



## Divine Knowledge from the Perspective of Bewilderment (Tahayyor)

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**Abstract:** *It is obvious that (Divine Knowledge) is considered an important issue in the area of Islamic philosophy, and valuable pertinent results can be achieved by reflecting on this subject. One of the questions that have occupied the minds is that whether divine knowledge is a type of intellectual knowledge (rational) or not? If divine knowledge is not intellectual, is it possible to consider it divine action? What does the Bewilderment mean in the area of divine knowledge? What are the steps to achieve divine knowledge? The results obtained in response to the above questions is that, from the perspective of Islamic traditions, divine knowledge cannot be understood through the reason, and any type of divine knowledge, even ascertainment of the creator of the universe, depends on an innate knowledge that has been institutionalized in all of humanity through divine action. Furthermore, divine knowledge has some stages whose lowest rank is to refute any analogy to God (Nafi Tashbih), and inability to achieve the total cognition of God's essence (Nafi Taetil). In higher levels, a type of bewildering knowledge is created that it has itself some stages. Some factors such as an infinite existence of God and rational inability to understand the essence leads to the bewilderment. In the current article, divine knowledge based on divine bewilderment as the highest type of knowledge is investigated.*

**Keywords:** *divine knowledge, bewilderment, intellectual knowledge*

### INTRODUCTION

One issue raised in the area of divine knowledge from the perspective of the Innocent Imams (PBUH) is bewilderment in divine knowledge that is the most sublimated type of knowledge. Bewilderment is both of a positive and negative nature. The positive side is raised in the traditions under two headings including Nafi al-Hadin (the negation of any attribute assigned to God) and Nafi Taetil (the impossibility to achieve divine knowledge). This type of knowledge is the same innate knowledge that is institutionalized at all of people through divine action, and it is obligatory due to the prestige of action, and its negative aspect is that while God is omnipresent, He would not be analogues and comparable to anyone. The issue of God's ubiquity, his uniqueness, and lack of comparability to anybody is the cause to bewilderment. Understand the issue of God's ubiquity and incomparably and uniqueness has perplexed all universe.

The current article seeks to explain divine knowledge from the perspective of the bewilderment.

### Terminology

**Divine knowledge:** to clarify further the issue of divine knowledge, some Persian into Persian dictionaries were used in the current article. For instance, regarding knowledge (Maerifat), Majma'e Al-Bahrain

Dictionary states that: “When it is alleged that I achieved the knowledge on something, it means I understood it”.

Maerefat-o-Allah or divine knowledge (knowledge of God) means man’s degree of capability to be cognizant of God’s magnificence and majesty. The knowledge has some stages. The lower stage is knowledge of things. One obvious example is knowledge on the burning power of fire based on experimental documents. This stage in the area of knowledge can be referred to the people who have proved God’s existence using causes and effects.

The second stage relates to the people who feel intense heat due to proximity to the fire, and their knowledge of the existence of the fire converts into the belief. This stage is also related to the pious Muslims whose hearts are appeased by God.

At the final stage, the person is burnt in the fire that its epitome in the mysticism is the person who has been achieved the degree of Fana (effacement) (Tarayehi FM, 1994).

Another dictionary states that knowledge and mysticism are tantamount to perception and contemplation of the object through thinking and contemplation. When knowledge of a thing revolves around understanding the consequences and signs and fails to fathom the essence, such inability to achieve cognition is the greatest evidence to the existence of the bewilderment in the essence of Almighty God. Of course, at higher stages, the essential knowledge of God’s essence is also possible, as in the prayer “Sabah” by Imam Ali (AS), it is recited that:

“Oh person who you are a testimony to your essence” (Babawayh AI, 1986). And in the prayer of Abu Hamza Thumali, Imam Sajjad recites that: “You assisted me to be cognizant of you, and you guide me in your direction, and if you were not present, I did not fathom who you are (Mousa AB, et al., 1989).

### **Bewilderment (Tahayyor)**

Bewilderment essentially occurs when the man looks at an object and the intensity of the light emitted from the object forces the eye to be closed, to the extent that the man fails to observe it and looks back (Zobeiri M, et al., 1993).

The meaning inferred from the bewilderment guides us to understand the matter properly, i.e. the intensity of light of Divine Presence (Hazrat-e-Haqq) not only can illuminate the eyes but also can amaze the cleverest intellects and illusions in confrontation with this light, and in fact, because of excessive bewilderment, these are the intellects that refrain from the light of the Haqq (the Truth), and such bewilderment is the epitome of divine knowledge and its highest stage.

### **Literal Meaning of Bewilderment**

According to the traditions, contemplation on the essence of God leads to the bewilderment, such that a narration recites that: “Beware of the thinking about the nature of God because it has no result except perplexity and confusion” (Babawayh AI, 1986).

In contrast, the Prophet in a prayer recites that: “O God increases my bewilderment in excess”. It can be concluded that the second bewilderment is positive and the first one is negative. The positive bewilderment comes from divine knowledge and negative bewilderment comes from the contemplation on Divine Nature.

After above semantic explanations of divine knowledge, its epistemological explanation is presented. In this part, first, the procedures to achieve divine knowledge are discussed, and then their efficiency relative to God is evaluated, and most correct epistemic procedure and the reasons to such superiority are explained.

### **Procedures to Achieve Divine Knowledge**

Procedures to achieve the divine knowledge are of two kinds.

1-Mediate knowledge; 2- Immediate knowledge

**1-Mediate knowledge:** is the same knowledge on mental forms that are representative of external objects.

It is an intermediary knowledge because it drives from outer realm, and can be achieved with the mediation of mental forms. Some of the most prominent characteristics to mediate knowledge include:

A) The ability to qualify truth, falsity, and fallibility: the origin of this distinction is the presence of an intermediary to acquire knowledge. When direct association cannot be established with the object, and it is done through the means, the means may present an inaccurate representation of the object, and then the principle of knowledge becomes subjected to falsity.

B) Intermediary between object and perceiver: mental forms play such part.

C)Impossibility to achieve the reality of being: through mediate knowledge, it would not be possible to understand the reality of things. The knowledge acquired from mediate knowledge is the knowledge generated from mental forms, and what can be achieved with this kind of knowledge is conceptual knowledge. Furthermore, using mental forms and concepts, it would not be possible to fathom the existence of universe and reality of the objects, because external object is the same reality of the universe, and it does not ever penetrate into the mind. The knowledge acquired through concept, proposition, and mediate knowledge is an indirect knowledge through which external facts and objects cannot be totally recognized (Hosainzade M, 2009).

**2-Immediate knowledge:** this type of knowledge has no intermediary, and the desired object would be present to the perceiver, and it is infallible because of the immediate presence of the object, and it would not be required to make attempt to achieve it. The truth of the known in the presence of the knower can be found in a non-acquired and emanative knowledge that has multiple types including innate knowledge. For example, theophilic nature that is institutionalized in the nature of the humanity is immediate knowledge, and anyone can find with a certain extent of thinking and contemplation, and its acquisition does not require mental exercise and intellectual intermediaries. The notable point is the emanation of innate knowledge as one type of immediate knowledge.

### **Divine Knowledge in Islamic Traditions**

In introduction to the discussion, some citations are presented to achieve a concluding remark.

- a) Whatever that can be ordained and measured rationally or can be compared and exemplified, it can be delimited (Babawayh AI, 1986).
- b) Whatever that is recognizable is confined to a certain limit (Babawayh AI, (1986)).
- c) Whatever that can be delimited is a creature of God (God's created being) (Ibid, P.252).
- d) You are God who is ineffable and indescribable, thus nobody can delimit you (Imam S, 1994).
- e) Each created being can be recognized by the creator, and the creator of the objects cannot be described and defined on the basis of any scale and measure (Kolayni M, 2007, P.13).
- f) He is incomprehensible to the reason as much as he is invisible to the eye (Horani ISH, 1985).

Based on the above narration, it could be concluded that everything that has an existential limit can be recognized rationally. However, God is immune from any limitation, thus he cannot be understood by reason and intellect. Now, another category of the narrations are presented.

A) God who created the hearts with your will and molded our intellect into your knowledge (Mousa AB, et. al., P.12).

B) Divine creation of the object is God's intention to represent his signs to the man (Horani ISH, 1985).

C) God did not enable intellects to know His characteristics, yet God has not deprived the intellects of the required extent of knowledge (Kolayni M, 2007, P113).

D) Under the light of the intellect, God has presented complete evidence to the servants.

The above traditions indicate the possibility to realize intellectual knowledge in the area of divine knowledge, such that Imam (AS) ultimately acknowledges that God has represented itself to the intellects. In contrast, in the first set of traditions, God is represented as a power that has been veiled from the reasons. Apparently, the result obtained from the first narrations (i.e. impossibility to achieve rational cognition) is in conflict with the result obtained from the second narration (i.e. the possibility to achieve rational cognition)

In response to this apparent contradiction, it should be noted that the reason is not contributor to knowledge, but it is veiled from innate knowledge, and knowledge generation is the act of God that has placed in our heart. However, if the reason pay regard to that innate knowledge, it can fathom it. In fact, the reason is the witness to the innate knowledge, such that acknowledges the existence of the Haqq (the Truth) based on that knowledge. Thus, the first stage to rational cognition is confession and attestation of innate knowledge that is institutionalized inherently, and main cause to the innate cognition is divine action whose creator is God. In the following, some narrations are presented that are evidences to the above allegations on rational cognition and their association with innate knowledge.

A) Thinking about him merely leads to faith in him (Horani ISH, 1985, P.244).

The above narration shows that the mere function of thinking is the affirmation of existence of God. Obviously, thoughts are the function of the reason, and when Imam states that practice of thinking is only to authenticate the existence of God, the practice of reason also become limited to the affirmation of the Haqq (the Truth). Of course, without the assistance of the innate knowledge, the reason fails to be able to prove the creator, such that a narration states that: God created men to recognize the fact that God is their creator. And if such possibility would not be realized, nobody would know who is the creator and God (Orousi H, et al., P.186).

As a result, it should be said that any rational knowledge on God revolves around the innate knowledge that inherently lies in man's heart.

B) In terms of reasoning (Borhan), God almighty is the real epitome of what he has created and represented in the universe, and God is immediately made obvious to anyone who seeks to explore Him, and He never hides, and the question is this: where is the self-evident being that his action is more obvious than God? (Kolayni M, 2007, P.122)

This narration also acknowledges that the function of the reasoning (Borhan) as a rational activity is to prove the existence of the Haqq (the Truth) through the Creation System, of course in case of consideration of innate knowledge, i.e. rational knowledge can be merely taken into consideration to ascertain the creator of the universe contingent upon paying attention to innate knowledge.

Of course, intellectual knowledge on the existence of the creator is general due to its intellectual property, and general creator should be adapted to God, which every man find it within its nature more or less and in a natural way. However, general explanation on rational cognition is that, in order to achieve an understanding of God and the divine creatures created by Him, the reason fails to be involved. This is because, based on philosophical rules, the reason is the proof to the generalities, and lacks the capability to fathom God. Thus, divine knowledge is only made possible by divine action. To affirm these allegations, there are many valid narrations and some of them are presented as below.

A) I asked Imam Ali (PBUH): 'O Commander of the Faithful, knowledge is the act of God and the confession is act of the servant.

Ali (PBUH) recited: the knowledge of Allah is authority, proof, obligation and invitation, and the servant acknowledges the presence of God and is accepted by Him, and God endows the intended persons with bounty and mercy, and knowledge is God's action, and is purity and benevolence (Helali S, p.60).

B) A person asked Imam Sadiq (PBUH): does knowledge have an acquired (mediate) nature?

Imam responded: No.

Then another person asked Imam: Can we consider the knowledge as God's action and one of his gifts?

Imam responded: "Yes, servants play no role in the cognition, and God only endow them with bounty (Babawayh AI, P.416).

C) Does the servants take advantage of the power by which can achieve divine cognition? No, cognition is a type of divine benevolence (Barghi A, 1992, P.281)

The above narrations indicate that the genesis of knowledge is dependent upon divine grace, and God endow the intended individuals with divine knowledge, and this can be considered a divine action. However, the relationship between faith, confession, and knowledge presented in the traditions is that, after obtaining knowledge, under the light of divine grace, the servant mission is over. Because the servant not only has been able to recognize the general creator but also to achieve an intuitive understanding of God, and following this stage, the faith must necessarily emerge, and the emergence of faith depends on the confession in three factors:

A) Confession in the heart, B) Confession in tongue, C) Confession in acting with bodily organ that is a confession of bodily organs.

These three types of confession constitute the faith.

Divine knowledge is not limited to a certain extent due to its boundless owner that is God Almighty, and it constantly continues and tends to the infinite, and the man is constantly amazed due to permanent continuity in the direction to divine knowledge. Under this condition, divine knowledge has analogical gradation (tashkik) and can be measured based on some grades. According to the traditions recited by the Infallible Imams, the praised degree (Mashkour) of God Almighty is the expression of incapacity caused by lack of divine knowledge.

Accordingly, Imam Ali (PBUH) states that: "God allows knowing his characteristics only to the extent that man can understand Him. God regards the knowledge of those who confess to their inability to understand Him as Mashkour, and has considered such knowledge as the praise to himself, and God regards the man's knowledge of the inconceivable as the faith (Kolayni MBY, P.394).

In another tradition, Imam Ali (PBUH) recites that: [O God] except for incompetence and inability, you have not provided the man with any alternative to your knowledge and cognition (Majlisi, MB, P. 150).

According to the content of the relevant narrative, the question arises whether the failure to recognize God is a negative affair or not? If the action is negative, how it can belong to knowledge as an existential action? In response, it must be said, because of inability, the servants fail to achieve a rational cognition and understanding of God through rational cognition, and the truth of the incapability can be divided into two categories including refutation of any analogy to God (Nafi Tashbih), and inability to achieve a total cognition of God's essence (Nafi Taetil). As a result, God does exist and there is possibility to achieve knowledge on God, but at the same time, God is unique and does not accept any analogy and similitude, and rational

understanding of His essence is impossible. In fact, the same incapacity of understanding the reality is considered an existential knowledge whose truth relates to the two mentioned negative issues. The relevant inability results from the divine cognition achieved by the mystic or pious man that seeks to achieve bewilderment, such that the Prophet wishes in His prayers that God increase such bewilderment. In a prayer, Prophet states that: God, increase my bewilderment toward Yourself (Araghi F, 1984, P. 396).

### **Bewilderment**

Inability to achieve divine knowledge is one of the factors that can give rise to bewilderment. Other relevant causes include:

### **Bewilderment Factors**

#### **A)The infinity of God**

God has no limits, so the essence of God fails to be categorized into any limited realm through which man find the chance to understand it, and then to achieve peace and equilibrium. As a result, man constantly faces bewilderment. For example, a mathematician who fails to solve a problem may become perplexed, and by finding the solution, he can regain the peace, and redeem himself from bewilderment. However, in recognizing God, as God is infinite and limitless, man fails to recognize Him, thus is constantly bewildered. Bewilderment results from the grandeur of the Haqq (the Truth), and because of the same infinite existence, it would be impossible to attribute analogy and comparability to God through which we can recognize God, and this can contribute to further bewilderment.

#### **B) The appellation of God to the title of Allah**

Amazement in God's essence is a logical idea. This is because, to perceive things, the reason should encounter a finite realm and phenomenon. Any perception depends on the fact that object-perceived must be limited to be able to recognize it, while God is boundless, i.e. God cannot be recognized perceptively, and the sacred meaning of Allah is a justified affirmation of the logical judgment acquired.

Regarding the origin of the holy name of Allah, Imam recites that: He is who everyone in need and despair is fascinated by and implores Him (Maleki M, et al. 1992, P.715).

Another Hadith says: the meaning of Allah is the god that people have been bewildered by him, and he is veiled from sight.

The above traditions suggest that the term "Allah" whose founder is God guides us towards the bewilderment in the divine essence.

C) The existential entity of the Haqq (the Truth: as the hadith states, "God knows all things, but not in a mixed form, i.e. when a thing encompasses into another thing, and it is also exterior to all things, but not in a separate and distinct form (Babawayh AB, 1986, P.42).

Existential inclusion of God Almighty in all places and times and His bewildering ubiquity is a feature that has amazed all people.

D) According to one tradition, Imam recites that: the highest intellects, the most meticulous thoughts in delicate affairs, have become perplexed at the lowest level of the cognition of Haqq (the truth) (Ibid, P.330).

In fact, the most brilliant minds in the right direction to know the truth have failed at the most preliminary stages, let alone ordinary minds. For example, if the cognition of the Haqq (the Truth) lies within a circle, the reason fails to enter the circle, let along understanding it.

## Conclusion

The intention underlying the creation of the universe has been divine knowledge, and the man in this direction is required to pass preliminary stages, and among the preliminary stages, what appears more prominent is to perform compulsory orders (Wajibat) and to forsake inviolable things (Moharramat) to the extent that man's existential potential is purified and cleansed as a result of performing these obligations and orders, and man can achieve a good knowledge of God, and after achieving the necessary competence, it is God who overflows man's heart with divine knowledge out of His bounty and grace. Thus, man can achieve the degrees of knowledge, such that he can become bewildered in understanding the Haqq (the Truth), and this bewilderment is proper and God's saints have continuously have implored God to intensify it.

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