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IMMEDIATE KNOWLEDGE ACCORDING TO AL-QĀḌĪ ʿABD AL-JABBĀR

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Abstract. Since Ibn Mattawayh and Mānkdīm up until George Hourani and Marie Bernand, there is an unstoppable interest among scholars towards ʿAbd al-Jabbār theory of knowledge. This interest has increased after the publication of the works of the late Muʿtazilites such as *Kitāb al-Muʿtamad fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* of Ibn al-Malāḥimī and *Kitāb Taṣaffuḥ al-Adilla* of his teacher Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. This article seeks to examine ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theory of immediate knowledge based on his *Mughnī* and other sources from his students and the late Muʿtazilites. I will also examine the implication of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's view on immediate knowledge on his theological arguments. This article is divided into two divisions; firstly, I will study the definition of immediate knowledge according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār and the responses from his successors. Secondly, I will analyze his view on the types of immediate knowledge that closely related to his theological arguments. From this point of view I will indicate that the disagreement about the content of immediate knowledge will lead to the dispute on the theological arguments among Muslim theologians (*mutakallimūn*).

Résumé. Depuis Ibn Mattawayh et Mānkdīm jusqu'à George Hourani et Marie Bernand, les spécialistes ont montré un intérêt constant pour la théorie de la connaissance d'ʿAbd al-Jabbār, intérêt plus grand encore depuis la parution des textes de Muʿtazilites tardifs comme le *Kitāb al-Muʿtamad fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* d'Ibn al-Malāḥimī, et le *Kitāb Taṣaffuḥ al-Adilla* de son maître Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. Cet article examine la théorie de la connaissance immédiate d'ʿAbd al-Jabbār à partir de son *Mughnī*, ainsi que de textes écrits par ses élèves ou par des Muʿtazilites tardifs. Est aussi étudié le rapport entre cette théorie et les arguments théologiques d'ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Ce travail est divisé en deux parties: en premier lieu, j'étudie la définition de la connaissance immédiate par ʿAbd al-Jabbār et les réactions de ses successeurs; en second lieu, j'analyse sa conception des types de connaissance immédiate étroitement liés à ses arguments théologiques. Et à partir de là, je montre comment le désaccord à propos du contenu de cette connaissance est à l'origine du débat opposant les théologiens musulmans (*mutakallimūn*) à propos de la validité de certains arguments théologiques.

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I. THE DEFINITION OF IMMEDIATE KNOWLEDGE

The *mutakallimūn* in general agree that knowledge is divided into immediate and acquire knowledge.[1] Immediate knowledge (*ʿilm ḍarūrī*) is considered the foundation of the theological arguments.[2] According to the Muʿtazilites, immediate knowledge is important in establishing the rational obligation. Every compos mentis person will reach a stage where he will obtain the maturity of the intellect (*kamāl al-ʿaql*). When a person completed his immediate knowledge he is considered achieving the maturity of the intellect. Then this maturity of the intellect will become the foundation for rational obligation.

In ʿAbd al-Jabbār's extant works, he does not discuss the definition of immediate knowledge by his Muʿtazilite predecessors. He considers that immediate knowledge is the foundation for human obligation (*taklīf*). It is something that precedes human obligation, without which the obligation will not be complete. On this, he reports:

> The one that God has created (in us) is called [*ʿilm*] *ḍarūrī*. It must precede the obligation of other knowledge and actions. It resembles to enabling (*tamkīn*), empower (*iqdār*) and divine assistance (*luṭf*); for the obligation will not complete except with those things, likewise it will not complete except preceded by this [immediate] knowledge.[3]

ʿAbd al-Jabbār's definition of immediate knowledge (*ʿilm ḍarūrī*) is closely related to the literal meaning of the word *ḍarūrī*, which is 'to force' (*aljaʾa*). In conventional usage, the word *ḍarūrī* indicates something that occurs in us but not from us (*mā yaḥṣulu fīnā lā min qibālinā*). Therefore, in *al-Sharḥ*[4] he defines immediate knowledge as "knowledge which occurs in us not from ourselves and we cannot banish it from our souls."[5]

Mānkdīm Shāshdīw (d. 425/1034),[6] however, considers that there is unnecessary repetition in this definition. He argues that knowledge

[1] For more information on the types of knowledge according to the *Mutakallimūn*, see Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Qāhir b. Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-Dīn* (Istanbul, 1928), p. 8; al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd fī al-Radd ʿalā al-Mulḥida al-Muʿaṭṭila wa-al-Rāfiḍa wa-al-Khawārij wa-al-Muʿtazila,* ed. Richard J. McCarthy (Beirut, n.d.), p. 26.

[2] For the views of other *mutakallimūn* on immediate knowledge, see Binyamin Abrahamov, "Necessary knowledge in Islamic theology", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* 20.1 (1993): 20–32.

[3] Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ al-Muḥīt bi-al-Taklīf*, ed. Jean J. Houben (Beirut, 1962), p. 6.

[4] Based on Mānkdīm's report in his (*Taʿlīq*) *Sharḥ*, Mānkdīm or Manakdim, Shashdiw, Aḥmad b. Abī Hāshim al-Qazwīnī (ʿAbd al-Jabbār), *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*, ed. ʿAbd al-Karim K. ʿUthman (Cairo, 1965), p. 48.

[5] Cf. ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa-al-ʿAdl*, ed. Taha Husayn, 16 vols. (Cairo, 1960–1969), vol. XII, p. 42; Mānkdīm, *Sharḥ*, p. 48; cf. Jan R. T. M. Peters, *God's Created Speech: A Study in The Speculative Theology of The Muʿtazili Qadi l-Qudat Abu l-Hasan ʿAbd al-Jabbar ibn Ahmad al-Hamadhani* (Leiden, 1976), p. 54.

[6] For his biography, see Margaretha Heemskerk, *Suffering in the Muʿtazilite Theology: ʿAbd al-Jabbār's Teaching on Pain and Divine Justice* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 60–2.

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that occurs in us not from ourselves is also knowledge whose existence we cannot deny. Therefore, it is enough to define immediate knowledge with one part of it, either the first or the second.[7]

Ibn al-Malāḥimī (d. 536/1141), on the other hand, disagrees with Mānkdīm. He maintains that ʿAbd al-Jabbār was right when he mentions both parts of the definition. Ibn al-Malāḥimī argues that defining immediate knowledge as "knowledge which occurs in us not from ourselves" indicates that it occurs by necessity (*muḍṭarr*); hence, knowledge was called *ḍarūrī*. However, if it is possible for one to deny the existence of knowledge from one's soul, it cannot be considered immediate knowledge. Therefore, in this regard, both parts of the definition are necessary to reveal the reality of immediate knowledge. Hence, defining it with only one of the two as Mānkdīm suggests is unsound.[8]

Another definition of immediate knowledge was reported by Ibn al-Malāḥimī from ʿAbd al-Jabbār's book *al-ʿUmad*.[9] In this book, ʿAbd al-Jabbār defines immediate knowledge as "knowledge that is not possible for the knower to deny from his soul with doubt (*skakk*) or vagueness (*shubha*), if it is isolated (*idhā infarada*)."[10] The inclusion of the sentence "*idhā infarada*" excludes acquired knowledge that is joined by immediate knowledge. For instance, one knows that Zayd is in the house from the report of a prophet, and then one sees Zayd in the house. The first is acquired, and the second is immediate knowledge. The knowledge from the first cannot be denied since it was joined by the second. However, if the first is isolated (*infarada*) it can be denied, but that was not the case for immediate knowledge.[11]

There is disagreement among modern scholars regarding the correct translation of *ʿilm ḍarūrī*. A. Tritton translates *ḍarūrī* as 'necessary' but indicates that this term as applied to knowledge has no equivalent in Western thought.[12] "It is wider than *a priori* or intuitive

[7] Mānkdīm, *Sharḥ*, p. 49. Peters in this regards is unable to differentiate between the view of ʿAbd al-Jabbār and that of Mānkdīm. Therefore, he mistakenly considers that it is ʿAbd al-Jabbār who says that "for a correct definition one has to restrict oneself to one of the two". In fact that was a statement from Mānkdīm. Cf. *God's Created Speech*, p. 54.

[8] Cf. Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Kitāb al-Muʿtamad fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, ed. Martin McDermott and Wilferd Madelung (London, 1991), p. 21.

[9] Mānkdīm also mentions this definition. Cf. *Sharḥ*, p. 48.

[10] Cf. Mānkdīm, *Sharḥ*, p. 48; Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, p. 20. A similar definition adopted by al-Mutawallī but without the inclusion of "*idhā infarada*", cf. al-Mutawallī, al-Nīsābūrī, *Kitāb al-Mughnī*, ed. Marie Bernand (Cairo, 1986), p. 2.

[11] Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad,* p. 20. Abrahamov translates this definition without the inclusion of the words "*idhā infarada*". This I believe does not precisely describe the meaning of *ʿilm ḍarūrī* according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār since it will include acquired knowledge that joined by immediate knowledge. Cf. Abrahamov, "Necessary knowledge", p. 21.

[12] On the theory of knowledge from western perspective see David W. Hamlyn, *The Theory of Knowledge* (London, 1971), p. 12.

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and came to include knowledge of facts of history and geography." He considers that Jaʿd b. Dirham (d. 125/742) was the first to use this term.[13]

Presumably, one of the reasons for this dispute is that classical *kalām* epistemology was not influenced by Aristotelian logic as it is in the late *kalām*. Therefore, the terms used are independent from Aristotelian justification. Instead, the *mutakallimūn* based their epistemology mostly on Qur'anic teaching. The *mutakallimūn* used logical methods, of course, but they did not like *manṭiq* (Aristotelian logic). On this matter, Van Ess reports that the Christian philosopher and logician Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī (d. 364/974) refused to enter into discussion with the followers of Abū Hāshim (d. 321/933) because the way they treated their problems and the terminology they used turned out to be too different from those Aristotelian notions to which he was accustomed.[14]

In the context of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theory of knowledge, Hourani considers that 'necessary knowledge' can be accepted as the non-technical meaning for *ʿilm ḍarūrī*, but as a philosophical term, the word 'immediate knowledge' is more appropriate. He argues that in philosophical English "necessary" means logically implied, and this is characteristic only of knowledge resulting from discursive reasoning, which is classified by Muslim theologians as *muktasab*.[15] Hourani supports his arguments with the nature that defines *ḍarūrī* knowledge according to Muslim theologians such as al-Baghdādī and al-Baqillānī: that we have no choice but to accept it when it is presented to our minds.[16] This is, according to Hourani, best translated as 'immediate knowledge.'[17]

However, Peters disagrees with Hourani's view. He considers that the correct translation for *ʿilm ḍarūrī* is 'necessary knowledge.'[18] Peters argues that ʿAbd al-Jabbār divides *ʿilm ḍarūrī* into direct[19] and indirect knowledge. He considers that direct knowledge is immediate knowledge; therefore, it is plausible to use the words 'necessary knowledge' for *ʿilm ḍarūrī* rather than immediate knowledge.[20] From the disagreement between Hourani and Peters, one may observe the validity of what was mentioned by Tritton earlier, that there is no concept in Western thought that is similar to *ʿilm*

[13] Arthur Tritton, "Theory of knowledge in early Muslim theology", in *Woolner Commemoration Volume* (Lahore, 1940), pp. 253–6, p. 253.
[14] Josef Van Ess, "Logical structure of Islamic theology", in G. Grunebaum (ed.), *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture; Giorgio Levi Della Vida Conference* (Los Angeles, 1967), pp. 21–50.
[15] George Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism: The Ethics of ʿAbd al-Jabbār* (Oxford, 1971), p. 20.
[16] Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-Dīn*, p. 8; al-Baqillānī, *al-Tamhīd*, p. 26.
[17] Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 20.
[18] This translation also has been used by Abrahamov in "Necessary knowledge", p. 20.
[19] Peters, *God's Created Speech*, p. 54.
[20] *Ibid*., pp. 53–5.

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ḍarūrī.[21] This fact was supported by the other reality that there is no entry for 'necessary knowledge' or 'immediate knowledge' in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*[22] and the *Encyclopedia of Theology*.[23] The nearest term is probably necessary truth.

Therefore, I suggest that Hourani's view is more plausible than Peters' since in the West, what is logically necessary is what follows the laws of logic. Thus, a statement such as 'Either it will or it will not rain' indicates logically necessary truth. Also, another example, "if men are mortal and Socrates is a man, then Socrates is mortal," expresses a logically necessary truth. Both examples are considered necessary since they follow the laws of logic.[24] Indeed, this type of reasoning is not considered from *ʿilm ḍarūrī* in Islamic theology. Instead, this type of reasoning is part of acquired knowledge (*ʿilm iktisābī*).

Similar to the majority of the *mutakallimūn,* ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintains that immediate knowledge does not need any proof to stand. Otherwise, it will be *ad infinitum*, every proof will need another proof without ending. Therefore, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that when one disputes something that is immediately known such as perceptible knowledge, one's deception is exposed. Therefore, it is useless to argue with a Sophist by presenting rational proof; but it is better to hit him and see whether he feels the pain or not.[25]

II. THE TYPE OF IMMEDIATE KNOWLEDGE

ʿAbd al-Jabbār mentions in the twelfth part of the *Mughnī* that one knows one's existence, state of believing and perceiving immediately from the beginning (*mubtadiʾan*).[26] However, he does not elaborate the type of immediate knowledge here, probably because he already did so in an earlier part of the *Mughnī*.[27] Fortunately, we manage to comprehend his type of immediate knowledge based on a systematic discussion from the *Taʿlīq al-Sharḥ* of Mānkdīm. He reports that according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, there are two types of immediate knowledge, direct and indirect knowledge.[28]

[21] Bernand uses both translations 'immédiat' and 'nécessaire' knowledge, however, she does not present any argument on that, see her *Le problème de la connaissance d'après le Muġnī du Cadi ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār* (Alger, 1982), pp. 137–41.
[22] See *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (An), 8 vols. (New York, 1972).
[23] See *Encyclopaedia of Theology*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1884–1885).
[24] Jonathan Lowe, "Necessity, logical", in Ted Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (New York, 1995), pp. 608–9, p. 609.
[25] *Mughnī*, XII, 42; Mānkdīm, *Sharḥ*, p. 48; Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, pp. 28–9; Peters, *God's Created Speech*, p. 54.
[26] *Mughnī*, XII, 66.
[27] I suggest that he already discussed this type of immediate knowledge in the first part of the *Mughnī*, which is lost.
[28] Mānkdīm, *Sharḥ*, p. 50. There is a disagreement among modern scholars on ʿAbd al-Jabbār's type of immediate knowledge. The confusion is possibly due to one's

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1. *Direct Knowledge*

Direct knowledge (*mubtadi*ʾ) according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is knowledge that exists in us from the beginning. It is similar to *a priori* knowledge, yet, the scope of this knowledge is wider than *a priori*.[29] Similar to *a priori* knowledge, immediate knowledge, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, is a set of knowledge that is known by every *compos mentis* person (*ʿāqil*). The objective of this set of knowledge is to achieve the maturity of the intellect (*kamāl al-ʿaql*). However, although this knowledge is available in all men of reason, it is conceivable that they disagree on it.

Therefore, we observe that ʿAbd al-Jabbār divides direct knowledge into two types: (i) what is considered (to belong) to the maturity of the intellect and (ii) what is not considered to belong to the maturity of the intellect. The first type of direct knowledge is undisputable and indubitable; for if one obtained this knowledge, one is considered a *compos mentis* person. Meanwhile, the second type is a kind of knowledge some persons have and others have not without this having any influence on the maturity of their intellect and their being *compos mentis* (*ʿāqil*). By way of example, he mentions recognizing Zayd. Although this knowledge is from the beginning (*mubtadi*ʾ) from God, yet it did not contribute to the maturity of the intellect; therefore, people disagree about it.[30]

Knowledge concerning the maturity of the intellect again is composed of two kinds: (*a*) what is based upon experience and (*b*) what is not. The latter concerns the knowledge of general rules of argumentation and its basic axiomatic. As an example, he mentions the axiom of non-contradiction (*ʿadam al-tanāquḍ*); either of the two alternatives is possible such as an essence (*dhāt*) whether it exists (*mawjūd*) or is nonexistent (*maʿdūm*).[31] The other comprises general rules concerning act and basic ethical rules.[32]

Some of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's statements in his works on the types of knowledge cause confusion among contemporary scholars especially regarding the basic ethical rules. For instance, in the *Mughnī,* he

interpretation on the text in the *Sharḥ*. Hourani in this issue divides ʿAbd al-Jabbār's type of immediate knowledge into two types, meanwhile ʿUthman, divides it into three types. Cf. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, pp. 20–2; ʿAbd al-Karim ʿUthmān, *Naẓariyyat al-taklīf, Āra' al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-kalāmiyya* (Beirut, 1971), p. 60.

[29] Literal meaning of *a priori* is "from what is prior" and *a posteriori* is "from what is posterior". Aristotle explains that *A* is prior to *B* in nature if and only if *B* could not exist without *A*; *A* is prior to *B* in knowledge if and only if we cannot know *B* without knowing *A*. David W. Hamlyn, "*A priori* and *a posteriori*", in Paul Edwards (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York, 1967), vol. 1, pp. 140–4, p. 140.

[30] Mānkdīm, *Sharḥ*, p. 51. cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, p. 55.

[31] Mānkdīm, *Sharḥ*, p. 51.

[32] Mānkdīm, *Sharḥ*, p. 51; cf. Bernand, *Le problème*, pp. 140–1.

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writes that "if they mean with this saying that, without the knowledge perceived by the senses it is inconceivable that one can know everything; this is valid but it is unconceivable to indicate that sensual knowledge evaluates the rational knowledge."[33] In this passage, ʿAbd al-Jabbār indicates that it is acceptable to say that all sources of knowledge must be from the senses but to say that the senses can evaluate rational knowledge is unacceptable.

ʿUthman considers that this passage indicates destruction of the foundation of rationalism since the passage seems to indicate that all knowledge is based on the senses.[34] The same result was obtained by Hourani when he considers that based on ʿAbd al-Jabbār's view of the knowledge of the basic ethical rules, all rational intuition in his epistemology is preceded by experience.[35] On this, Hourani quotes ʿAbd al-Jabbār's statement as follows:

> And we only say about these two [lying and wrongdoing are evil] and similar pieces of knowledge that they are things that occur originally (*ibtidāʾan*) in rational persons: not that they exist originally before knowledge of the perceptible, but because preceding knowledge is not a means to them, as we have shown with respect to perception and other things… this knowledge [*e.g.* that harmful pain is evil] is not dependent on perception, even though perception must precede it in a special sense.[36]

ʿAbd al-Jabbār explains that although basic ethical knowledge is preceded by perception, but sense cannot perceive knowledge directly like a perceptible thing. Therefore, he does not consider basic ethical principles as perceptible knowledge, and perception is not a means to it.[37] The knowledge of it is drawn out from particular experiences in which it is learned by a direct apprehension.[38]

In general, ʿAbd al-Jabbār's immediate knowledge consists of the following:

i) One's knowledge of oneself and its state that is not based on any external factor, such as willing, hating etc.;
ii) Knowledge of logical axiomatic principles, such as the principle of non-contradiction (*ʿadam al-tanāquḍ*);
iii) Knowledge of basic ethical rules, such as injustice (*ẓulm*) is evil;
iv) Perceptible knowledge that is based on sense perception;
v) Recognizing someone.[39]

[33] *Mughnī*, XII, 58.
[34] ʿUthman, *Naẓariyyat al-taklīf*, p. 53.
[35] Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, pp. 21–2.
[36] *Mughnī*, XII, 66.
[37] *Ibid*. However, Hourani observes that knowledge of the basic ethical rules are *a posteriori* since it is based on perception (*idrāk*).
[38] Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 22.
[39] Cf. Mānkdīm, *Sharḥ*, p. 51.

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Hence, we can observe that in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's type of immediate knowledge there is *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge. One's knowledge of oneself is *a priori* since it does not need any experience. This knowledge occurs in us before the occurring of any other knowledge and without a means (*bi-lā wasīṭa*). As examples, ʿAbd al-Jabbār identifies some principles that are known immediately to human beings, such as knowledge that one will believe what one perceives. Similarly, one's knowledge of the tranquillity of one's soul is also immediately known. But one's knowledge to prove the existence of knowledge (*ithbāt al-ʿilm*) and its situation differs from what is not knowledge; the way to it is via proof.[40]

However, there is uncertainty regarding the knowledge of basic logical axiomatic such as the principle of non-contradiction (ʿ*adam al-tanāquḍ*): is it *a priori* or *a posteriori*? According to Mānkdīm's report, it is *a priori* since it is not based on experience (*khibr*), but ʿAbd al-Jabbār reports in the *Mughnī* that although logical axiomatic is immediately known, it must be preceded by other knowledge. On this, he writes:

> As one knows through his knowledge of the existence of bodies and others, that it is impossible for a body to be existence and non existence [at the same time], or eternal and temporal [at the same time]. For one knows that a thing is on certain attribute and not on it [at the same time] is impossible… Therefore, one immediately knows of its impossibility (*istiḥālatih*) although it must be preceded by the knowledge of body and existence, also this knowledge comes to his mind. Hence, it is inconceivable for him to doubt on that.[41]

Therefore, based on ʿAbd al-Jabbār's explanation, I posit that knowledge of logical axiomatic is also *a priori*, since there is no experience involved. This judgment is true if one derives logical axiomatic from one's knowledge of oneself. Yet, if it was derived from the knowledge of something other than oneself, it is *a posteriori* knowledge since senses are involved.[42] Meanwhile, knowledge of the perceptibles (*mudrakāt*) is *a posteriori* knowledge since they are based on the senses and perception.

2. *Indirect Knowledge*

Indirect knowledge, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, is knowledge that occurs through a means (*ṭarīq*). This indirect knowledge again has two sub-categories: (i) what takes place by the means (*ṭarīq*) and (ii)

[40] *Mughnī*, XII, 59.
[41] *Mughnī*, XII, 61.
[42] One knows the existence of others through senses.

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what resembles the means (*mā yuḥṣalu ʿammā yajrī majrā al-ṭarīq*). What ʿAbd al-Jabbār suggests by means (*ṭarīq*) in immediate knowledge is the perception (*idrāk*) through the five senses.

a. *Perceptual Knowledge*

All perceptible knowledge is included in this first subsection of indirect knowledge, because one knows perceptible knowledge only through the means of perception. ʿAbd al-Jabbār explains that whenever the perceiving subject is rational (*ʿāqil*) and there is no ambiguity in the perceived object, the perception certainly will occur. The knowledge gained from the perception must be initially (*ibtidaʾa*) from the act of God, but occurs only when the perceiver is doing the perception. Thus, perception is an act of human beings, whereas knowledge is an act of God. This implies that if the perceiving subject is closing his eye he will not be able to perceive a thing from his sight and God will not create perceptible knowledge in him.[43]

As far as perception is concerned, one might ask that, how does the process of human beings obtain immediate knowledge? To answer this question ʿAbd al-Jabbār reports:

> Indeed the knower knows from his observation of the body and his examination of its states that it is inconceivable for the body to exist in two places [at the same time]. Likewise he realizes that when he knows the existence of body, it is impossible for it to be existence and nonexistence, eternal and temporal; for he knows that it is inconceivable for a thing to be in one state and the opposite state at one time. This is because that will lead to the combination of two contradictions. Hence, he immediately will know its impossibility.[44]

ʿAbd al-Jabbār elucidates that the perceiver will perceive a thing in detail (*tafṣīl*). He will perceive the most specific attributes (*akhaṣṣ awṣafih*) of the thing exist,[45] for instance, its color or other accidents that differentiate the thing from others. In other words, perception will obtain only what could be perceived by the senses and not beyond it. Senses could not perceive the ethical value of a thing; for the value of a thing (good or evil) is an additional attribute (*awṣaf zāʾida*).[46] Perceptive knowledge is free from any judgment or value. Senses are unable to perceive the value of what they perceive. Therefore, rational evaluation is needed to understand the value of a thing.[47]

[43] *Ibid*. Cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, p. 54. These approach however, suitable for a perceptive knowledge (*mudrakat*).
[44] *Mughnī*, XII, 65–6.
[45] *Mughnī*, XII, 61. See also, Alnoor Dhanani, *The Physical Theory of Kalām: Atom, Space and Void in Basrian Muʿtazilī Cosmology* (Leiden, 1994), pp. 22–5.
[46] *Mughnī*, XII, 66.
[47] *Ibid*.

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Thus, ʿAbd al-Jabbār concludes that the role of the senses is to perceive the existence of a thing. However, one cannot know the truth or falsehood of a thing through the senses. Instead, the truth or falsehood must be known via the intellect. Therefore, the intellect is the evaluator (*qāḍī*) of the validity of perceptive knowledge or what has been perceived by the senses.[48]

Furthermore, ʿAbd al-Jabbār believes that through perception one not only knows perceptible things but also other thing such as the intention of the speaker (*qaṣd al-mukhāṭib*). Although one could not perceive the intention directly or naturally (*bi-al-ṭabʿ*), one knows it through the speaker's speech or sign.[49] Therefore, ʿAbd al-Jabbār also includes knowledge of the intention of a speaker in immediate knowledge. However, for the knowledge of God's intention, one could not know immediately but only via proof. For knowledge of God's intention is based on knowledge of His essence. Since knowledge of His essence is based on proof, knowledge of God's intention must also be through proof.[50]

Based on the previous explanation, one might observe that ʿAbd al-Jabbār considers that perception is a vital means of knowledge. A human's connection with the outside world is established through perception. However, what if someone argues that the senses are not reliable since they sometimes make wrong judgments, such as one perceives a distant object as small, and, therefore, consider it so, yet, in reality that object is big?

Responding to this question, ʿAbd al-Jabbār clarifies that the senses cannot be blamed if there is any mistake in judgment related to the senses. He believes that it is necessary to differentiate between knowledge perceived by the senses and what the perceiver believes, which is his interpretation of the data given by the senses. The mistakes always occur when the perceiver interprets the data wrongly. Besides, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that the role of the senses is to perceive a thing as what it is (*ʿalā mā huwa ʿalayhi li-dhātihi*). Whereas to know whether a thing is valid or invalid is the duty of the perceiver (*mudrik*). Therefore, ʿAbd al-Jabbār concludes that the mistakes in the judgment of the perceiver have nothing to do with the reliability of the senses. Rather, the mistake occurs because of obscurity (*shubha*) that appears with it.[51]

ʿAbd al-Jabbār even goes further to state that "without knowledge of what is perceived by the senses it will be unfounded for human beings

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 58.
[49] Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī believes that knowledge of the intention is immediate and perceptible. Cf. *Mughnī*, XII, 63.
[50] *Mughnī*, XII, 64.
[51] *Mughnī*, XII, 60.

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to know all knowledge."[52] Thus, it is correct to say that sensory knowledge is the precedent (*aṣl*) for rational knowledge.[53] However, he disagreed that sensory knowledge is the evaluator (*qāḍī*) over rational knowledge whether it is valid or not; because the way to know the validity of all knowledge is the tranquillity of the soul (*sukūn al-nafs*).[54] When it is confirmed that the tranquillity of the soul has occurred in all knowledge, it must be said that the knowledge is valid, irrespective of whether it is perceptual knowledge or rational knowledge.[55] Explaining the relationship between the tranquillity of the soul and perception, ʿAbd al-Jabbār writes:

> We have already explained that the tranquillity of the soul that follows a belief is knowledge irrespective of from where it comes. Indeed, what occurs via reflection (*naẓar*) is at the same level of what occurs through perception (*idrāk*). The only difference is that the knowledge one perceived could not be denied from one's self, and this is not the case of the knowledge from reflection.[56]

From this passage, one might observe that ʿAbd al-Jabbār is not concerned with the means one gets the knowledge from, as long as it caused the tranquillity of the soul. Therefore, knowledge from perception is at the same level as knowledge from reflection. There is no difference between immediate knowledge and acquired knowledge in terms of its reliability. The only difference according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is that immediate knowledge cannot be denied from one's soul, whereas acquired knowledge can be denied.

b. *Knowledge Resembles a Means*

The second sub-category of indirect knowledge is what takes place through knowledge that resembles the means (*ṭarīq*) of something. The meaning of this type of knowledge is that the validity of certain knowledge is based on the other. Before one knows (*b*), one must know (*a*). It is knowledge that needs other knowledge to exist or to be validated. An example is one only knows the state (*ḥāl*) of a thing after knowledge of its essence (*dhāt*). Without knowledge of the essence, one cannot know the state of that essence. Therefore, the knowledge of the essence resembles a means for one to know the state of a thing. The former is precedent (*aṣl*), and the latter is antecedent (*farʿ*).[57]

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 58.
[53] This view is equivalent with that of al-Ashʿarī, cf. Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-Dīn*, p. 10.
[54] *Mughnī*, XII, 20; Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, p. 14; Mānkdīm, *Sharḥ*, p. 46.
[55] *Mughnī*, XII, 58.
[56] *Ibid.*, pp. 56–7.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 61; Mānkdīm, *Sharḥ*, p. 50; Peters, *God's Created Speech*, p. 54; Abrahamov, "Necessary knowledge", p. 23.

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Explaining the differences between these types of indirect knowledge with the former, Mānkdīm reports that:

> The difference between what occurs in us through a means and what resembles a means is that, it is possible for the former to exist without a means; yet, this is not the case in the latter. Therefore, it is plausible for God to create in us a knowledge of perceptible things without perception, but it is implausible for Him to create a knowledge of the state (*ḥāl*) without a knowledge of the essence (*dhāt*); for the essence is a precedent (*aṣl*) for the state and it resembles a means to the knowledge of the state.[58]

One might observe that, by stating this point ʿAbd al-Jabbār established the principle of hierarchy in his argument. What I mean is that this subsection of indirect knowledge will become the ground for his theological argument that needs to be observed when one is dealing with the issue of knowledge. This principle is the hierarchical order of knowledge that means that knowledge must be arranged systematically.

However, the establishment of this principle is not free from critics. ʿA. K. ʿUthman has questioned the significance of mentioning it as a separate sub-division. He argues that if that knowledge (what resembles a means) is related to our state, it could possibly be included in the first division of immediate knowledge, *i.e.*, direct knowledge. And if it is related to the state of others, it is not immediate knowledge but is acquired.[59]

In this regard, I agree with ʿUthman's observation and prefer this knowledge be included in direct knowledge since it can be considered as part of the axiomatic principles. However, I suggest that ʿAbd al-Jabbār has another reason for specifying a sub-division for this principle. Most likely, the significant role played by this principle in his theology has led ʿAbd al-Jabbār to consider it as a separate sub-division of indirect knowledge. Hence, next I will evaluate the implication of his view on immediate knowledge in his theological arguments.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār depends on this principle when arguing against the Hanbalites who depend merely on the Qurʾan and the Sunna in their theological arguments. Based on his second sub-division of indirect knowledge, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that one cannot use the Qurʾan to prove the existence of God, because the former is consequent (*farʿ*) and the latter is precedent (*aṣl*). That he believes will not comply with the previous principle. Hence, ʿAbd al-Jabbār insists that the intellect (*ʿaql*) is the only way to prove the existence of God.[60]

[58] Mānkdīm, *Sharḥ*, p. 50.
[59] ʿUthman, *Naẓariyyat al-taklīf*, p. 60.
[60] *Faḍl al-iʿtizāl wa-ṭabaqāt al-Muʿtazila wa-mubāyanatuhum li-Sāʾir al-Mukhālifīn*, ed. Fuad Sayyid (Tunis, 1974), p. 139.

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Furthermore, he elucidates that in order to accept the validity of the Qur'an, which is the word of God, one must prove His existence. The only way to prove God's existence is via intellectual reasoning. Therefore, ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintains that those who are using the Qur'an to prove the existence of God are not following the right way in their argumentation.[61]

Elaborating on this matter, ʿAbd al-Jabbār states:

> Probably some of them will be surprised at this arrangement. They assume that proofs are from the *Kitāb*, *sunna* and consensus (*ijmāʿ*) only, or, if indeed reason can be included it must be the last. But that is not the case. This is because God is not communicating except with a *compos mentis* person (*ahl al-ʿaql*). Since with reason one can prove the validity of the *Kitāb*, tradition and consensus, reason is considered the precedent (*aṣl*). Through reason, we distinguish between the rules of action and the rules of the actor. With it we shall be able to know who is responsible for what he omits or what he performs, who will be praised and who will be blamed. Because of that someone who has no reason (*lā ʿaql lahu*) is exempted from obligation (*taklīf*). And when we know via reason that there is only one God and we know that He is a wise God, hence His speech (*kalām*) is a proof. And when we know that He sends the prophet and distinguishes him from liars (*kadhdhab*) through a miracle, we know that the word of the prophet is a proof. And when the prophet says that "My nation will not consent to an error" and "You have to be with the majority (*jamāʿa*)", then we know that consensus is a proof.[62]

One might observe from previous arguments that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's principle 'that the consequent (*farʿ*) cannot prove the precedent (*aṣl*)' played a major role in developing his arguments. Therefore, to establish this principle ʿAbd al-Jabbār specified a sub-section in immediate knowledge for it.

Another theological dispute resulting from ʿAbd al-Jabbār's view on immediate knowledge is with the Ashʿarites. ʿAbd al-Jabbār considers that basic ethical rules knowledge is included in immediate knowledge. His inclusion of this knowledge in immediate knowledge implies man's ability to know good and evil with reason alone. However, this inclusion is rejected by the Ashʿarites since they exclude ethical rules from immediate knowledge.[63]

The Ashʿarites believe that God reveals ethical judgment to human beings through the prophets. Therefore, ethical knowledge, according to the Ashʿarites, must be acquired through revelation and is not immediate knowledge.[64]

[61] Daniel Gimaret "Les *Uṣūl al-ḫamsa* du Qadi ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār et leurs commentaires", *Annales Islamologiques*, 15 (1979):79–96, pp. 79–96.
[62] *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 139.
[63] Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, pp. 8–9.
[64] Cf. *ibid*., p. 25.

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Thus, basic ethical rules become one of the main differences that distinguish ʿAbd al-Jabbār's view of the type of immediate knowledge from the view of the Ashʿarites.[65] ʿAbd al-Jabbār considers that reason alone is capable of distinguishing between good (*ḥasan*) and evil (*qubḥ*) without depending on revelation (*waḥy*).[66] Meanwhile the Ashʿarites maintain that obligation will occur only after one knows revelation through the prophet.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above one might observe that immediate knowledge according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār are: firstly one's knowledge of one own situation (*ḥāl*), such as willing (*murīd*), dislike (*karīḥ*), and believing (*muʿtaqid*). This knowledge is considered the first foundation in immediate knowledge. [67] Secondly, knowledge of the situation of perceptible objects (*mudrakāt*) which is based on the principle of non-contradiction. It is impossible for a body to be in two different places at the same time. It is considered the foundation (*aṣl*) for all knowledge.[68]

Thirdly, is the knowledge of ethical principle. Some examples of this knowledge are the evilness of wrongdoing (*ẓulm*), ungratefulness (*kufr al-niʿma*) and lying that has no benefit in it and not to avoid danger, the goodness of charity (*iḥsān*), and courteousness (*tafaddul*).[69] Fourthly, is the knowledge of some motives (*dawā'i*). Knowledge of divine assistances (*alṭaf*) is invalid without it. When the basic principles of harm (*ḍarar*) and benefit (*nafʿ*) such as pure harm (*ḍarar al-maḥḍ*) must be avoided and pure benefit (*nafʿ al-maḥḍ*) must be performed, are unknown, it is inappropriate for a person to be obligated.[70]

The main objective of immediate knowledge according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is to prepare the ground for the person to be ready for his obligations. After one has already obtained all this immediate

[65] An important characteristic of this intuitive ethical knowledge as described by Fakhry, is that "it is autonomous and self-validating. It requires neither 'acquired' nor 'deductive' evidence to support it, not even the warrant of divine revelation (*samʿ*). Rather the contrary, for unless the grounds of religious or revealed truth, such as the wisdom of God and the truthfulness of the Prophet who bears His message to mankind, are rationally known, the truth of revelation, identified by ʿAbd al-Jabbār with the Qur'ān and Traditions, would remain forever questionable." Cf. Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden, 1994), p. 33.

[66] Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, p. 49.

[67] This type of knowledge is similar to the knowledge provided by the *cogito* of René Descartes' philosophy. Cf. Descartes, *Meditation on First Philosophy*, ed. John Cottingham (Cambridge, 1986), p. 136.

[68] *Mughnī*, IX, 384.

[69] Oliver Leaman, "'Abd al-Jabbar and the concept of uselessness", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 41.1 (1980): 129–31, p. 129.

[70] *Mughnī*, IX, 384–5.

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knowledge, one achieves the maturity of intellect (*kamāl al-ʿaql*). At this level, one is ready and capable of receiving and implementing the obligation. For ʿAbd al-Jabbār, this maturity of the intellect is the starting point when a person becomes obligated (*mukallaf*).

ʿAbd al-Jabbār believes that man has an innate capacity to know the divine command that develops in him."[71] The maturity of the intellect according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is the starting point for the obligation (*taklīf*). In Islam, arriving at the age of puberty (*bulūgh*) is considered one of the signs of the maturity of one's intellect. When one reaches this age of puberty, one will be considered (*balīgh*) and ready for the obligation.[72]

From the previous explanation thus, we can also arguably conclude that immediate knowledge plays an important role in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theological epistemology in establishing rational obligation. The inclusion of ethical judgment in immediate knowledge differentiates his view from that of the Asharites and the Hanbalites.

[71] Ismaʿil R. al-Faruqi, "The self in Muʿtazilah thought", *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 101.3 (1966): 366–88.
[72] *Mughnī*, XI, 376.

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