Such individuals fail to rise above animal existence and cannot reach spiritual perfection.

In this article, we will provide an overview of these perceptive faculties, with deeper explorations to follow in subsequent articles.

Sense Perception Faculty: The Gateway to the Soul

Our first perception of the world begins through our five senses. Each sense offers a distinct lens into the world. A person who lacks any of these senses lacks a kind of cognition. For example, a person who is born blind has an incomplete perception of the physical world because the brain obtains most of its environmental information through the sense of vision.

Our soul acts like a programming software. Input data from our senses—sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch—enter this system; these inputs are referred to as "sensory forms." These sensory forms are then given to the faculties of imagination and estimation, later analyzed by our intellect. In the end, the output of all these processes manifests itself in the heart and forms the truth of our existence.

Imaginal Faculty: The Soul's Camera

Following our sensory perception, even after the material form of sensory things fades, visual images of them remain in the mind, which are called "imaginal forms." These forms act as boundaries between the material and the immaterial worlds because they have certain properties of matter like size and color, but they are devoid of volume, weight, time, and place. For example, in the above exercise, you pictured a childhood memory, even though a considerable amount of time

had passed and you were currently not present in that location. You visualized it in the same place where it had happened.

The imaginal faculty perceives, stores, and preserves imaginal forms. It acts as the soul's camera; it captures and perceives the images of the creatures of the material world, and then it relays these perceptions to the intellective faculty. Our imaginal faculty can combine imaginal forms to make new images which do not exist in reality. For example, you can imagine a person who has wings or a neck that can rotate 360 degrees. Our imaginal faculty is very powerful. All inventions, artistic creations, beautiful poems, and captivating stories owe their existence to the imaginative minds of individuals with a potent imagination.

Estimative Faculty: Grasping Specific and Abstract Concepts

Some concepts are not material in nature and do not possess a specific form or shape; therefore, the five senses cannot perceive them. For example, if you were asked to draw injustice or love, you would not be able to do so unless you found a manifestation of them in the physical world. Understanding these abstract concepts is done by the intellective and estimative faculties. While the intellect grasps general concepts, estimation understands specific interpretations. For instance, the intellect understands the general concept of love, while your love for your mother is a specific concept perceived by the estimative faculty. These specific meanings are called "estimative forms." This faculty represents a lower level of the intellective faculty, and it also exists in animals: a sheep fears a wolf, or a dog shows affection to its owner.

Intellective Faculty: Perceiving General and Abstract Concepts

The intellective faculty perceives general concepts. For example, when we say the 'human being,' it encompasses a general and comprehensive concept that includes all humans, regardless of their appearance, historical era, or geographical location. Similarly, when we talk about peace, we refer to a general concept which encompasses peace at all times and places, without seeking specific instances of it. These general notions are known as "intellective forms," and the intellect perceives them. Since we have intellect, we are able to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, truth and falsehood. If we lacked intellect, our perception would be confined to details and estimations, and we could never achieve growth and excellence. Intellect also exists in angels.

The Heart: The Truth of Our Existence

Sense perception, imagination, and estimation are shared between humans and animals, so if we pay too much attention to these faculties, our animal dimension will grow strong. Although the intellect sets us apart from animals and makes us superior, it does not make us human. As previously mentioned, having intellect make us angels not humans.

What truly distinguishes us from other creatures is the supra-rational faculty, the human dimension, or the heart. Everything on earth or in the heavens has been designed to nurture this dimension of our existence.

We are shaped by our past; therefore, whatever we are today, our clothing, lifestyle, and mindset have greatly been influenced by what we have seen, heard, and eaten since the moment of our birth. We are all like a blank slate at the time of birth, a slate on which nothing has been written yet. But as soon as we receive our first perceptions of the world, the slate of the soul begins to record and capture, starting the process of "becoming" or our journey towards perfection.

All our perceptive faculties are interconnected on this path, and the health or illness of each faculty affects the others. Ultimately, the output of all these faculties pours into the heart. Therefore, if they remain healthy, the heart remains healthy, and if they become contaminated, the heart becomes impure.

Among the perceptive faculties of the soul, the five senses have a greater impact on maintaining the health of the heart compared to others. This is because sensory perceptions are the gateway to our soul; if they are contaminated, this contamination is gradually spread to higher levels, affecting imagination, estimation, the intellect, and the heart one after the other. We will discuss the concept of the "sound heart" more in the upcoming articles.

If you have any points or questions about perceptive faculties, please feel free to share them with us in the comments section.