

Knowledge

Theologians are unanimous about knowledge being one of the perfect self-attributes of Allah, and that “al-Aalim العالم” is one of His Supreme Names (Attributes). No two persons contest it, so in order to explain, we have to prepare for the topic with a precept.

What is Knowledge?

Knowledge is defined as an image resulting from a thing on the mind’s page. Or it is a reflection coming out on the mind when one is in contact with the outside. Men of wisdom have derived this definition from the sciences in circulation among people.

But this definition is incomplete because it does not cover some sections of knowledge. Knowledge is categorized as either incidental or ever-present. The said definition suits the first rather than the second. Let us explain both categories for you.

When man casts a look at the outside and observes the cosmos that surrounds him, the trees and the rocks, the sun and the moon, etc., he earns a realization, and the outside thing is realized only through the mediation of an image between the person who realizes and the thing which he realizes. This image is extracted from the outside through tools of knowledge, and then it moves to the centers of comprehension.

Trees are identified when they are exhibited, the image is known through the self, whereas man is the one who knows. We have called the thing as being in the outside known through exhibiting and the image as being known through the self because the outside is known to us via this image, without it, the link between man and reality is severed.

In other words, the outside reality is not present with us in this feature because the outside thing has an outside effect such as heat coming out of fire, wetness from water, weight from rocks and iron, etc. It is known that the outside thing does not come to our minds with these characteristics. For this reason, the outside thing has become known through exhibiting and the image is known through the self due to man

always experiencing mental images.

Thus, you come to know the definition of incidental knowledge. It is the knowledge in which the outside reality is known not by itself but through the mediation of an exact image of it. All tools of the senses are employed in the service of this knowledge. It depends on three pillars: one who realizes, the outside, and the image. Do not think that this is an admission of the originality of the image and of the outside being a branch thereof.

There is no doubt that the matter is the opposite. The outside is the origin and the image is extracted from it, telling us about it. But what the mind practices and employs is the image that it has, not the same outside. This mental image is its only means to realize the outside and to be aware of it.

Up to here, you have come to know the definition of incidental know-ledge. As regarding the ever-present knowledge, it is the realizing person being aware of the presence of what he realizes without the mediation of anything, and it has two parts:

1. There is no mediation between the realizing person and what he realizes, while the first is not being aware of the reality. This knowledge is reached through the same image that is extracted from the outside. This is so because the outside is realized through the image. As for the image itself, it is known by the self, and there is no mediation between it and the realizing person. When one comes in contact with the outside through the mental image, he will achieve two types of knowledge: One is incidental in its capacity as knowledge of the outside through the image method, and one is present by regarding his knowledge as having been attained through the same image, its presence and reality being realized by the individual.

Thus, you come to know an essential difference between both norms of knowledge. What is known in the incidental knowledge is not present to the one who realizes it in its reality, as you have come to know. With the ever-present one, what is known is present with him in its reality, and this is similar to the mental knowledge image. Through its reality, which does not depart from being a mental existent thing, it is present to man. Thus, the incidental knowledge has three branches, whereas what is ever-present has two in as far as this part is concerned.

2. Knowledge in which there is no mediation at all between the person who realizes it and what he realizes is united through the self and is different according to noticing and considering. It is like man knowing and realizing his own self. The reality of every human being is present by itself with him, not absent from him. He sees himself rationally, senses it through his senses and conscience, and sees it present with him without any mediation between the realizing person and the self that he realizes.

In this case, knowledge becomes unilateral, not bilateral and tripartite as is the case in the first part (above). It is then that the one who realizes and what he realizes are both united, and man's self becomes knowledge and a discovery. Among the present knowledge is man's awareness of his feelings, happiness and pain. They all are present without any mediating image.

Thus, you come to know about the weakness of the conclusion about man's presence having taken place through his own thinking, so it is said, "I think, therefore I exist." It seeks evidence from the presence of thinking to indicate the presence of the thinker. [1](#) The aspects of weakness are:

First: Man's knowledge of himself is a necessity, it does not need a proof. Man's contemplation is not clearer than his self-awareness, his being aware of his knowledge of his entity, of himself.

Second: The one seeking evidence has admitted the result at the beginning of his evidence when he said "*I* think." He has taken his presence as being pre-supposed, taken for granted, and then he has tried to find evidence of it.

Inclusive Definition

In the light of what we have stated, i.e. dividing knowledge to incidental and present, it is accurate to say that knowledge, in the absolute sense, is "the presence of what is known with the one who knows it." This definition covers knowledge in both its types. [2](#) Yet what is present in the first is the mental image rather than the outside reality. In the second, it is the same reality of what is known without any mediator between it and the one who knows it.

The mental image in the incidental knowledge is present with man, not absent from him. Also, the same man in the present knowledge is present with him, within him, since it is standing on its own. It is called knowledgeable. Since it is exposed to itself, not absent from it, it is regarded as being known. Since there is presence, not absence, this presence is called knowledge.

This definition is comprehensive, inclusive of all types of resulting knowledge in what is possible and what is a must. If you grasp this precept, the research in His knowledge, Glory to Him, stands once on its own and once due to His actions (the things that are outside His entity).

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, of Himself

His knowledge, Praise is due to Him, of His entity is not incidental, i.e. He takes the image from the Self and witnesses it through such a way. The reason is that such type of knowledge cannot be known about Him, as we will see later. Rather, it is ever-present, i.e. He is present by Himself and for Himself. Two evidences prove it:

First: One who grants perfection cannot lack it.

He, Praise belongs to Him, created mankind and the world by Himself through His ever-present knowledge. One Who grants such perfection has to create it in the best of way, the most perfect, because one who lacks perfection cannot grant it. He creates it the best that it can be. Although we are not familiar, and we will never be familiar, with the particularity of the ever-presence of His self with Himself, we refer to this knowledge as "the presence of His entity is with Him, and His knowledge of it

without an intermediary is obvious.”

His knowledge, Glory to Him, of Himself

His knowledge of Himself, Glory belongs to Him, is not incidental, that is, His takes the image from the self and witnesses it through this way. This is not so because this type of knowledge does not apply to Him as you will come to know. Rather, it is present, that is, He is present for His own self. There are two matters that prove it:

First: One who bestows perfection cannot be lacking it.

He, Glory belongs to Him, created man, who is aware of his presence at present. One Who grants this perfection has to be creating it in the best and most perfect way because one who lacks perfection cannot be the one who bestows it; He surely is the One Who creates it as best as can be. Although we are not, and we will never be, familiar with the particularity of His presence by Himself, we term this knowledge as “the presence of His entity with Him and His knowledge of it without a mediation in-between.”

Briefly, one who enjoys intellectual commonsense does not find it rational to think that one who grants perfection can be without it, lacking it; otherwise, the one who receives the boon will be better than the one who grants it, and the one who is deriving the benefit is better than the one who grants the benefit. Since all possibilities have been proven to be rendered to Him, including the Knowledgeable entity itself, it becomes a must that the One Who creates this perfection should be knowledgeable by Himself, knowledge which is innate, not superfluous.³

Second: Factors of absence and disappearance of the self are non-existent.

To explain, we say that since the material existent is present in quantity, ratios and parts that have no collective presence, since its parts do not gather in one (and the same) status, some of its parts are absent from others. So, it is not right for the material existent, due to its being a matter, to be aware of itself by itself due to the absence that controls its own parts.

Absence contrasts the presence of the self. It prevents the attainment of the self-knowing itself (by itself). So, if the one who is present is above being absent, taken apart, his parts can be put together, a simple existent, as a whole, rather than parts and particles, his entity is ever-present, and it has an absolutely complete presence. Thus, we see the presence of our selves by our own selves, but not in the sense of some parts of our bodies being present, but in the sense we have the presence of a human reality expressed by the term “I” which is above quantity, parts and particles.

So, if we suppose there is an existent at a high level of abstraction and simplicity, having no absence factors, which are among the features of a material being, his entity is present with him. This is the meaning of His knowledge, Glory to Him, of His own Self, that is, an innate presence that stands by itself

in the most perfect way because it is above being material, a composition and a division as you will see the proof for His simplicity when we discuss the negative attributes.

There are other proofs that we have avoided in order to be brief. Yet some folks deny that He knows through His own self, and here is the explanation of their belief.

Self-Knowledge Requires Variation

Those who deny His knowledge, Glory to Him, of Himself by saying that knowledge is a standing ratio between the one who knows and the thing which he knows, and the ratio is usually between two different things, and the ratio of the thing to itself is impossible, since there is no variation here, nor is there duality. Briefly, the one thing, I mean the Almighty, Glory to Him, is One, a ratio cannot be imagined as existing in Him.

Critics have rebutted it with this gist: Multiplicity and variation exist in incidental knowledge because it is the adding of the one who knows to the outside through the mental image, so in it, the known image is not the same as the outside identity. As regarding present knowledge, there is no requirement in it to have external variation; rather, multiplicity suffices for consideration.

For example, He, Glory to Him, has an entity that is never absent from Himself. So, He knows, and since His entity is ever-present, it is known.

In other words, the terms of: knowledge, one who knows, something known, etc. are used for the sake of calculations and considerations. Considering the self's revelation to the self is called "knowledge", and the self is exposed to the self is called "a piece of knowledge." Considering its familiarity with itself is called "knowledgeable." If you consider how man gets to know himself, it may be easier for you to believe in all of this.

What we have stated is due to the critics saying that differentiation may be through the self, and it may be through a sort of consideration. Here, the Self of the Almighty, since it is knowledgeable and is different from it because it is known, this suffices for knowledge to be attached to it.[4](#)

His knowledge, the Glorified One, of Things before Creating Them

His knowledge, Glory belongs to Him, of things is of two types: pre-creating knowledge, post-creating knowledge. The first is the one that we see to be one of the most important issues in the science of logic. Here is the proof for it:

Knowledge through Causality is Knowledge of Causer

Knowing the cause, as a cause, is knowing the causer, the one that caused it. Knowing the objective, as such, is knowing the existence of its effect. What is meant by knowing the objective is knowing the method which became a principle for the presence of the effect and for its taking place. In order to explain this principle, we use the following examples.

Knowing Causality is Knowing the Causer

Knowing the cause, as a cause, is knowing the causer, the one that causes it. And knowing the reason, as a reason, is knowing the effect. What is meant by the cause is knowing how it became a principle for finding the effect, for making it happen. In order to explain this principle, let us provide the following examples:

A. An astrologer who knows the astrological laws and cosmic computations gets to know that the eclipse of the sun or of the moon or the like takes place at a certain time or in a particular situation. His knowledge of these eventualities is nothing but his knowing the cause behind them.

B. The physician who knows the cases and types of the pulse as well as the conditions and situations of the heart can predict what will happen to a patient in the future. Such knowledge is nothing but his knowing the cause as such.

C. A pharmacist who knows the particularity of poison when one drinks it can inform us that the life of such a person will end at a certain period of time.

If you come to know these examples, we say that the world, all of it, is the effect of His Presence, Glory belongs to Him, and has no cause other than Him, Praise belongs to Him. Knowing the self is knowing the way that caused the world to come to be, the cause behind its existence.

In other words, knowledge the self, the indications of which you have already come to know, is knowing the way the entire cosmos came to be, and knowing this way is attached to knowing the effect. This evidence is based on precepts taken for granted by the theologians to the summary of which we would like to point out as follows:

First: The world, in all its parts, relies on Him, the most Praised One that He is, and this is the requirement for the Unity of the Creator, and that there is no creator other than Him.

Second: The causality of something is that it includes a particularity that requires the effect producing it, and it definitely positively requires the presence of the effect in the outside so as without this particularity, the effect will not come to be. For this reason, there is a special connecting link between the standing particularity relevant to the cause and the existence of the effect that requires the existence of the effect. Had it not been for that particularity, the ratio of the effect to the cause, and to others than

lack it, would have been equal, although it by necessity is nil.

The particularity that exists in the fire, which brings about heat, is not the same particularity that is present in the water, which brings about wetness.

Third: His effect, the Almighty, on others is through His own Self, not through an incidental particularity, an entity that is superfluous to Him. He by Himself is the doer of everything, as is required by the simplicity of His own Self and His lack of need for anything at all (the superfluous particularity) beside Himself. The most Praised and Exalted One by necessity is the doer on His own; He does not act through a method attached to His own self.

Fourth: Knowing the entity that requires a thing is knowledge of the thing itself.

This discussion results in concluding that the Knowledge of the Almighty, by itself, is the knowledge of His particularity, entity, and it is inseparable from Him, I mean His knowledge of things requires such a connection, a link.

Great men of logic and philosophy have pointed out to the above. The head of theologians, Mulla Sadra (Sadr ad-Deen), has said, “The Self of the Praised One, as the cause behind all things, due to the latter’s presence, and the knowledge of the cause requires knowing their effects; realizing them from this standpoint requires their arrangement one after the other.”⁵

The wise Sabzawari refers to the same in a poem in which he says:

*One who knows things other than Him and who relies on Him
Testifies to the cause behind the knowledge as one
Of knowing the effect, an unavoidable must.*⁶

Precision and Perfection Prove His Knowledge of What He Makes.

Noticing any simple or complex set (an electronic pen or a computer) tells us that its maker is one who knows the laws and relations that govern it. A huge encyclopedia points out to the knowledge of those who wrote and compiled its texts.

In other words, the existence of the effect indicates the existence of the cause. Its details lead to its being particular to its own cause. The precision of composition of the things that exist in the world, as a creation of Allah, Glory to Him, prove that their Maker is knowledgeable of what He creates, familiar with what He makes. The details that make up a created thing lead us to the Attributes of the One Who has created it.

This evidence has been of interest to thinkers. What is made indicates, from the standpoint of arrangement of parts, that is, the parts are made for each other in order to serve the purpose of what is made, that it did not result from a maker who is not familiar with these details. Rather, it was made by a

maker who organized it for a purpose, so he has to be knowledgeable of it. If man looks at a house, he will realize that the foundations were made for the wall and the wall was made for the ceiling, etc. He will conclude that the house was built by one who is knowledgeable of the building industry.

The conclusion is that whatever is made, its precision, minute details, marvelous system, certain and exact amounts tells us that its maker is fully familiar with these laws and symbols, knowledgeable of the measurements and systems the made item needs. From this onset, the cosmos, starting from the infinite atom and ending at the gigantic constellation, from the tiny cell to the largest planet, the systems and the very precise plans, tells us that the Creator of the cosmos is fully knowledgeable of all the secrets and laws it contains. It tells us that it is impossible for Him to be ignorant of them.

The Holy Quran has referred to this evidence when it said:

“Should He not know, the One Who created, the One Who understands the finest mysteries (and) is well acquainted (with them all)?!” (Qur’an, 67: 14).

The Almighty has also said,

“We have created man and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him” (Qur’an, 50: 16).

Our Imam, the Commander of the Faithful (as), has said, “He knows what shall be and what was; He created the beings with His knowledge, initiated them with His wisdom.”⁷

Imam Ali ibn Mousa al-Ridhah (as) has said, “Praise be to the One Who created creation with His might, perfected what He created with His wisdom and placed everything in its place with His knowledge.”⁸

It is to this evidence that al-Tusi, the critic, pointed out in abstracting belief saying, “... And precision is evidence of knowledge.”

So, you say that some animals may perform precise actions in organizing their homes and ways of living, as is the case with the bees, ants and many beasts and birds, although they are not masters of knowledge.

I say in response: The precision in action, which we have stated, proves that the doer’s knowledge is a mental case not liable for specificity. As for these animals, their work is the result of inspiration from their Creator as Quranic texts have stated. The most Praised One has said,

“And your Lord taught the bees to build their cells in hills, on trees, and in (men’s) habitations. So eat of all the produce (of the earth), and find the spacious paths of your Lord with skill: From within their bodies, a drink of varying colors comes out in which (there) is healing for men: Truly (there) is a Sign in this for those who ponder” (Qur’an, 16:68-69).

Interpreting these wonderful actions, some people may render them to animal instincts. This does not contradict what we have stated. Mute instincts are no more than a blind matter that cannot find something balanced except when there is a higher command that leads them to what they are required to do. And this interpretation has room somewhere else.

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, of Things After Creating Them

You have come to know evidences about His knowledge of Himself and of His actions before creating things, and it is time now to look into His knowledge, Glory to Him, of His actions after creating and forming them. In this regard, we contend ourselves with both following evidences:

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, is Action

The external things end up in their status of existence at Allah, Glory to Him, and everything ends up at Him. Every effect is present at its cause, not being absent from it, nor is it obstructed from it. You have come to know the fact that knowledge is the presence of what is known with the one who knows it.

In other words, every existent thing other than Him is possible, be it is an essence and is incidental, external or mental. All are colored with the color of possibility, and there is no avoiding relying on it. Reliance is only presence with Him, His being fully acquainted with it, Glory to Him.[9](#)

In order to explain this evidence, we say this: Every possible thing is affected, in its coming into being, by Allah, the Glorified One. The effect has no meaning other than being attached to its cause and its standing for it in reality like the literal meaning of a noun. Just like the literal meaning, in all its affairs, it stands through the meaning of the noun, so is the effect. It stands through its cause. Just as the literal meaning being cut off from the name ends its presence, so is the effect when detached from the cause: It ends up at its being non-existent.

If you say, "I started my course from Basra," there are noun meanings: course and Basra, and there is a literal meaning which is the starting of the course from that city. But the second meaning stands on both sides; without them, it cannot stand on its own. Similarly is the effect, that is, the possible implementation of presence. It stands through the one that implements it, not through its own actuality other than its being attached to its cause.

Otherwise, it will be required to be independent, and this, if we suppose it is possible, trails it. If there is such a thing, it will be outside its own cause. Getting out of its limits requires independence that cannot exist with something being probable. There must be caution in its regard and never abandon such caution since all things are present with Him. Presence is knowledge: You have come to know that knowledge is the knower possessing what is known.

Thereupon, the world, just as it is His doing, so is His knowledge, Glory to Him. In order to bring the picture closer to comprehension, notice the mental images created by the soul on the mind's stage. They

are the doing of the self and, at the same time, they are knowledge of them. The self does not need, in order to know these images, other images.

Likewise, the self encompasses these images, and they stand through the One Who undertakes them, who creates them. Such is the world in its precision and magnanimity: a creation of Allah, Glory to Him, which is sustained by Him. He fully encompasses it.

Expanse of His Presence is Evidence of His Knowledge

Irrefutable evidences have shown that His existence, Glory to Him, is above having a body, a matter, time and place. It is above any time or place restriction. Something like this has an unlimited and endless presence. Limits and restrictions are outcomes of a thing being restricted by time and place.

What exists in time and place does not go beyond the frame of its environment. As for the thing that is above these two restrictions, nothing limits it, nor is there anything that confines it. A thing the condition of which is as such knows everything and is not confined to anything. Rather, it encompasses everything.

In order to bring an example that brings the picture closer to comprehension, let us say that one who sits in a room and looks to the outside from a small opening in the wall does not see but a portion of the passing train. He is the opposite of one who stands on the roof or looks from a higher angle, such as from a plane.

Based on this principle, the more one is stripped of restrictions, the more and more knowledge of things he will have. Allah is above time and place, above each and every limit and restriction. Nothing encompasses Him that is located within the frame of time and place. Rather, He encompasses everything that takes place on the stage of existence.

Imam Ali (as) has pointed out to some of what we have stated saying, "Allah, the most Exalted and the most Great, is the 'where' of the 'where'; there is no 'where' for Him. He is too great to be confined to a place, He is everywhere without getting in contact with a thing, without neighboring a thing. His knowledge encompasses it; nothing is empty of His management."

We are going to recite some holy verses as we research His knowledge, Glory to Him, of the details.

Levels of His Knowledge, Glory to Him

It has become obvious from the above that His knowledge of things, Glory to Him, is of two levels:

First: He knows them before bringing them into existence, and you have already come to know the evidence for it.

Second: He knows of them after getting them out of the status of the self, and you have already come

to know its evidence. All this is based on philosophical proofs. But the Holy Quran reminds us of His knowledge through manifestations which it sometimes expresses as the Preserved Tablet, other times as the Unfolded Scroll, a third time as the Clear Record, a fourth time as the Well-Guarded Book, a fifth time as the Guarding Book, a sixth time as the Book of Destiny, a seventh time as simply the Book, an eighth time as the Clear Imam, a ninth time as the Mother Book and a tenth time as the Tablet that blots out and confirms.

To the Preserved Tablet, the most Praised One refers saying,

“Nay! This is a glorious Qur’an, (inscribed) in a preserved tablet” (Qur’an, 85:21-22).

To the Unfolded Scroll He refers saying,

“By a decree inscribed in a scroll unfolded” (Qur’an, 52:2-3).

Referring to the Clear Record, He says,

“... nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered) but is (recorded) in a clear record (for those who can read)” (Qur’an, 6:59).

To the Well-Guarded Book He refers saying,

“That this indeed is a most honorable Qur’an, in a well-guarded Book” (Qur’an, 56:77-78).

To the Guarding Book, the Almighty refers saying,

“We already know how much of them the earth diminishes: With Us is a record guarding (the full account)” (Qur’an, 50:4).

To the Book of Destiny (term of death), He refers saying,

“Nor can a soul die except by God’s leave, the term being fixed in writing” (Qur’an, 3:145).

When He simply refers to the Book, He says,

“We gave (clear) warning to the Children of Israel in the Book...” (Qur’an, 17:4).

The Holy Quran makes a reference to “the Clear Imam” in Surat Ya-Sin:

“We have taken account of all things in a clear Imam” (Qur’an, 36:12).

To the “Mother Book”, the Almighty refers saying,

“And indeed it is in the Mother Book, in Our presence, high (in dignity), full of wisdom” (Qur’an, 43:4).

And to the Tablet that blots out and confirms, the Almighty refers saying in His Book,

“Allah blots out or confirms whatever He pleases: The mother of the Book is with Him” (Qur’an, 13:39).

We have contended ourselves with referring to each Book with one verse although there are many.

Scholars of exegesis have differed among themselves about the truth of these books and their details. Some say that they are stripped of matter and material, so much so that it is right to regard them as manifestations of His endless knowledge. And there are those who say that they are material tablets and books in which things, their life spans and periods are recorded by way of symbols. Both opinions cannot be taken for granted. Rather, believing in them and looking into their exegesis must be done through the Book (Quran) and the authentic Sunnah.

It is also regarded, among the manifestations of His knowledge, is decree and destiny that we will discuss in a special chapter by His leave.

Two interesting items have to be pointed out here:

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, is Presential, not Incidental

You have come to know the difference between the incidental and the presential types of knowledge, so we do not wish to repeat ourselves. But what must be pointed out is that His knowledge, Glory to Him, of His own self and of His action is presential. As for His knowledge of His entity, it is due to such entity never being absent from Him, it is always present with Him. As for His knowledge of things, you have come to know that it is of two types.

First: Knowledge of the self is knowledge of the calculation that results in things, and knowledge of such calculation is knowledge of things. Thus, it becomes clear that His knowledge, Glory to Him, of Himself reveals in detail the things in the way that is appropriate for Him.

Second: The presence of probabilities whenever necessary. What is probable stands through the presence of the Creator, Glory to Him, in its taking place and in its sustenance. His being self-sustaining, Glory to Him, is like the meaning of the letters composing a name. This type of existence does not permit absence, for the latter spells its non-existence and annihilation. So, if the possible existents have this characteristic, how can one imagine that He is separate from them?

It is nothing but supposing their non-existence and non-presence. Thereupon, the world, in all its particles, is the outcome of His own action, Glory to Him, of His own bringing it into being. At the same time, it is present with him. Such presence is His knowledge. Allah’s knowledge and His action are two different concepts, but they are in agreement on the outside.

As regarding whether or not He has beyond the present knowledge an incidental knowledge,

researching it is the task of detailed books. Peripatetic philosophers have claimed that He, Glory to Him, has an incidental knowledge that they label as painted images.

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, of Details

It is amazing how some philosophers go as far as denying His knowledge, Glory to Him, of details. They are influenced by some flimsy misconceptions. You will be familiar with the answers to some of them. Carefully discerning what we have stated about the probable existents, you will find it obvious that His knowledge, Glory to Him, of the details is quite clear. Its reality is clear if you understand how creation is, how existence is only due to the outgiving of Allah, Glory to Him, and here is its explanation:

The cosmos, with everything it incorporates, from the atom to the constellation, regenerates; it is always changing, not only in its incidental characteristics and outer shapes but also in its essence and entity. What appears to the onlooker to be fixed, stable and immovable in the natural world is actually the fault of the senses. The reality is different. In all its atoms, matter is subject to alteration, change and flow in every time and place.

The meaning of change in the world of the matter is the regeneration of its existence, the flowing of its coming to be time and over again. Every material phenomenon is preceded by a time void. The presence of matter, which came to be through a gradual and flowing process, is like a spring the water of which continuously gushes out. It does not have a presence, firmness, immobility and stability.

If creation and existence are the outcome of a gradual and sequential process, and the effect cannot come out of the limits of its cause, it seems that the world, in its atoms and particles, as it was made by Allah Almighty, is known to Him. Gradual outpouring and presence in the form of a gradual process which He, Glory to Him, has set up, necessitates His knowledge, Glory and Exaltation belong to Him, of the outer details.

Deniers' Misconceptions

You have already come to know that His knowledge of the particulars, Glory to Him, and the rest of discussion in analyzing the misconceptions raised in this field, and here are their explanations:

First Misconception: Knowledge of Details Inheres Change in His Knowledge

They have said that if He, Glory to Him, knows the details that go on in the cosmos, it becomes mandatory for His knowledge to change according to the change of what is known. Otherwise, conformity would have been non-existent. Since time details change, and had they been known to Allah Almighty, this would have necessitated change to His knowledge, which is impossible.

This has been explained by *allama* Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani who says, "Some of them have denied His being knowledgeable of the details according to the changing partial variable; rather, He knows them as

things that are comprehensible essences. Their argument is that had He known that Zaid was sitting in this house, after his departure, when His first knowledge remains, becomes ignorance, and if is removed, change becomes a must.”[10](#)

[Misconception Analyzed](#)

This misconception is extremely weak, and its rebuttal is:

First: The revocation might. If knowledge of details requires it to change when what is known changes, it also becomes a must to change its ability due to its being relevant to details, while the ability is one of the characteristics of the self. So, what is the answer in the ability aspect, and what is the answer in the knowledge aspect?

Second: Through resolution. Our knowledge of events that are in various periods of time is knowledge of time, as for His knowledge, the most Exalted One that He is, it is not conditioned by time at all. There is no present, past and future here. These adverbs are relevant to time when measured according to time-related existents, the time in which one lives. When one does something, it is said that he is doing it during a particular time. What he did is labeled as past. And what he will do is called future.

As for what exists outside the frame of time, environment and place, it cannot be imagined in His regard that there is any past, present and future. Allah, Glory to Him, knows all fractional events as a whole, not with regard to some of them taking place in the present, some in the past and some in the future. Rather, He knows them through knowledge that is inclusive, one that is above being subjected to time conditions.

In other words, since the Almighty does not occupy a space (just as He is never subject to time), relating Him to all places alike is not by measuring them with Him so as one would say that it is near, distant, medium. Thereupon, His relevance to all things, in all times, is one and the same. What is present since time immemorial, and what remains forever, is attributed to Him and there is nothing in His knowledge that “was”, “is” and “will be”.

Rather, they all are present with Him in all their details but not with regard to time having anything to do with them according to their three characteristics. They cannot be applied to Him, the most High. Such knowledge is not variable but continuous, such as the knowledge of totalities.

In order to bring this closer to comprehension, we bring about this example. If the street is full of cars that pass one after the other, and if someone is looking at them from a narrow window, he sees each moment a passing car. The cars will then, relevant to him, are of three types: one has already passed, one is now passing and one is yet to pass. This division is sound as related to him in this situation.

Based on this premise, the existent which is above the restrictions of time and the limits of place is familiar with all things once, and the changing existents are painted with the hue of stability in as far as He is concerned.

Knowledge in the example brought while explaining the misconception, that is, Zaid sitting for a while at home, then he came out of it at another time, is relevant to sitting and coming out once and there is no sense here for advancing and delaying.

[Another Way to Resolve Misconception](#)

This misconception is based on the supposition that His knowledge of things, Praised is He, is incidental through the drawn images that stand through Him, Glory to Him, the change in what is known will then be concurrent with the images that stand through Him. This will require His essence being the place for change and alteration.

But if we say that His knowledge of the details, Glory to Him, is presential, that is, the things, in their outer identities and self realities, are the products of His own doing, Glory to Him, and at the same time His knowledge, there is no objection, then, to say that a change has taken place to His knowledge, Glory to Him, as a result of a change that took place to the existent things.

This is so because the knowledge that depends on His knowledge is the one described as being innate. As for the operative knowledge, that is, the knowledge that stands in the position of an action, there is no objection if it changes as His action changes. The knowledge that stands in the position of the action is no more than the knowledge of the same action and nothing else. It is to this conclusion that the critical-Tusi refers when he says, “The changes of additions is possible.”¹¹

In other words, change is what is added, not in the entity itself. What is meant by additions is His action, which is His knowledge. There is no objection for a change to take place in the additions and attachments while no change takes place to the entity itself.

[Second Misconception: Realizing Details Needs a Mechanism](#)

Realizing the details needs material tools and physical mechanisms, while the most Glorified One is above having a body or physical requirements.

The answer to this misconception is obvious. Knowledge of details acquired through material tools is the affair of one who is not familiar with how to perpetuate their maintenance, and things do not stand through him but are present in his possession, such as humans. Man’s knowledge is through extracting images through sense-related tools. Therefore, realizing details depends on these tools and on their functions.

When it comes to the Almighty, since His knowledge encompasses all things, and since He truly sustains them, His knowledge does not depend on tools and on their functions.

It is to this answer that the virtuous al-Qoshaji refers as he explains abstraction saying, “Realizing details needs a physical mechanism if the knowledge (of them) comes through extracting images. But if it is a pure addition, without an image, there is no need for it.”¹²

Third Misconception: Knowledge of Details Requires Plurality

Knowledge is an image that is equivalent to what is known and drawn to the one who knows it. There is no doubt that things have various images. The abundance of known things requires abundance of the single self from all aspects. [13](#)

The answer to this misconception, as you have already come to know, is clear, too. It is based on His knowledge of things being drawn within Him, Glory to Him, similarly to things drawn within the human self, so this requires plurality in the single self. You have already come to know that His knowledge of things is not like that. Rather, the outside identities are present with Him, with His Self, without any images, and this type of knowledge is stronger than that in which things produce images.

Fourth Misconception: Knowledge of Details Requires Turning What is Probable into a Must

If knowledge of a variable takes place prior to its variation, such knowledge becomes a must. Otherwise, it is possible there is no such requirement. Hence, His knowledge, the most Exalted One, turns into ignorance, which is impossible. [14](#)

In other words, the knowledge of the most Exalted One is not relevant to events prior to their taking place. Otherwise, this will require the events being both possible and a must at the same time. As for the first, it is due to their taking place. As for the second, without Him, it would be possible that they would not have existed; thus, His knowledge turns into ignorance.

The answer to this misconception is obvious. What is impossible is the combination of what can by itself be and also what must by itself be. As for the combination of what by itself is possible with what must be (existent) as a must through others, there is no doubt about it. The effect, in the full presence of the cause, is by itself probable and a must through others.

Thereupon, if His knowledge, Praise belongs to Him, hinges on the presence of an event at a particular time, His knowledge, Praise belongs to Him, does not get Him out of the self probability. The ultimate requirement for His knowledge (of something) being in agreement with the reality is that something exists through something else, whether the cause behind it is Allah, Glory to Him, or someone else, and it is in agreement with what is probably by its own self.

Briefly, the event that takes place during a certain circumstance does not get out of the limit of probability after being attached to His knowledge, the most Exalted One, and the full cause for it takes place. The creation, all of it, is possible by itself while, at the same time, it is a must through someone else.

The Holy Quran and the Expanse of His Knowledge, the Most

Exalted One

From what we have already stated, we can grasp the greatness of the (Quranic) phrase that says, "Allah's knowledge encompasses everything." It means that the Almighty knows what has already passed, what will come to pass, and what is in existence in the universe, the secrets and the symbols.

The most Praised One says,

"The keys of the unseen, the treasures that none but He knows, are with Him. He knows whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but with His knowledge: There is no grain in the darkness (depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is (recorded) in a clear record" (Qur'an, 6:59).

The most Praised One also states,

"Say: 'Whether you hide what is in your hearts or reveal it, Allah knows it all: He knows what is in the heavens and what is on earth. And Allah has might over all things'" (Qur'an, 3:29);

"Allah knows what every female (womb) bears, and that of which the wombs fall short (of term) or exceed. Every single thing is before His sight in (due) proportion" (Qur'an, 13:8);

"We have created man and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him, for We are nearer to him than his life-vein" (Qur'an, 50: 16),

and

"The One Who knows the unseen and from Whom not the least tiny atom in the heavens or on earth is hidden, nor is there anything less than that, or greater, but is in a clear record" (Qur'an, 34:3).

There are other verses that refer to the Almighty's knowledge of all details.

Loftiness of the Quranic Expression About the Expanse of His Knowledge

One of the most complex concepts is imagining the concept of what is infinite as a fact and a reality. Man is still dealing in his life with limited matters. Therefore, imagining something infinite is a very difficult problem for him. This system, the stars that it contains, is only a portion of our expansive constellation. Despite that, the part and the whole are endless in as far as the particles and compositions are concerned. The largest figure an ordinary individual knows how to use in his life is the billion: the number 1 before which nine zeros line up.

Also, the human civilization, because of its coming to perfection through mathematical sciences, has reached what is called astronomical numbers/figures. Nevertheless, all numbers, including the

“astronomical” ones, which mankind has reached, cannot be described as infinite. When the Holy Quran wants to explain His knowledge, Glory to Him, as being infinite, it does not use numbers and mathematical figures or even the “astronomical” ones because they all end up at a certain limit/point.

Instead, it brings about a superb example that shows the expanse of His knowledge. He says,

“And if all trees on earth were pens and ocean (were ink), with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply), God’s words would still not be exhausted (in the writing), for Allah is Exalted in might, full of wisdom” (Qur’an, 31:27).

Look at this magnificent expression which is superior to all others, and see how you find no mathematical figure that depicts the expanse of His knowledge, Glory to Him, equivalently to His saying “...God's words would still not be exhausted”. If one were to say that the extent of His knowledge is the figure one before which there are hundreds of zeros, he will not convey the meaning of His statement: “...God's words would still not be exhausted”. Thus, you come to know the truth of His statement, Glory to Him,

“Only little knowledge is communicated to you, (O mankind!)” (Qur’an, 17:85).

It expresses the limitation of human measurements and criteria. It also expresses how little, how minute, mankind’s knowledge is.

Statements by Imam Ali (as) About the Knowledge of the Most Exalted One of Details

Commander of the Faithful Ali (as) has said, “The number of rain drops is not beyond His knowledge, nor is it the number of the stars in the sky, the particles of dust carried by the wind, the sound of ants on soft rocks, or where particles fall in the dark night. He knows where leaves fall, what visions conceal.” [15](#)

He, peace with him, has also said, “Praise belongs to Allah Who knows the dust raised by the beasts in the plains, the sins of His servants which they commit in privacy, the places where sea creatures go, and the tumultuous water stirred by storms.” [16](#)

He (as) has also said, “He knows what the chests hide, what the consciences conceal; His knowledge encompasses everything.” [17](#)

Up to this point, talk comes to an end about the positive entitative attribute that is knowledge. The following discussion covers the second attribute which is potency, that is, His being Omni-Potent, Mighty, Able, Powerful, if the most Praised One so wills.

3. Self-Affirmative Attributes

- [1.](#) The one who seeks such evidence is the French philosopher Rene Descartes.
- [2.](#) The goal behind this definition is only to point out in a way to the truth of the knowledge without observing the condition of a true definition, so it must not be criticized as requiring a role so the one who defines it may derive it in the definition.
- [3.](#) Refer to Al-Asfar, Vol. 6, p. 176. You will come to know in the next researches that His Attributes are His own Self.
- [4.](#) Murad fi Tajrid al-Itiqad الاعتقاد تجريد المراد في كشف , p. 175 and Sharh al-Qawshaji شرح القوشجي , p. 313.
- [5.](#) Al-Asfar الأسفار, Vol. 6, p. 275. Refer also in this regard to abstractions and its explanations.
- [6.](#) Sharh al-Manzouma شرح المنظومة , philosophy section, p. 164.
- [7.](#) Nahjul-Balagha, pieces of wisdom section, No. 191.
- [8.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 4, p. 65.
- [9.](#) Kashf al-Murad, p. 175.
- [10.](#) Qawaid al-Maram, p. 98.
- [11.](#) Tajrid al-Itiqad, p. 176.
- [12.](#) Al-Qoshaji, Sharh al-Itiqad, p. 414.
- [13.](#) Ibid.
- [14.](#) Kashf al-Murad, p. 176.
- [15.](#) Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 178.
- [16.](#) Ibid., sermon 198.
- [17.](#) Ibid., sermon 86.

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