

What is controlling the mind? Is it the Brain, or the Heart?

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Abstract

During centuries, human beings have been raising a key question on the exact role of our heart: is it concerned with the mind or is it only a blood pump? And in the latter option, is the brain the main part of the mind?

In the holy Quran, it is clearly stated that the Heart is the key organ of the mind, thoughts and wisdom (See surat Alaaraf and Alhadj). Moreover, during the ancient civilizations it was also admitted that the heart was the central system of the feeling and thoughts.

However, in the last centuries, the unique definition of the heart has become only medical and limited to the function of blood pumping.

Fortunately, recent research works in the field of neuro-cardiology have led to very interesting discoveries reinforcing the old theory showing the great role of the heart in mind and feelings.

Heart/Brain relationship with the mind

The famous question, concerning the actual location of the mind center or the feeling center, has not been solved yet.

In the holy Quran, this key point is often referred to as the heart, while in medical science it is supposed to be the brain.

So, is it the heart, the brain or something else?

In this context, *Rollin McCraty*, Director of the HeartMath research center, said: <<Most of us have been taught in school that the heart is constantly responding to “orders” sent by the brain in the form of neural signals. However, it is not as commonly known that the heart actually sends more signals to the

brain than the brain sends to the heart! Moreover, these heart signals have a significant effect on brain function – influencing emotional processing as well as higher cognitive faculties such as attention, perception, memory, and problem-solving. In other words, not only does the heart respond to the brain, but the brain continuously responds to the heart.>> said the HeartMath Institute Research Director.

Consequently, it appears that the ancient medical definition of the heart, supposed to be a simple blood pump, is misleading. In fact, several research experiments showed that the heart is also responsible for many emotional functions.

According to HeartMath research center, in the new field of neurocardiology, scientists have discovered that the heart possesses its own nervous system: a nervous network so sophisticated as to earn the description of an intelligent heart-brain. With more than 40,000 neurons, this heart-brain gives the heart the ability to sense, process information, make decisions, and even to show a type of learning or memory.

One of the conclusions of HeartMath institute (HeartMath LLC. www.heartmath.com) is as follows: “Although there is much yet to be understood, it appears that the age-old associations of the heart with thought, feeling, and insight may indeed have a basis in science.”

Now, when one read the holy Quran, we strangely discover that the heart is often referred to as the organ of feeling and wisdom, as one can see in the following verses:

a. First verse (chapter 7, verse 179):

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا. {الأعراف: من الآية 179}

Translation (chapter 7, verse 179): [Certainly We have winnowed out for hell many of the jinn and humans: **they have hearts with which they do not understand**, they have eyes with which they do not see, they have ears with which they do not hear. They are like cattle; indeed, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless].

b. Second verse (chapter 22, verse 46):

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِن تَعْمَى القُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ. {الحج: 46}

Translation (chapter 22, verse 46): [Have they not travelled through the land so that **they may have hearts by which they may exercise their reason**, or ears by which they may hear? Indeed, it is not the eyes that turn blind, but **it is the hearts in the breasts that turn blind!**].

If we observe the first verse, we notice an important phrase: “**they have hearts with which they do not understand**”, which involves that the heart represents the system of understanding.

Also, if we observe the second verse, we notice another important phrase: “**they may have hearts by which they may exercise their reason**”, which shows that the heart is the center of reasoning.

Again, in the same verse, the second sentence: “**it is the hearts in the breasts that turn blind**” clearly shows that the meaning of the term “heart” is the well-known “heart” that is inside the breast.

Hence, once again, recent scientific discoveries come together strengthening the knowledge embedded in the Quran and which was sent down 14 centuries before.

Conclusion

Even though the relationship between the heart, brain and the mind is an enigma, which is not completely resolved or even understood, it appears that the Quran sheds light on a lot of questions that were mistakenly answered by medical scientists. That is, it appears that the new scientific discoveries about the strong role of the heart in feelings, wisdom and reasoning are confirming the Quran hypothesis, which shows once again that this ancient book, dating from the 7th century, could not be a human invention at all.

References

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