



# The Heirs of Avicenna: Philosophy in the Islamic East, 12–13th Centuries

Metaphysics and Theology

*Peter Adamson and Fedor Benevich*



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# The Heirs of Avicenna: Philosophy in the Islamic East, 12–13th Centuries

*Metaphysics and Theology*

*By*

Peter Adamson  
Fedor Benevich



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# Introduction

This book is the first in a series of volumes devoted to the reception of the thought of Abū ‘Alī Ibn Sīnā (d. 428 AH, 1037 CE), usually known in English by his Latin name Avicenna, in the Islamic East during the 12–13th centuries CE. He was the central figure for thinkers of this time and place. Some engaged in summarizing, interpreting, and defending his teachings, while others attacked those same teachings. Quite a few did both. But no philosophically-minded author could ignore him. As a result, the task of documenting his reception is pretty close to charting the whole development of philosophy during the period. Our hope is that the book series will provide a resource for further work on this chapter in Islamic intellectual history, and cement the growing sense among scholars that this was a time of great philosophical achievement.

The corpus of writings produced in this period may usefully be compared to the “high scholastic” era in Latin Christendom. We are dealing with an enormous amount of material by authors of varying intellectual approach, who produced intricate and often technical arguments, presupposing familiarity with specialist vocabulary and with debates that ran across the generations. The main difference is that in the Islamic East these debates revolved around Avicenna, whereas in the later scholastic tradition it was of course Aristotle who set the terms of discussion. On the other hand, Avicenna was powerfully influential on the Latin tradition too, and on philosophy in the Western Islamic world or *maghreb*, which we have not attempted to include here. Indeed, when we combine the Latin reception, the Western Islamic reception, and the reception in the Islamic East which is (only partially) displayed in this book series, we can only conclude that Avicenna was by some distance the most seminal thinker of the medieval period in the parts of the world dominated by the Abrahamic religions.

One feature common to Latin scholastic philosophy and philosophy in the Islamic East is that it was often practiced within a theological context. In Latin Christendom this was very explicitly the case, as major philosophers were members of theology faculties at universities and even put the word “theology” in the titles of their works (Aquinas would be a famous example of both). In the Islamic world authors were not formally designated as “theologians” in this way, but it is clear that many or even most of the thinkers quoted within these pages were adherents of one or another theological tradition, such as Ash‘arite *kalām* or a given branch of Shi‘ism. In a controversial recent paper a leading scholar of the field, Dimitri Gutas, revised his earlier assessment of

post-Avicennan thought as a “golden age” of philosophy, to propose that we are actually dealing with something he calls “paraphilosophy.”<sup>1</sup> His point is that such apparently “philosophical” argumentation as we find in our period is compromised by the wider motives of the authors. For Gutas, philosophy in the strict sense should be an “open-ended and rational inquiry into reality.” The post-Avicennan authors, by contrast, were constrained by religious or other doctrines which they assume to be true in advance, so that their inquiry was not really “open-ended.” Their work constitutes “paraphilosophy” because they are “doing what appears to be philosophy/science in order to divert attention from, subvert, and substitute for philosophy/science, and as a result avoid doing philosophy/science.”

There is a lot that could be said in response to this, beginning with the observation that by this standard, such figures of the aforementioned scholastic tradition as Aquinas, Scotus, and Ockham would not be philosophers either, leaving us with a vision of “medieval philosophy” in Latin Christendom that would at best include only a few arts masters like Siger of Brabant and John Buridan. (This seemingly conversation-ending bullet is one Gutas is ready to bite, though.) Also, as will be clear even from the brief historical overview presented later in this introduction, the thinkers of our period were approaching Avicenna, and philosophy, from a very diverse range of perspectives. It would clearly be painting with too broad a brush to say that all the figures quoted in this volume were “paraphilosophers,” even by Gutas’ criteria. Indeed, a single author may seem to be a philosopher in one book, and a paraphilosopher in another book. We will have more to say about this problem below. But this introduction is not the place to engage fully with Gutas’ article,<sup>2</sup> if only because it is hard to imagine any response more thorough or convincing than the rest of the book and its sequels. If you can read what follows here and convince yourself that it is not philosophy, then we would be very surprised. At the very least, it will be clear that there is plenty of sophisticated argumentation going on in the Islamic East in the centuries after Avicenna, argumentation that should be of great interest to historians of philosophy. That seems a sufficient rationale for our undertaking.

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1 D. Gutas, “The Heritage of Avicenna: The Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy, 1000–ca. 1350,” in J. Janssens and D. De Smet (eds), *Avicenna and his Heritage* (Leuven: 2002), 81–97; D. Gutas, “Avicenna and After: The Development of Paraphilosophy. A History of Science Approach,” in A. Al Ghouz (ed.), *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th to the 14th Century* (Göttingen: Bonn University Press, 2018), 19–72.

2 For one detailed response see J. Kaukua, “Post-Classical Islamic Philosophy: a Contradiction in Terms?” *al-Nazariyat* 6 (2020), 1–21.

Accordingly, this book series is aimed primarily at a philosophical readership. Our goal is to give readers access to philosophical conversations that took their starting point from Avicenna's writings and ran over the next several centuries. Actually they ran still further than that. One could extend this project to look at authors of the mid- or later-14th century like 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 1355) or Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390), or even further, pursuing the same themes we cover here into the school of Shiraz or the period of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires. We have limited ourselves to a more practicable period of two centuries, roughly from the death of al-Ghazālī in 1111 to the time of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274) and his students. The resulting cast of characters is large, and we make an attempt later in this introduction to provide readers with an overview that situates them historically. But it must be admitted that the issue that was of most concern to Gutas—the overall intellectual projects of the various authors covered here—is not foregrounded by our own approach. Nor will readers of these books learn much about the wider historical context in which these thinkers were working.

Instead, taking inspiration from sourcebooks on periods in ancient philosophy,<sup>3</sup> we have arranged our material thematically, enabling the user to pursue a topic like mental existence, modality in logic, or the powers of the soul, from Avicenna forward to the turn of the 14th century. To get a picture of the philosophy of a single figure, one could of course read across the chapters to see what that figure has to say on a range of themes. This would be particularly worthwhile when it comes to authors who adopted especially distinctive and innovative positions, and who play a significant role in almost every chapter, like al-Suhrawardī, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and al-Ṭūsī. But even in these cases, our volumes are no substitute for monographs giving a synoptic portrait of individual thinkers, such as are now increasingly available in English.<sup>4</sup>

3 Namely A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 vols (Cambridge: 1987); R. Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators, 200–600AD: a Sourcebook*, 3 vols (London: 2004).

4 For instance J. Kaukua, *Suhrawardī's Illuminationism: a Philosophical Study* (Leiden: 2022), L. Hassan, *Ash'arism Encounters Avicennism: Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī on Creation* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2020), A. Shihadeh, *Doubts on Avicenna: A Study and Edition of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī's Commentary on the Ishārāt* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), and F. Griffel, *The Formation of Post-Classical Philosophy in Islam* (Oxford: 2021), which is useful for the whole period but especially focuses on Fakhr al-Dīn. One should not neglect older studies on individual thinkers, e.g. S. Pines, *Studies in Abu'l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī: Physics and Metaphysics* (Jerusalem: 1979), and studies in Arabic and non-European languages e.g. M.Ṣ. al-Zarkān, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa-ārā'uhū al-kalāmīyya wa-al-falsafīyya* (Cairo: 1963).

## 1 Method

That brings us to the question of how we went about producing this book. It offers translations of excerpts from at least half a hundred texts written over two centuries of philosophy. Given the enormous textual base, the selection of passages involved an uneasy marriage between comprehensiveness and feasibility. While we have attempted to provide a relatively complete picture of each theme in our time period, we would absolutely not claim to have provided an exhaustive account of the development of philosophy in the relevant period. This would be simply impossible, given our limited time and resources, and the current state of research. For one thing, we have not usually attempted to indicate which authors repeat the arguments and ideas of others. This was an accretive tradition, by which we mean that material from earlier authors is often taken up and reproduced by later ones, with or without citation of the source. For the most part we have contented ourselves with giving readers the earliest, clearest, or most frequently quoted version of a given argument or position, without citing the (often numerous) passages where the same material reappears. Occasionally we do give such references in notes, but the reader should be warned that the sheer size of our corpus means that no such list can be considered to be complete. On the other hand, where an author has an important signature doctrine (e.g. Fakhr al-Dīn on the univocity of existence) we usually quote several passages to give a full picture of this element of his thought.

One corollary of this strategy is that thinkers appear more frequently if they are more apt to innovate, or offer formulations or points that became a touchstone for subsequent authors. Authors like, say, Abū al-‘Abbās al-Lawkarī, a student of Avicenna who was usually happy simply to quote or paraphrase the master, are thus quoted only rarely. By contrast another student of Avicenna named Bahmanyār, who will emerge in this book series as far more important than usually assumed, is quoted fairly often. Of course neither of them fall within our official timespan, but we have included material from authors between Avicenna and al-Ghazālī—including al-Ghazālī himself—insofar as this seemed helpful for understanding the debate in our period proper. We do the same with pre-Avicennan authors to contextualize Avicenna, even to the extent of quoting key texts from Aristotle and other Greek philosophers. Still, we have kept this to a bare minimum, so that our choice of texts from before the 12th century is even more selective. In some cases we have saved time by quoting doxographical passages, as where an author like Ibn al-Malāḥimī or al-Shahrastānī does us the favor of summing up the previous *kalām* discussion on a given topic. Of course these doxographies are to be approached with caution

in terms of their accuracy and comprehensiveness, but they at least show how the state of play was seen in our period.

As with any sourcebook, this one could be accused of presenting material out of context. Indeed, a proponent of Gutas' "paraphilosophy" thesis would probably say that while this book sure does make it *look* like there were thousands of pages of top-notch philosophy being written in our period, this is an illusion created by the lack of framing, as can be found for instance in the programmatic statements offered at the beginnings of works. To this our response would be, first, that this series is intended to complement other scholarship that does engage holistically with the corpora of individual authors. And second, that we are offering a different kind of context, which is usually more important for understanding the point of a given passage, by situating it within a chapter full of texts on the same issue. To understand, say, Ibn Kammūna's views on the problem of universals, it is certainly not irrelevant to know about Ibn Kammūna's whole enterprise as a systematic thinker. But it is absolutely crucial to know what people had been saying about universals up to his time. It is this sort of framing that our sourcebook does provide.

In terms of our translation style, we have striven to offer as readable as possible an English version of the passages, though it must be conceded that our authors do not make this an easy task. As already noted we are dealing for the most part with highly technical and intricate argumentation, driven forward by subtle distinctions and arguments with sub-arguments and sub-sub-arguments. Often, in a borrowing from *kalām* argument technique, we are given a range of options, with all but one eliminated to leave the right answer standing.<sup>5</sup> Again, the parallel to scholastic Latin philosophy suggests itself. Another difficulty is the abundance of technical terminology. We have not been overly concerned to translate the same word always in the same way, since we believe that this would often distort the meaning. To take two notorious cases, *dhāt* is sometimes "object," sometimes "essence," sometimes "self"; the notorious word *ma'nā* appears as "meaning," "entity," and even "something." In many cases we provide transliterated Arabic in round brackets to help reader keep track of important terms, to see where the same term is being translated in different ways, and so on.

Another challenge, maybe the biggest challenge we faced apart from the sheer quantity of material, was the variable extent to which that material has

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5 An old but still very helpful study of the argumentative technique in *kalām* is J. van Ess, "The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology," in: G.E. Grunebaum (ed.), *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*, Giorgio Levi Della Vida Biennial Conference, University of California (Wiesbaden: 1970), 21–50.

been edited. Hardly any text from our period exists in a critical edition that would live up to the standards applied by, say, editors of classical Greek literature. Usually the best one can hope for is a printed edition based on one manuscript, which mentions variants from other manuscripts in the notes. In many cases there is no edition, so we translate from a manuscript, where possible while consulting other manuscripts of the same text. But with the many dozens of works involved, obviously it would have been folly to pretend that we could get an adequate philological picture of the treatises from which we were translating. Far from having worked out a *stemma codicum* for each work, we are usually just citing from whichever manuscript(s) we could get access to. It is important to bear this in mind, since it means that every passage translated here is in some sense provisional. Proper philological investigation and an improved edition could change any of them and no doubt would change many of them. Thus, alongside deeper thematic studies building on what we offer here and comprehensive investigation of individual thinkers, there remains much to do on the philological front.

Finally on the question of method, it should be explained how we worked as a team. Thanks to the support of the DFG, which funded our work on this and the subsequent volumes, we were able to employ several postdoctoral researchers at Munich. For this volume the researcher was Fedor Benevich, who is now a lecturer at Edinburgh. Our procedure was that Benevich would work through the corpus of texts, select passages for translation, and produce draft English versions. These were then revised by Adamson, who also wrote the first draft of the thematic introduction to each chapter, which was in turn revised by Benevich. This twofold structure within each chapter should allow users to access the material at different levels. Probably every reader should start with the thematic introduction to get a general sense of the debate on each topic. The passages are arranged in rough chronological order, so one can then read the chapter straight through to see how things developed from Avicenna onward, or taking guidance from the thematic introduction, go straight to individual arguments or authors of particular interest. We also hope that the books can be used in teaching, and have already had some experience using draft chapters for this purpose. On this basis, our recommendation would be for instructors to make a selection of passages from a given chapter, and have the students read just the thematic introduction and the selected passages. This is because of the size of the chapters, and the density of the material, which rewards close reading. By contrast researchers are of course encouraged to look through all the material, ideally alongside the original Arabic, and to bear in mind that there is going to be further material of relevance that was not included, for the reasons already mentioned. It should also be borne in

mind that a given passage may be relevant to more than one of our themes.<sup>6</sup> To save space we have not duplicated passages by including them in more than one chapter, but we do sometimes give cross-references to other chapters, and would encourage the reader to bear in mind that each chapter will typically be complemented by others. The introductions to each chapter will hopefully make the links between them clear.

## 2 Historical Overview

The quotations that make up the chapters are drawn from more than forty post-Avicennan philosophers who lived in the Islamic East between the late eleventh and early thirteenth century CE.<sup>7</sup> The “Islamic East” takes in the heartlands of the Muslim world at the time, stretching roughly from Syria in the West to modern-day Afghanistan in the East. Vast though this territory is, it does exclude the *maghreb*. This means that we will in these books not be covering Ibn Rushd (Averroes, d. 1198) and other thinkers who worked in Andalusia, or for that matter figures who worked in Cairo, such as the great Jewish thinker Maimonides. Certainly Avicenna was influential in this region as well, as already noted above, but it forms a separate tradition to some extent, and it would have been unfeasible to include these philosophers in our coverage. With regard to the thinkers we *are* covering, it should be borne in mind that they often travelled widely in the Eastern Islamic realms. Let’s take two prominent examples, al-Suhrawardī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. As his name indicates, the former was born in the Persian city of Suhraward. In between he journeyed first to Marāgha, later a renowned centre of scientific and philosophical activity in the time of al-Ṭūsī, and already in al-Suhrawardī’s day a place where he could be initiated into philosophy by his master Majd al-Dīn al-Jīlī. He then

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6 Moreover, some passages may be relevant for different volumes. For instance, the questions of modality and essentiality, understood nowadays as metaphysical issues, may be expected to be found in this volume. However, the reader will find the relevant chapters in the volume on Logic and Epistemology, since the authors of our period saw those issues as part of logic.

7 This section only attempts to provide a general historical overview of these authors to facilitate the use of the materials in the subsequent chapters. The reader can find detailed biobibliographical accounts of those authors in a few core publications focusing on the life and works of post-Avicennan philosophers: F. Griffel, *The Formation of Post-Classical Philosophy in Islam* (Oxford: 2021); Kh. El-Rouayheb, *The Development of Arabic Logic (1200–1800)* (Basel: 2019); A.H. al-Rahim, *The Creation of Philosophical Tradition* (Wiesbaden: 2018); U. Rudolph (ed.), *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt: 11. und 12. Jahrhundert: Zentrale und östliche Gebiete* (Basel: 2021). This section largely relies on the accounts from these sources.



travelled to Anatolia, before winding up in Damascus and Aleppo where he was executed on the orders of Saladin. As for Fakhr al-Dīn, his name too connotes his place of birth: al-Rāzī means that he came from the Persian city of Rayy. His own travels took him to Nishapur and then Marāgha, where he likewise studied with al-Jīlī. Where al-Suhrawardī went West, Fakhr al-Dīn ventured east, moving around central Asia as he became a client of rival political dynasties, the Khwārazm-Shāhs and the Ghūrīds. A work called *Debates* (*Munāẓarāt*) records his argumentative encounters with scholars in Transoxania. He finally died in Herat after rejoining the Khwārazm-Shāhs. As even this sketch shows, student-teacher relationships and patronage were key factors in the careers of our authors, as they had been for Avicenna himself.

So much for the geography; now let us turn to chronology. The history of metaphysics and theology in the Islamic East in this period can be divided into three phases, which we describe as periods of formation, culmination, and refinement. But we begin earlier than that, with a look at the background to Avicenna himself.

### 3 Prehistory

In the middle of the eleventh century, the two predominant philosophical traditions in the Islamic world were *falsafa* and *kalām*. *Falsafa* was the philosophical tradition that takes its origins from ancient and late-Ancient Greek philosophy, primarily Aristotle and Neoplatonism. It began in the ninth century CE as a by-product of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement. The most important early *falsafa*-philosophers were Abū Ya‘qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī (d. 873), Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 925), Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī (d. 974), and Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 950). Although all these authors were known in the post-Avicennan tradition, the philosophers of this later period were unanimously agreed that the philosophical tradition of *falsafa* culminated with the unique synthesis of Aristotelianism, Neoplatonism, and original thought in the works of Avicenna. Thus the reader will find only sporadically the names of other *falsafa*-philosophers in the pages of this book.

We consider *kalām* as another philosophical tradition of the Islamic world, but one very different from *falsafa* in its nature and history. Unlike *falsafa*, *kalām* barely has any historical relation to ancient and late ancient Greek philosophy. Its origins and early development are rather obscure due to the lack of sources, but it is certain that by the beginning of the eleventh century, *kalām* had developed into a fully formed philosophical tradition with its own methods, terminology, and standard issues such as proofs for the existence of God,

free will and the conditions of moral responsibility, and the composition of physical objects.<sup>8</sup> The two predominant traditions of *kalām* relevant for post-Avicennan philosophical discourse are the Mu‘tazilism and Ash‘arism.

The Mu‘tazilites who are mentioned in post-Avicennan sources can be roughly divided into two periods: classical and “reformed” Mu‘tazilism. The most influential classical Mu‘tazilite authors, the members of two competing schools of Basra and Baghdad, were Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī (d. 915/6), his son Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā‘ī (d. 933), Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī al-Ka‘bī (d. 931), Abū ‘Abdallah al-Baṣrī (d. 980), and ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. 1024). Post-Avicennan sources seem to agree that the important turn in the Mu‘tazilism came in the eleventh century with Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 1044). Abū al-Ḥusayn is credited with philosophical views that would differ from the traditional Mu‘tazilite approaches, on such questions as the nature of non-existence, the theory of states (*aḥwāl*), God’s knowledge, and theory of action. Traditionally opposed to Mu‘tazilism were the Ash‘arites, that is, the followers of Abū al-Hasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 936). The most prominent representatives of the classical Ash‘arism were Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013), Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā‘īnī (d. 1027), Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī (d. 1085), and Abū al-Qāsim al-Anṣārī (d. 1118). Ash‘arism plays crucial role in the formation of post-Avicennan philosophy, with a few philosophers describing themselves as the proponents of this school of *kalām*.

#### 4 Formation

The opposition between *falsafa* and *kalām* defines the character of philosophy in the formative period of post-Avicennan philosophy in the Islamic East.<sup>9</sup> The authors who write in this period can be divided into those who are mostly faithful to *falsafa*, that is, to the teachings of Avicenna, and those who adhere to the positions of *kalām* and attack Avicennan philosophy on this basis.

The philosophers who most appropriately may be called Avicennans are the representatives of Avicenna’s own school. The first and most influential among them is **Bahmanyār ibn al-Marzubān (d. 1044)**, a direct student of

8 On the history of *kalām*, see further S. Schmidtke (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* (Oxford, 2016) and J. van Ess, *Theology and Society in the Second and the Third Centuries of the Hijra: A History of Religious Thought in Early Islam*, 5 vols., tr. from German by J. O’Kane, G. Goldbloom, R. Otto (Brill: 2017–2020).

9 Further references on the formative period of post-Avicennan philosophy include A. Shihadeh, “From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī: 6th/12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 15 (2005): 141–179.

Avicenna.<sup>10</sup> Bahmanyār's most widely read treatise is *al-Taḥṣīl* (*The Attainment*), a reorganized and comprehensive epitome of Avicenna's teachings. *Al-Taḥṣīl* provides us with an overview of what has been recognized as Avicennism in post-Avicennan philosophy. Another of his treatises from which we quote is *Fī mawḍū' 'ilm mā ba'd al-ṭabī'a* (*On the Subject-Matter of Metaphysics*), which again demonstrates Bahmanyār's close adherence to Avicenna's philosophy.

Alongside Bahmanyār, the next important philosopher usually connected with Avicenna's school is 'Umar al-Khayyām (d. 1123/24). Although al-Khayyām is mostly known in contemporary scholarship as a poet and mathematician, he has written several short treatises in metaphysics and philosophy of religion, such as *Risāla fī al-wujūd* (*Epistle on Existence*), *al-Jawāb 'an thalāth masā'il* (*Response to Three Questions*), *Risālat al-ḍiyā' al-'aqlī* (*Epistle of Intellectual Radiance*), and *Kawn wa-taklīf* (*Generation and Obligation*). Al-Khayyām discusses in them various questions, such as distinction between essence and existence, God's essence, the nature of evil, and the nature of religious obligation in the determinist world. Al-Khayyām consistently defends Avicennan doctrine, albeit with further developments, as in the case of the conceptual distinction between essence and existence. Among the treatises listed above, al-Khayyām's *Risāla fī al-wujūd* stands out as an attempt to address the metaphysical views of Mu'tazilite *kalām* from the standpoint of Avicenna's philosophy.

The final representatives of Avicenna's school live in the first half of the twelfth century. They are 'Umar ibn Sahlān al-Sāwī (d. ca. 1145) and Sharaf al-Zamān al-Īlāqī (d. 1141). Of these two, the latter seems to be rather a minor figure, possibly due to our lack of sources, or because of his execution following the sultan Sanjar's defeat at the battle of Qaṭwān. The only work by al-Īlāqī quoted in this volume is his brief response to Taj al-Dīn al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153) on the nature of God's knowledge, in which al-Īlāqī seems to express even more radical denial of God's knowledge than Avicenna would be willing to do himself. Like al-Īlāqī, al-Sāwī also engaged in philosophical correspondence with al-Shahrastānī, but unlike al-Īlāqī, al-Sāwī seems to have been a far more influential figure. This can be seen, for instance, from the mentions of al-Sāwī in al-Suhrawardī's treatises. Among al-Sāwī's own treatises, *al-Baṣā'ir al-Naṣīriyya* (*Insights for Naṣīr al-Dīn*) bears close similarity in method and

10 See further J. Janssens, "Bahmanyār ibn Marzubān: A Faithful Disciple of Avicenna," in: D.C. Reisman and A.H. al-Rahim (eds.), *Before and After Avicenna: Proceedings of the First Conference of the Avicenna Study Group* (Leiden-Boston: 2003), 177–198.

in content to Bahmanyār's *al-Taḥṣīl* and can be used as a helpful overview of Avicennism as it was seen in the twelfth century. Still more important, arguably, are al-Sāwī's shorter treatises, which were designed as responses to two critics of Avicenna of his time, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. ca. 1165) and the aforementioned al-Shahrastānī. One of these treatises is *Nahj al-taqdīs* (*The Way to Sanctification*), in which al-Sāwī attempts to support Avicenna's denial of God's knowledge of particulars as such. (He may be the last person in the post-Avicennan tradition to do this.) Another is al-Sāwī's response to al-Shahrastānī on the nature of God's essence, which was given the title of *Muṣāra'at al-Muṣāra'a* (*The Wrestling Match with the Wrestling Match*) by a copyist, due to the similarity of al-Šahrastānī's argumentation in this epistolary exchange with al-Shahrastānī's treatise *al-Muṣāra'at al-falāsifa* (*The Wrestling Match with the Philosophers*).

Bahmanyār, al-Khayyām, al-Sāwī, and al-Īlāqī are the four main representatives of purely Avicennan *falsafa* in the formative period of post-Avicenna philosophy. Probably even more important for the formation of post-Avicennan philosophy, though, are their opponents, the scholars of *kalām* who extensively engaged with Avicenna's philosophy, criticized it, and used it in the development of their own thought. The most famous among them is, of course, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), who was allegedly responsible for the perishing of philosophy in the world of Islam, according to traditional orientalist narratives. Although this account has been widely dismissed, the importance of al-Ghazālī for the later generations is not subject to doubt. Al-Ghazālī's famous treatise *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (*The Incoherence of the Falsafa-Philosophers*) helped to set the questions that would typically be contested between partisans of *kalām* and proponents of *falsafa*, such as God's essence and God's knowledge of particulars. Also important is al-Ghazālī's treatise *Iq-tiṣād al-i'tiqād* (*Moderation in Belief*), which will be used in this volume as a rich source of the traditional Ash'arite views on various philosophical questions.

Al-Ghazālī's critique of Avicenna's philosophy from a *kalām* perspective found several followers. One of them is Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī (d. ca. 1194), the author of the treatise *Hudūth al-ālam* (*The Temporal Origination of the World*). For the purposes of this volume, this treatise will be important as an expression of Ibn Ghaylān's metaphysical views on essence and existence, God's essence, and universals, in which he appears to be close to al-Shahrastānī. Another staunch opponent of everything Avicennan is Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī (d. ca. 1194). Al-Mas'ūdī might have been the first in the long tradition of commentators on Avicenna's treatise *al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbihāt* (*Pointers and Reminders*), with his *al-Mabāḥith wa-al-shukūk 'alā kitāb al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt*

(*Investigations and Doubts on Pointers and Reminders*).<sup>11</sup> However, unlike many later commentaries on *Ishārāt*, al-Mas‘ūdī’s aim was nothing like a defence or even an elucidation of Avicenna’s philosophy. Rather, his goal was to refute Avicenna’s arguments, mostly from a proper Ghazālian Ash‘arite perspective.

Avicenna’s philosophy has come under fire not only from the position of the Ash‘arite *kalām*, but also the “reformed” Mu‘tazilites. Here, the most important source is **Rukn al-Dīn ibn Muḥammad al-Malāḥimī al-Khwārazmī** (d. 1141). He authored *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn* (*Gift for the Scholars of Kalām*), which draws extensively on al-Ghazālī and attempts to refute Avicenna’s philosophy from the perspective of Mu‘tazilite *kalām*, with respect to the same set of philosophical questions as al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut*. Ibn al-Malāḥimī is also the author of two longer *summae* of Mu‘tazilite *kalām*, *al-Fā‘iq fī uṣūl al-dīn* (*Superior Book of Theology*) and *al-Mu‘tamad fī uṣūl al-dīn* (*Fundamental Book of Theology*). These are core sources for the “reformed” Mu‘tazilite *kalām* of the school of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. For instance, Ibn al-Malāḥimī provides important information on the teachings of his school for Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.

All four authors, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Ghaylān, al-Mas‘ūdī, and Ibn al-Malāḥimī, focus primarily on criticising *falsafa* as embodied by Avicenna. Their own philosophical views remain largely faithful to the traditional philosophical positions of the Ash‘arite and Mu‘tazilite *kalām*, albeit refracted through the lens of their need to respond to Avicenna. In other authors, this primarily critical approach is integrated into a larger project. Here the first name, which has been already mentioned, is **Taj al-Dīn al-Shahrastānī** (d. 1153). He is known chiefly as the author of *al-Milal wa-al-niḥal* (*Religions and Sects*), an enormous history of philosophy and theology stretching from the pre-Socratics to the various schools of *kalām* and *falsafa*. For our purposes, though, al-Shahrastānī is more important as the author of independent philosophical treatises. These include the aforementioned *Muṣāra‘at al-falāsifa* (*The Wrestling Match with the Philosophers*). This treatise attempts to refute Avicenna’s philosophical views on God’s essence and God’s knowledge, among others. But probably the most significant treatise by al-Shahrastānī for our understanding of the formative period is his *Nihāyat al-aqdām fī ‘ilm al-kalām* (*The Utmost Point of Progress in the Science of Kalām*). In this treatise, al-Shahrastānī reconstructs the Ash‘arite and the Mu‘tazilite views on questions of metaphysics and philosophy of religion, and compares and contrasts them with the *falsafa* of Avicenna. As a res-

11 On the traditions of commentators on Avicenna’s *Ishārāt* see R. Wisnovsky, “Towards a Genealogy of Avicennism,” *Oriens* 42 (2014): 323–363 and idem, “Avicenna’s Islamic Reception,” In P. Adamson (ed.), *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, (Cambridge: 2013), 190–213.

ult, *Nihāyat al-aqdām* shows how a post-Avicenna philosopher understood the main differences between Muʿtazilites and Ashʿarites in pre-Avicennan *kalām*. *Nihāyat al-aqdām* is also one of the earliest examples of the project of integrating *falsafa* and *kalām*, which will be characteristic of the whole history of post-Avicennan philosophy.

A final figure of the formative period, possibly belonging already to its culmination, is **Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī** (d. ca. 1165), a Jewish scholar who, according to most sources, converted to Islam at some point of his life. The magnum opus of Abū al-Barakāt is *al-Muʿtabar* (*The Carefully Considered* or *The Reconsidered*). Abū al-Barakāt cannot be easily placed in the *falsafa* or *kalām* camp. *Al-Muʿtabar* demonstrates that he is a highly original and independent thinker, who draws on doctrines and arguments from both traditions and elaborates on them freely, based on his own personal reflection. Abū al-Barakāt structures the book according to his own vision of the relationship between different branches of philosophy. Some of *al-Muʿtabar*'s philosophical positions are Avicennan, and they will serve as an important foundation for later developments in Avicennans (this applies for instance to his understanding of God's essence). On other topics, like God's knowledge of particulars, he adopts a strongly anti-Avicennan stance, and here he becomes a touchstone for both Avicennans and anti-Avicennans. Finally, Abū al-Barakāt's libertarianism and denial of God's knowledge of future contingents are unique in post-Avicennan philosophy, with an early Shiʿite scholar of *kalām*, Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam (d. ca. 795/6 CE), being the only other proponent of such views known to us. Abū al-Barakāt project of integration, reconsideration and reformation would be extremely influential in the culmination period of post-Avicennan philosophy, with such luminaries as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and al-Suhrawardī reacting against some of his positions and arguments and accepting others.

## 5 Culmination

Speaking of whom, the formative period of post-Avicennan philosophy reaches its culmination towards the second half of the twelfth century with **Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī** (d. 1210) and **Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī** (d. 1191). Both of these philosophers attempt to set a new agenda by replacing the contest between Avicenna and *kalām*, so characteristic of the formative period, with their own philosophies. Both will prove successful.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī can primarily be considered a prodigy of Ashʿarite *kalām*. There is a direct teacher-student link between al-Rāzī and the school of al-Juwaynī. In most of his treatises, al-Rāzī often appears to defend an Ashʿarite

point of view, on issues including determinism, God's essence, and the nature of good and evil. Still, it would not be appropriate to characterize al-Rāzī *simply* as an Ash'arite. In effect, al-Rāzī is carrying out a project not unlike that of al-Shahrastānī in *Nihāyat al-aqdām*. He looks back on Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite *kalām*, as well as the *falsafa* of Avicenna (and sometimes even other *falāsifa*, such as Abū Bakr al-Rāzī), analyzes their views and arguments, and evaluates which philosophical position has the upper hand. Al-Rāzī thus sees himself as an umpire in the contest between *kalām* and *falsafa*. But he goes far beyond al-Shahrastānī's project, becoming one of the great systematizers in the history of philosophy in the Islamic world. He bends over backwards to consider all possible views which have been held, or even could be held, on each philosophical problem, and then supplies all the arguments that could be brought to bear in favor of this or that solution. As readers often lament, it can remain unclear what al-Rāzī's own view might be, especially given that he appears to defend different positions in different treatises. Still, it needs to be emphasized that al-Rāzī lists of arguments remain almost identical from one treatise to another, with only slight additions or rephrasing. Given this consistency, it is highly unlikely that al-Rāzī is constantly changing his mind. Rather, he is simply more interested in an analytical project whereby philosophical positions and arguments are reduced to their underlying assumptions and principles, so as to reveal how different philosophical positions follow from different presuppositions.

Fakhr al-Dīn is the author of multiple lengthy treatises. In the context of the history of Islam, he is most famous for writing his voluminous commentary on Quran (*al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*). For the purposes of this volume, though, al-Rāzī's systematic treatises will be more relevant. The most important titles among them are *Ishāra fī 'ilm al-kalām* (*Pointer on the Science of Kalām*), *al-Mabāhith al-mashriqiyya fī 'ilm al-ilāhiyyāt wa-al-ṭabī'iyyāt* (*Eastern Investigations in Metaphysics and Physics*), *Nihāyat al-'uqūl fī dirāyat al-uṣūl* (*Summit of Intellectual Knowledge in Theology*), *Mulakhkhaṣ fī al-ḥikma wa-al-mantiq* (*Summary on Philosophy and Logic*), *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-al-muta'akhhirīn* (*Epitome of The Ancient and Modern Thought*), *al-Arba'īn fī uṣūl al-dīn* (*Forty Questions on Theology*), *al-Ma'ālim fī uṣūl al-dīn* (*Signs in Theology*), *al-Risāla al-kamālīyya fī al-haqā'iq al-ilāhiyya* (*Complete Epistle on Metaphysical Truths*), *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbihāt* (*Commentary on Pointers and Reminders*), *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma* (*Commentary on Origins of Wisdom*), and *al-Maṭālib al-'āliyya min al-'ilm al-ilāhī* (*Lofty Inquiries on Metaphysics*). Each of these treatises has its own aim that determines its structure, contents, and the arguments and positions which al-Rāzī discusses. Some have a clear Ash'arite leaning, such as *Nihāyat al-'uqūl* or the *Muḥaṣṣal*, while other treatises seem

to be more grounded in Avicenna's philosophy, like the *Mabāḥith*. But most of the other works just listed are hard to label as being either representative of al-Rāzī's Ash'arite views or of his interest in Avicenna's philosophy. They should be more appropriately regarded as the products of al-Rāzī's own philosophical genius, which seeks to replace both Avicennan *falsafa* and *kalām* with a new synthesis (determining the nature of this synthesis remains a desideratum for future research).

Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī had a similar ambition. He lived a very short life because he was executed by Saladin for political plotting in 1191. Yet he managed to write a series of treatises that changed the course of post-Avicennan philosophy forever. For a long time, al-Suhrawardī's philosophy, which he himself calls "philosophy of illumination," was presented in modern scholarship as a turn from philosophy to mysticism and spiritualism. But this is not the picture that the reader will find in this book. Rather, just as al-Rāzī's project may be regarded as a development of al-Shahrastānī's project, so can al-Suhrawardī's project be regarded as a development of Abū al-Barakāt's project (something neither of them would probably like to hear, given al-Rāzī's critical view of al-Shahrastānī and al-Suhrawardī's contempt for Abū al-Barakāt).<sup>12</sup> Al-Suhrawardī's main goal is to reform and develop Avicenna's philosophy, with the aim of producing a better, more defensible version. With respect to some philosophical questions, al-Suhrawardī remains consistently Avicennan, for instance, regarding the nature of good and evil, or determinism. But in most other cases, al-Suhrawardī fashions a "reformed Avicennism" by arguing for positions that were never explicitly stated by Avicenna, such as conceptualism with regard to the notion of existence and the generic universals, God's direct knowledge of particulars, or the difference in perfection between God's existence and the existence of other things. Al-Suhrawardī develops these ideas either on purely Avicennan grounds or by drawing insights from the authors of the formative period of post-Avicennan philosophy, especially al-Khayyām and Abū al-Barakāt.<sup>13</sup>

Al-Suhrawardī's most important treatises are *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* (*Philosophy of Illumination*), *al-Talwīḥāt al-lawḥiyya wa-al-'arshīyya* (*Intimations of the Tablet and the Throne*), *al-Mashārī' wa-al-muṭārahāt* (*Paths and Havens*), *al-Muqāwamāt* (*Opposites*), *al-Lamaḥāt* (*Flashes of Light*), *Hayākil al-nūr* (*Temples of Light*), and *Partūnāma* (*Sun Rays*). It has been common to divide these

12 See, for instance, al-Rāzī, *Munāzarāt*, 39 and al-Suhrawardī, *Mašārī', Ilāhiyyāt*. 471.

13 This view of al-Suhrawardī has been recently defended in J. Kaukua, *Suhrawardī's Illuminism: A Philosophical Study* (Leiden-Boston: 2022).



treatises into two groups, pro-Avicennan and illuminationist,<sup>14</sup> but we have found no solid basis for this. Only *al-Lamaḥḥāt* stands out as a summary of purely Avicennan philosophy. All the other treatises form a unity, which represents al-Suhrawardī's own take on Avicennan philosophy characterized by distinctively "illuminationist" elements, such as anti-realism about the notion of existence, a theory of celestial intelligences called the "Lords of Species," a direct realist epistemological theory of knowledge as presence, and so on. *Hikmāt al-ishrāq*, which was traditionally supposed to be the only treatise representative of al-Suhrawardī's personal philosophy, is mostly in harmony with al-Suhrawardī's other treatises. It is distinguished primarily just by the additional emphasis on the terminology of "light" in the second part of the book. Yet its argumentation is predominantly a summary of lengthy discussions in *al-Mashārī'*. The latter, in fact, appears to be the most valuable source for al-Suhrawardī's philosophy. It presents a detailed account of al-Suhrawardī's philosophical argumentation and of his reaction to Avicennism, Abū al-Barakāt, and *kalām*. Still, his other treatises do offer additional insights in al-Suhrawardī's version of reformed Avicennism.

## 6 Refinement

If the formative period described above was characterized as a contest between Avicenna and *kalām*, the period after al-Rāzī and al-Suhrawardī up until the end of the thirteenth century was a time of contest between their two philosophies. Al-Rāzī becomes the new *kalām*, al-Suhrawardī the new Avicenna. Avicenna himself and the earlier treatises of *kalām* are still read, but they are always interpreted and understood through the lens of these two thinkers. When we need to identify a philosophical tradition, we usually speak about a common set of questions, arguments and available positions as well as some standard terminology. This is precisely the framework that al-Rāzī and al-Suhrawardī create for philosophy in the thirteenth century. From al-Rāzī's analytical and systematic approach, authors inherit a determinate set of arguments, principles, and positions. Meanwhile al-Suhrawardī's reformist approach to Avicenna defines a series of standard notions, such as the "merely conceptual (*i'tibārī*)," "concrete being (*huwīyya*)," "knowledge by presence (*'ilm huḍūrī*)," and "the Lords of Species (*arbāb al-naw'*)."

14 On the division of al-Suhrawardī's treatises, see H. Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990).

The influence of al-Rāzī and al-Suhrawardī was felt immediately. The first to fall under al-Rāzī's spell were his direct disciples. Among them, we have surviving works of only one, **Zayn al-Dīn al-Kashshī** (d. ca. 1221/2). His main work is *Ḥadā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq* (*Gardens of Truths*), a philosophical summa that is largely indebted to al-Rāzī. At the same time, we can observe the influence of al-Suhrawardī already in al-Kashshī, who speaks of divine Lights and Lords of Species. Another student of al-Rāzī, **Quṭb al-Dīn al-Miṣrī** (d. 1221) may not have produced philosophical texts available to us, but he taught one of the most influential scholars of the thirteenth century, **Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī** (d. 1265?). Al-Abharī is a paradigm author of the post-Rāzian and post-Suhrawardian era. He authors more than a dozen short treatises, most of which attempt to cover the whole of philosophy, from logic to metaphysics and natural philosophy. In these treatises, al-Abharī does to al-Rāzī and al-Suhrawardī what they did to Avicenna and *kalām*. That is, al-Abharī systemizes arguments and positions, adds further options, and explains how al-Suhrawardī's views and argumentation fit into al-Rāzī's analytical scheme of philosophy.

Al-Abharī's allegiance to the Rāzian reading of *kalām* and to Suhrawardian reformed Avicennism seem to be in flux across his treatises. Some of them, such as *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* (*Revelation of the Truths*), *Tanzīl al-afkār* (*Settlement of Thoughts*) and *Risāla fī 'ilm al-kalām* (*Epistle on the Science of Kalām*) go more in the direction of al-Rāzī. Other texts, such as *Bayān al-asrār* (*Explanation of Secrets*), *Zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq* (*Cream of Truths*), *Muntahā al-afkār fī ibānat al-asrār* (*Final Thoughts to Explicate the Secrets*), and *Talkhīṣ al-ḥaqā'iq* (*Summary of Truths*) clearly follow al-Suhrawardī on most points. Al-Abharī's *Hidāyat al-ḥikma* (*Philosophical Guidance*) is just a faithful exposition of truly Avicennan philosophy, which may be why it becomes a common basis for later commentaries. With al-Abharī, we encounter once again one of the core puzzles regarding post-Avicennan philosophy: why would one and the same author write so many different treatises, which express mutually contradictory views? While this question arises with al-Rāzī himself, with al-Abharī it becomes even more puzzling. Different answers can be given—different genres, audiences, didactic purposes, or periods of life—but the question still requires further research.<sup>15</sup> The Abharian synthesis of al-Rāzī and al-Suhrawardī must be the product of his studies with the aforementioned Quṭb al-Dīn al-Miṣrī and the astronomer and mathematician **Kamāl al-Dīn ibn Yūnus** (d. 1242). No philosophical treatise of Kamāl al-Dīn survives, yet his impact on philosophy in the thirteenth

15 Some possible solutions to this puzzle can be found in Griffel, *Formation*.

century is significant. His school in Mosul might have been the place where al-Suhrawardī's philosophy was transmitted to subsequent generations.<sup>16</sup>

This hypothesis—and for now it remains only a hypothesis—can take some support from the scholarly profile of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274). Just like al-Abharī, al-Ṭūsī studied with al-Rāzī's student Quṭb al-Dīn al-Miṣrī and with Kamāl al-Dīn ibn Yūnūs. Al-Ṭūsī is among the most famous post-Avicennan philosophers, alongside al-Rāzī and al-Suhrawardī themselves. His fame is due above all to his work as an astronomer. But within philosophy, his most frequently consulted text is *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt* (*Commentary on Pointers and Reminders*), a critical response to al-Rāzī's earlier commentary on Avicenna's *Pointers and Reminders*. Due to this response, al-Ṭūsī has earned the reputation of being the greatest defender of Avicenna's philosophy after Avicenna. Al-Ṭūsī's other treatise *Maṣāri' al-Muṣāri'* (*Fatalities of the Wrestler*), directed against al-Shahrastānī's *Muṣāra'a* (*Wrestling Match*) in defence of Avicenna, is another case to the point.

Yet the usual depiction of al-Ṭūsī as a staunchly orthodox Avicennist is an oversimplification. Al-Ṭūsī's works are a product of his time, following in the footsteps of al-Abharī, and influenced by al-Suhrawardī's reformed Avicennism, possibly through the school of his master Kamāl al-Dīn ibn Yūnūs. Signs of this would include his conceptualism with regard to existence and generic notions, or his stance on God's knowledge of particulars. Al-Ṭūsī's life goal is not just to defend Avicenna, but to correct and refine post-Avicennan philosophy as it has reached him. This can be seen for instance from al-Ṭūsī's *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal* (*Summary of the Epitome*), which is another critical response to al-Rāzī, now to the latter's treatise *al-Muḥaṣṣal*. Here, al-Ṭūsī's project is not that of a defensive Avicennan but a thoroughgoing critic of al-Rāzī, for his understanding of *falsafa*, for his understanding of *kalām*, and anything else that comes up.

Al-Ṭūsī is the author of innumerable shorter treatises. His *Tajrīd al-'aqā'id* (*Extraction of Beliefs*) is al-Ṭūsī's updating of the *kalām* summa for a post-Rāzī, post-Suhrawardī era: his writing here is however so compressed that it is almost impossible to understand it without the commentary of his student al-Ḥillī, which is entitled *Kashf al-murād fī sharḥ Tajrīd al-i'tiqād* (*Revealing the Meaning of the Extraction of Beliefs*). Al-Ṭūsī is also the author of a numerous epistolary exchanges with his contemporaries, collected in a recent edition of *Ajwibat al-masā'il al-naṣīriyya* (*Answers to Questions for Naṣīr al-Dīn*), a brilliant

16 That al-Suhrawardī was studied in the school of Ibn Yūnūs is mentioned in 'Abd al-Laṭīf's autobiography. See C. Martini Bonadeo, *'Abd al-Laṭīf's al-Bağdādī's Philosophical Journey: From Aristotle's Metaphysics to the Metaphysical Science* (Leiden-Boston: 2013), 124.

representation of the thriving, interconnected network of philosophers in the Islamic East in the middle of the thirteenth century.

Among al-Ṭūsī's correspondents and colleagues is Shams al-Dīn al-Kātibī al-Qazwīnī (d. 1276). He is a student al-Abharī, as we can clearly see from his treatise *Jāmi' al-daqa'iq fi kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* (*Collected Subtleties in Revelation of the Truths*) which largely follows al-Abharī's brand of Suhrawardian reformed Avicennism. Al-Kātibī's *Ḥikmat al-'ayn* (*The Quintessence of Wisdom*), focusing on metaphysics and natural philosophy, is however more balanced between al-Rāzī and al-Abharī. In fact, al-Kātibī appears to be very much interested in al-Rāzī's philosophy, with his commentary on al-Rāzī's *Mulakhkhaṣ* (*Munassaṣṣaṣ fi sharḥ al-Mulakhkhaṣ*) being a paradigm example of why we call this period one of "refinement." Al-Kātibī carefully studies al-Rāzī's texts, interprets them sentence by sentence, and provides critical evaluation, based on either al-Abharī's and al-Ṭūsī's insights or his own logical considerations. Al-Kātibī is indeed famous as one of the most influential logicians, with his treatise *al-Risāla al-Shamsiyya* (*Treatise for Shams al-Dīn*) destined to become *the* handbook of logic in post-classical philosophy in the Islamic world.

Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286) belongs to the same circle of scholars as al-Ṭūsī and al-Kātibī. One might be surprised to find his name here, as he is a Christian author, writing mainly in Syriac, and known to contemporary scholarship mostly as a historian. However, Bar Hebraeus is no less an "heir of Avicenna" than al-Ṭūsī and al-Ḥillī.<sup>17</sup> His *Ḥēwath hekhmthā* (*Cream of Wisdom*) is a presentation of Avicennan philosophy, heavily influenced by contemporary discussions in al-Abharī and al-Ṭūsī. Bar Hebraeus' lengthy theological compendium *Mnārath qudhshē* (*Candelabrum of the Sanctuary*) is likewise indebted to the Rāzian systematization of *kalām* and the Abharian-Ṭūsian updating of Avicennism. Bar Hebraeus' goal is to adapt the mixture of *falsafa* and *kalām*, typical of philosophy of his century, for use in Christianity, and to make it available to a new audience by writing in Syriac.

In the younger generation of this circle we have Ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, also known as al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 1325). Apart from the aforementioned exegesis of al-Ṭūsī's *Tajrid* in *Kashf al-murād*, al-Ḥillī also wrote a few independent works, such as *Taslik al-nafs ilā ḥaḏīrat al-quds* (*Conveying the Soul to Paradise*) and *Nihāyat al-marām fi 'ilm al-kalām* (*The Utmost Objective in the Science of Kalām*), both being works of *kalām*, and *al-Asrār al-khaṭiyya* (*Hidden Secrets*),

17 This view on Bar Hebraeus is corroborated by S. Rassi, *Christian Thought in the Medieval Islamic World: 'Abdīshō of Nisibis and the Apologetic Tradition* (Oxford: 2022) and H. Takahashi, "The Reception of Ibn Sīnā in Syriac: The Case of Barhebraeus," in D. Reisman (ed.), *Before and After Avicenna* (Leiden: 2003), 249–281.

an elaborate study of all parts of philosophy. In all of his works, al-Ḥillī shows how much he is influenced by his teacher, al-Ṭūsī. Al-Ḥillī is sometimes credited with being among the most influential Shī'ite scholars, and a reviver of neo-Mu'tazilism of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, now in a Shī'ite context.<sup>18</sup> Note, however, that both prominent elements of al-Ḥillī's Mu'tazilism, moral realism and compatibilism, are already present in al-Ṭūsī. Still, al-Ḥillī's independent works do not shy away from criticizing the arguments and positions provided by his teacher, providing another stage in the refinement of post-Avicennan philosophy. In this regard, al-Ḥillī is a more interesting source for the later stage of the Ṭūsian circle than his younger contemporary **Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī** (d. ca. 1330), whose *al-Muḥākamāt bayna Naṣīr al-Dīn wa-al-imām Fakhr al-Rāzī* (*Discussions between Naṣīr al-Dīn and Fakhr al-Rāzī*) appears to be a largely secondary compilation of al-Rāzī's and al-Ṭūsī's commentaries on Avicenna's *Ishārāt*.

So far, we have considered one line of scholars in the thirteenth century, those who reacted to al-Rāzī and were indirectly influenced by al-Suhrawardī through the school of Kamāl ibn Yūnus and al-Abharī. In this line of the tradition, al-Suhrawardī's heritage is present only to the extent of being understood as a better, stronger version of Avicennism, for instance with regard to the question of God's knowledge of particulars, God's essence, and a conceptualist understanding of existence. The metaphysics of Light is marginalised in this tradition, if it is mentioned at all. Indeed, the later representatives of this tradition may not even be aware of it when they are following al-Suhrawardī.

The situation is very different with three other scholars of the late thirteenth century, whose direct and explicit adherence to the philosophy of al-Suhrawardī is beyond any doubt. They are Ibn Kammūna, Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī, and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī. The senior of them is **ʿIzz al-Dawla ibn Kammūna** (d. after 1284) a Jewish philosopher from Baghdad and a clear adherent of al-Suhrawardī's illuminationism.<sup>19</sup> He writes a commentary on al-Suhrawardī's *Talwīḥāt* (*Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*), in which he explains the dense text of *al-Talwīḥāt* through al-Suhrawardī's own *Mashārīʿ*, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, and *Muqāwamāt*. Another important work of Ibn Kammūna is *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma* (*The Innovative in Philosophy*) a concise compendium of illuminationism, influ-

18 See, for instance, S. Schmidtke, *The Theology of al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī* (d. 726/1325) (Berlin: 1991).

19 A detailed study on Ibn Kammūna's life and works is R. Pourjavadi and S. Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad: ʿIzz al-Dawla Ibn Kammūna* (d. 683/1284) (Leiden: 2006).

enced by al-Suhrawardī, al-Abharī, al-Ṭūsī and—reaching back all the way to the generation of Avicenna’s students—Bahmanyār’s *Tahṣīl*.<sup>20</sup> Ibn Kammūna’s method in *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma* recalls that of al-Ḥillī’s *Asrār*, with its focus on a succinct analytical presentation of arguments supporting correct positions, instead of presenting all possible positions, as common in the systematic tradition of al-Rāzī. Finally, Ibn Kammūna is also the author of a series of treatises on immortality and the transmigration of the soul, which will be treated in a further volume of our series.

We know little about what attracted Ibn Kammūna to the direct study of al-Suhrawardī’s own works, instead of just using the simplified version of al-Suhrawardī, as transmitted through the school of Kamāl ibn Yūnus. A hint may be that Ibn Kammūna wrote an epitome of **Najm al-Dīn al-Nakhjawānī** (d. after 1229) *Commentary* of Avicenna’s *Pointers* (*Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*).<sup>21</sup> Almost nothing is known about this al-Nakhjawānī so far, but his surviving commentary of Avicenna’s *Pointers* (if it is the same text that Ibn Kammūna summarizes) does include a few illuminationist passages, from which we will be quoting. Ibn Kammūna in turn certainly influences **Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī** (d. after 1288). The latter goes further than Ibn Kammūna, departing from a more Avicennan al-Suhrawardī to a proper, self-standing illuminationism. Indeed it would be fair to credit (or blame) al-Shahrazūrī as having propagated the aforementioned reading of al-Suhrawardī’s illuminationism as something entirely new and non-Avicennan. In his treatises *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* (*Commentary on the Philosophy of Illumination*) and *al-Shajara al-ilāhiyya* (*Divine Tree*), al-Shahrazūrī uses Ibn Kammūna’s *Commentary* on al-Suhrawardī’s *Talwīḥāt* extensively, but focuses more than Ibn Kammūna on al-Suhrawardī’s metaphysics of Light, so as to portray his metaphysics as profoundly non-Avicennan. At the same time, al-Shahrazūrī’s treatise *al-Shajara al-ilāhiyya* is among the most helpful sources on the state of philosophical discussion around the end of the thirteenth century. It is a valuable analytical sourcebook of post-Rāzian and post-Suhrawardian philosophy, which provides an almost exhaustive list of positions and arguments on various questions of metaphysics, theology, natural sciences, and the philosophy of mind, ascribed to al-Rāzī, al-Abharī, al-Ṭūsī, and Ibn Kammūna, all with evaluative remarks by al-Shahrazūrī himself. In this regard, al-Shahrazūrī appears to be a more valuable source than

20 See further H. Eichner, “The Chapter ‘On Existence and Non-existence’ of Ibn Kammūna’s ‘al-Jadīd fī l-Ḥikma’: Trends and Sources in an Author’s Shaping the Exegetical Tradition of al-Suhrawardī’s Ontology,” in Y.T. Langermann (ed.), *Avicenna and His Legacy* (Brepols, 2009), 143–178.

21 R. Pourjavadi and S. Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad*, 85–86.

the final Illuminationist in our period, **Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 1311)**, whose *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-ishrāq (Commentary on Philosophy of Illumination)* is largely secondary to Ibn Kammūna and al-Shahrazūrī, despite being widely read in the later tradition.<sup>22</sup>

Both the Abharian-Ṭūsian philosophical circle and the Illuminationists influenced by Ibn Kammūna engage in the project of refinement, building on the achievements of the period of culmination. They do not create new systems of philosophy but adjust, re-systematize, and explicate the positions and arguments that al-Rāzī and al-Suhrawardī have left to them, sometimes adding new arguments. There is, however, one last line of philosophers in the thirteenth century which takes distance from Suhrawardian reformed Avicennism. The first to be mentioned here is **Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 1233)**. In effect, al-Āmidī is still a representative of the previous period of post-Avicennan philosophy. For him, philosophy remains a contest between *kalām* and *falsafa*, not between al-Rāzī and al-Suhrawardī. And like al-Rāzī and al-Abharī, al-Āmidī writes a series of treatises that demonstrate different allegiances.<sup>23</sup> His *al-Nūr al-bāhir (Luminous Light)* is a compendium of orthodox Avicennan philosophy, reminiscent of the early works of Avicenna's own school from the formative period. His *Kashf al-tamwihāt fī Sharḥ al-Rāzī 'alā al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbihāt (Revealing al-Rāzī's Frauds in his Commentary of Pointers and Reminders)* is a response to al-Rāzī's *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, not so much interested in defending Avicenna as in showing that al-Rāzī is wrong about everything (as we said about the later *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, by al-Ṭūsī). Likewise, al-Āmidī's *Rumūz al-kunūz (Signs of Treasures)* and *Daqā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq (Subtleties of Truths)* demonstrate engagement with al-Rāzī, while at times being explicitly more critical of Avicenna. Finally, al-Āmidī's *Abkār al-afkār fī uṣūl al-dīn (Firstborn Thoughts in Theology)* and *Ghāyat al-marām fī 'ilm al-kalām (The End of Objectives in The Science of Kalām)* go in a completely different direction. Here, al-Āmidī presents himself as a staunch proponent of orthodox Ash'arite *kalām*, trying to escape al-Rāzī's influence so as to return to the original pre-Rāzian *kalām*. Towards this end, in the *Ghāyat al-marām*, al-Āmidī uses al-Shahrastānī's *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, among others. Al-Āmidī's *Abkār al-afkār* and *Ghāyat al-marām* represent the last attempt to defend the traditional *kalām* metaphysics, physics, and philo-

22 A rather different view of Quṭb al-Dīn is found in J. Walbridge, *The Science of Mystic Lights: Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī and the Illuminationist Tradition in Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: 1992).

23 See L. Hassan, *Ash'arism Encounters Avicennism: Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī on Creation*, 283–294.

sophy of mind. But as our chapters show, al-Āmidī seems to have no influence on metaphysics and theology in the Islamic East in the thirteenth century.

Afdal al-Dīn al-Khūnajī (d. 1248) is another author of the refinement period who managed to remain untouched by al-Suhrawardī's version of the reformed Avicennism. In his works, al-Khūnajī is mostly focused on adjudicating between traditional Avicennism and al-Rāzī, and on developing his own ideas in logic. Indeed, al-Khūnajī's most important contributions are all in logic, with his treatise *Kashf al-asrār 'an ghawāmiḍ al-afkār* (*Revealing the Secrets of Abstruse Thoughts*) being among the most influential reformist writings in the history of post-Avicennan logic. Al-Khūnajī will barely appear in this volume, but will take a central place in the volume on Logic and Epistemology.

In the second half of the thirteenth century Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī (d. 1283) is the next to lie outside the tradition initiated by the school of Kamāl ibn Yūnus. As with al-Khūnajī, al-Urmawī's main historical achievement consists in his writings on logic. Yet his *Maṭāli' al-anwār* (*The Dawning of Lights*) also includes a section on metaphysics, which again focuses on the clash between Avicenna and al-Rāzī. Al-Urmawī is particularly interested in the relationship between *falsafa* and *kalām* and devotes a short treatise *Risāla fī al-farq bayna naw'ay al-'ilm al-ilāhī wa-al-kalām* (*Treatise on the Difference in Kind between Metaphysics and Kalām*) to this question.

A final figure who may be placed in this category is Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī (d. either 1303 or 1322). Al-Samarqandī studied with Burhān al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 1289), whose auto-commentary *Sharḥ Asās al-kiyāsa* (*Commentary on the Foundations of Intelligence*) yet again engages with Avicenna and al-Rāzī as two opponents. Al-Samarqandī adopts a similar approach in his *al-Ṣaḥā'if al-ilāhiyya* (*Divine Pages*) and his auto-commentary (*Ma'ārif al-Ṣaḥā'if*). This is a work of *kalām*, which focuses on the traditional views of the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites and contrasts them with the Avicennan version of *falsafa*—all this, predictably enough, filtered through al-Rāzī. Unlike the last two mentioned authors, however, al-Samarqandī does not escape the influence of the Abharian-Ṭūsian philosophy. This can be seen just from his use of terminology like *naḥs al-amr* (a calling card of Ṭūsian philosophy), and more substantively from his agreement with al-Ṭūsī's version of compatibilism. Despite being indebted to al-Rāzī and al-Ṭūsī, al-Samarqandī demonstrates curious originality, which can be observed, for instance, in his analysis of the notion of existence. Like al-Urmawī, al-Samarqandī is interested in the relationship between *falsafa* metaphysics and *kalām*, and he takes a similar view on this question. Further treatises by al-Samarqandī include another text of *kalām*, *al-Mu'taqad li-i'tiqād ahl al-islām* (*The Contents of Belief of the People of Islam*), and a logical treatise *Qisṭās al-afkār fī taḥqīq al-asrār* (*Balance of Thoughts in Understand-*



*ing the Secrets*). Al-Samarqandī is otherwise known as the author responsible for emergence of a new genre, *ādāb al-baḥth*, focused on theory of argumentation, which became important in the later centuries. Al-Samarqandī stands at the end for the Rāzian line of philosophy in the thirteenth century, just as al-Ḥillī does so for the Abharian-Ṭūsian line, and al-Shahrazūrī for the Illuminationists. These three authors mark the end of the period of the “Heirs of Avicenna.”

## 7 Others

In the previous sections of this historical overview, we have described the main historical developments in post-Avicennan philosophy between the middle of the eleventh and the end of the thirteenth centuries in the Islamic East. There are, however, a few authors who fall outside of these main developments, or just are so marginal that they cannot easily be integrated in the historical picture of schools and traditions given above.

First of all, we need to mention two representatives of what is sometimes called “philosophical Sufism,” ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī (d. 1131) and Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 1274). For the purposes of this volume, both al-Hamadhānī and al-Qūnawī play a role insofar as both react to some contemporary discussions in the mainstream development of post-Avicenna philosophy. Thus ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt with his treatise *Zubdat al-ḥaqā’iq* (*Cream of Truths*) represents a reaction from the perspective of philosophical Sufism to the developments in the formative period of post-Avicenna philosophy. Al-Qūnawī, in his turn, reacts to the processes in the Abharian-Ṭūsian circles in his epistolary exchange with al-Ṭūsī (*Murāsālāt bayna Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī wa-Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī*). We hope to provide more information on both authors and the development of post-Avicennan philosophical Sufism in general in a separate volume in this series.

Two further authors are Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī (d. 1229) and Ibn al-Nafīs (d. 1288). Each of them is famous for their writings in the areas outside of philosophy. Al-Sakkākī’s most famous contributions are in the areas of language and magic. Ibn al-Nafīs is primarily famous for his contributions in medicine. Still, both al-Sakkākī’s *Miftaḥ al-‘ulūm* (*Key to the Sciences*) and Ibn al-Nafīs’ *Sharḥ al-wurayqāt fī al-manṭiq* (*Commentary on Logic Textbooks*) contribute to the history of logic (and, hence, will be addressed in the Logic volume of this series). Based on the example of these two polymaths, one can observe the integration of the scholarly community of the thirteenth century Islamic East into the philosophical discourse of the “heirs of Avicenna.”

Finally yet importantly, there is one more author in the early thirteenth century who lies outside our main historical framework. His name is Afḍal al-Dīn al-Kāshānī, more commonly known as **Bābā Afḍal** (d. ca. 1213/14). Otherwise known as a Persian poet, Bābā Afḍal is also the author of a few philosophical treatises, such as *Madārij al-kamāl* (*The Levels of Perfection*), *ʿArḍnāma* (*The Book of Displays*), and *Taqrīrāt wa fuṣūl muqattaʿa* (*Miscellaneous Expositions and Issues*), as well as some philosophical letters. Bābā Afḍal is primarily a Neoplatonic philosopher, something rather unusual for this period of post-Avicennan philosophy.<sup>24</sup> Still, as the reader will see, Bābā Afḍal's philosophy is largely integrated into Avicenna's conceptual framework, using the same arguments in application to different terminology, and discussing a similar set of issues as we find among the "heirs of Avicenna." In this regard, Bābā Afḍal is different from his contemporary ʿAbd al-Lāṭif al-Baḡhdādī (d. 1231), whose turned so decisively away from anything Avicennan that we decided not to include him in this volume.<sup>25</sup>

## 8 Online Text Resource

All the texts quoted in this volume are available in a free online resource which can be found at:

[www.heirsofavicenna.net](http://www.heirsofavicenna.net)

There users will find the passages in their original languages, mostly in Arabic but also Greek, Persian, and Syriac, with the same division into chapters and text numbers.

24 Cf. W. Chittick, *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy: The Quest of Self-Knowledge in the Teachings of Afḍal al-dīn al-Kāshānī* (Oxford: 2001).

25 See further Martini Bonadeo, *ʿAbd al-Lāṭif's al-Baḡhdādī's Philosophical Journey*.

## The Subject Matter of Metaphysics and *Kalām*

Since this book is concerned with issues that Avicenna understood as falling under the discipline of metaphysics, it seems sensible to begin with the question of what he took metaphysics to be. Sciences in the Aristotelian framework are distinguished by their subject-matter, so we can pose the question more precisely by asking what the subject-matter (*mawḍūʿ*) of metaphysics is. Famously, Avicenna and Averroes disagreed about this. Whereas Averroes thought that the subject-matter of metaphysics is, or at least includes, the divine, Avicenna ruled this out on the basis that no science proves the existence of its own subject-matter.<sup>1</sup> Rather, the subject-matter is simply “granted” or “assumed” (*musallam*), as, for example, the existence of motion is taken for granted, not proven, in physics [T1]. But it is a task for the metaphysician to prove that God exists, and Avicenna duly does so in the metaphysical sections of his various works.<sup>2</sup> Nor is metaphysics devoted to the study of causes more generally, and for the same reason metaphysics has to establish the existence of causation. In support of this claim, Avicenna offers the observation that (as al-Ghazālī and Hume will later argue) sensation can establish only “conjunction,” not causation [T2]. Thus we need a science that is not based on sensation to prove causation, and this is metaphysics.

For Avicenna, the right answer to the question is that metaphysics is about “the existent as such (*al-mawjūd bi-mā huwa mawjūd*).” This means that metaphysics should also inquire into the proper accidents or “accompanying features (*lawāḥiq*)” of existence, “like one and many, potentiality and actuality, universal and particular, and possible and necessary” [T3]; this is echoed by Bahmanyār [T7] and al-Nasafī [T25], who explains how metaphysics investigates unity as an “attachment” of existence. With this, Avicenna places existence at the center of the highest philosophical science. One advantage of doing so

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- 1 For this dispute see A. Bertolacci, “Avicenna and Averroes on the Proof of God’s Existence and the Subject-Matter of Metaphysics,” *Medioevo* 32 (2007), 61–98; C. Cerami, “Signe physique, signe métaphysique: Averroès contre Avicenne sur le statut épistémologique des sciences,” in C. Cerami (ed.), *Nature et sagesse: Les rapports entre physique et métaphysique dans la tradition aristotélicienne* (Louvain: 2014), 429–474; C. Cerami, *Génération et substance: Aristote et Averroès entre physique et métaphysique* (Berlin: 2015). On Avicenna’s understanding of the role of metaphysics see more generally A. Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle’s Metaphysics in Avicenna’s Kitāb al-Šifā’: A Milestone of Western Metaphysical Thought* (Leiden 2006).
  - 2 See further the chapter below, Proofs of God’s Existence.

is that he can easily make sense of the contents of (most of) Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which several times announces its own topic as "being *qua* being," and includes extensive discussions of the aforementioned "accompanying features" of being in books like Iota and Theta.

More problematic is book Lambda of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which begins by rehearsing ideas from the *Physics* and then discusses at some length the nature of God and the other celestial movers. Furthermore, in an influential passage elsewhere in the *Metaphysics* (E.1, 1026a13–19), Aristotle says that the "first science" is distinguished from physics and mathematics because it deals with things that are separate from matter and are unmoving, which certainly sounds like he is saying that metaphysics is about the divine movers. But Avicenna can explain this too: God and the celestial intellects are, after all, existents, albeit especially exalted ones. So *qua* existent, they fall under the purview of metaphysics, just like everything else does. Which is a good thing, since as immaterial entities they fall outside the remit of natural philosophy. So if they were not proven and studied in metaphysics, they could not be proven and studied at all. The upshot is that theology is subsumed within metaphysics, rather than being equated with it. Employing synecdoche, Avicenna allows us to call metaphysics as a whole "divine science" or "first philosophy" in honor of its most important part [T5]. Still, it would be a mistake to believe that metaphysics studies only immaterial things. It should also study material things insofar as they exist, and investigate the features that belong to them insofar as they are existent. Of course these features belong to immaterial things too, since they too are existents [T5].

Clearly metaphysics does not prove that there is existence, since this is its subject matter. Besides, it is a primary intelligible that is too obvious to need proof, an Avicennan doctrine invoked by several later authors [T21, T35–T36]. Nor does metaphysics establish the principles of existence as such. It does however establish the principles of certain kinds of existents [T4]; again, this point is reiterated by Bahmanyār [T7] and al-Nasafī [T25]. This gives metaphysics sovereignty over the other sciences, which take from metaphysics the principles they need to investigate their more limited subject matters [T6]. In each case, the subject matter of these lower sciences will be a type of existent. For instance, natural philosophy studies those existents that are bodies.

One question raised about the Avicennan view is whether "existent" is really the right designation for its maximally universal subject matter. Everything that exists is also a "thing," so could not we instead say that metaphysics is the study of "things"? 'Umar al-Khayyām allows that this would not be wrong, exactly, but since "existent" is epistemically prior to us, it is the "more appropriate" choice [T12]. Of course, so long as "thing" and "existent" are extensionally identical,

this is really just a problem about how to refer to the subject matter, that is, under what intensional concept. But Ibn Kammūna, who gives this issue a longer treatment, raises the difficulty that “thing” and “existent” may not be extensionally equivalent after all. Some “things” actually lack existence, so that “thing” may seem to be more universal. He rebuts this with the unimpeachably Avicennan observation that all things have at least mental existence, if not external, concrete existence [T34]. We will be returning to this issue later in the present volume.<sup>3</sup>

Though Avicenna’s account comes through this query about “things” unscathed, it is heavily modified and critiqued for other reasons. Abū al-Barakāt challenges the fundamental presupposition that human knowledge is in fact divided into distinct sciences. In fact all sciences are one, precisely because they all deal with existents: a classic example of an Avicennan insight being used against Avicenna [T13]. If we divide knowledge into various departments, we do this only for pragmatic and pedagogical reasons. In this sense we may still accept a division of the sciences into logic, natural, mathematical, and “divine science” or metaphysics. But Abū al-Barakāt has his own criterion for the division of sciences. All sciences investigate either things that really exist (metaphysics and natural sciences) or those that exist in the mind (logic, psychology, and mathematics). As for the particular task of metaphysics, since *all* scientific knowledge concerns existents, this will not be its special task. Rather it should inquire into things that possess “divinity,” which for Abū al-Barakāt has a broad meaning extending beyond God to anything that exercises “lordship.” Thus the class of the “divine (*ilāhī*)” includes also angels and separate souls [T14]. As a result metaphysics is the highest science, because it confers the highest perfection on the human mind when it grasps the best possible objects of knowledge [T15].

The doctrine of the unity of the sciences is accepted by al-Shahrazūrī, who like Abū al-Barakāt [T13] describes an ascent and descent from more particular to more general sciences and back [T37]. These passages are reminiscent of ideas found later in the Latin tradition, especially in Zabarella’s account of scientific method as involving “progress” towards principles, which are then used to help understand the original starting points.<sup>4</sup> Al-Shahrazūrī, incidentally, makes a good point that one might have expected to receive more discussion

3 See especially the chapters below on the Essence-Existence Distinction and Non-Existence.

4 J.P. McCaskey (ed. and trans.), *Jacopo Zabarella: On Methods, On Regressus*, 2 vols (Cambridge MA: 2013); for discussion see H. Mikkeli, *An Aristotelian Response to Renaissance Humanism: Jacopo Zabarella on the Nature of Arts and Sciences* (Helsinki: 1992); W.A. Wallace, “Circularity and the Paduan *Regressus*: from Pietro d’Abano to Galileo Galilei,” *Vivarium* 33 (1995), 76–97.

in this tradition, namely that if (as many authors in our period hold) existence is a merely conceptual item, it can hardly be a suitable subject-matter for any science [T38].<sup>5</sup> A similar concern is expressed by al-Ḥilli, namely that even if existence is extramentally real, it would be only accidental to things and, again, not a fit subject for scientific inquiry [T39].

Along with Abū al-Barakāt, the most innovative account of metaphysics is offered by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. This has been explored in an important study by Heidrun Eichner, who with some understatement remarks that al-Rāzī's "structure no longer respects the traditional Avicennian division of Aristotelian philosophy."<sup>6</sup> A crucial text is al-Rāzī's explanation of how he has arranged his work the *Mabāḥith al-mashriḳiyya* [T16]. As Eichner explains, al-Rāzī drops the basic division between natural philosophy and metaphysics, and instead addresses himself to three topics: (a) the most general things (*al-umūr al-āmma*), such as existence and its properties, non-existence, quiddity, and unity and multiplicity, (b) contingent things, and (c) divine matters (*al-ilāhiyyāt*). Al-Suhrawardī has a similar idea in relation to (a) and (b) when he divides metaphysics into the general study of the "divisions of existence" and theology. However, al-Suhrawardī still separates natural philosophy and mathematics as distinct sciences [T20].

Even in those passages where al-Rāzī agrees with Avicenna that metaphysics is a science that has existence as its subject matter (as in [T18]), he tries to assimilate it to his project of studying "common things." Presumably taking his cue from Avicenna's suggestion that metaphysics could study opposed properties that belong to existents as such, like unity and multiplicity, al-Rāzī puts forward no fewer than twenty such disjunctive pairings [T17]. Thus, in a development that anticipates ideas found in the Latin scholastic tradition, in this case Duns Scotus, al-Rāzī considerably expands the scope of ontology. For al-Rāzī, ontology is a study of "common things"; an approach that is explained further by al-Kātibī [T23]. Al-Kashshī explains why this broad investigation into "common things" is the first science one should undertake, and also integrates into the project the study of the "Lights" dealt with in Illuminationist philosophy [T24].

Al-Rāzī's restructuring of science was probably motivated, at least in part, by the desire to adapt Avicennan philosophy to the traditional concerns of *kalām*. As the list at [T17] makes clear, the inquiry into "common things" will include

5 J. Kaukua in his "T'ibārī Concepts in Suhrawardī: the Case of Substance," *Oriens* 48:1 (2020), 40–66 attempts to provide a solution to this puzzle.

6 H. Eichner *The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition and Islamic Orthodoxy: Philosophical and Theological summae in Context* (unpublished Habilitationsschrift, 2009), 81.

investigation of the eternal and the created, the necessary and the contingent, the hidden and the manifest, and even of concepts relevant to *kalām* atomism. (Thus his first dichotomy is “space occupying” or not, this being a property standardly ascribed to atoms.) Yet the list also retains such Aristotelian contrasts as potential and actual, unity and multiplicity, as well as distinctively Avicennan ones like necessary and contingent. Here then, al-Rāzī sets out the agenda that characterizes his project in the works he classified as belonging to *ḥikma* (literally “wisdom”): an original fusion of *kalām* and *falsafa* as presented by Avicenna.<sup>7</sup>

Many authors, including al-Rāzī, find it plausible to identify *kalām* with metaphysics understood as the study of solely divine matters, which legitimizes claims for its preeminence and comprehensiveness [T9, T19, T22]. But already al-Ghazālī observes that *kalām* evolved from a historically earlier enterprise, namely *kalām* as a mere dialectical defense of the faith, into a general science that investigates everything in the world (something that al-Rāzī will call *ḥikma* later) [T10]. This approach to *kalām* can be detected already in al-Juwaynī [T8]. So it does not come as a surprise that in another passage, al-Ghazālī equates *kalām* with metaphysics in the Avicennan sense of an inquiry into existence and its proper features [T11]; the passage is adapted by al-Ḥillī [T40]. Al-Urmawī, though, sticks with the idea that *kalām* has God as its subject matter, which prompts him to wonder why it is metaphysics that is called “divine science,” which seems like it could be the proper name for *kalām* [T31]. He even argues that the proof of God’s existence is not a proper task for the *mutakalimūn*, in keeping with the aforementioned rule that sciences should not establish the existence of their own subject matters [T30, T32]. Later, al-Samarqandī distinguishes between metaphysics and *kalām* by saying that the latter investigates the same subject-matter, but “according to the canon of Islam” [T27, T28]. In other words, *kalām* just is metaphysics, but supplemented by revelation (and al-Urmawī echoes the point at the end of [T32]).

In our period, conceptual structures familiar from the Aristotelian sciences, such as the contrast between principles (*mabādīʿ*), and problems (*masāʾil*), are also applied to *kalām*. This is a move we find in al-Samarqandī [T29], who goes on in his *Maʿārif al-Ṣaḥāʾif* to include under “principles” parts (a) and (b) of al-Rāzī’s tripartite structure, that is, “common things” and the contingent. Principles thus include everything apart from discussion of theology proper, which in turn is where we raise and solve the “problems.” A similar procedure, but with terminology taken from the Islamic sciences instead of Aristotle, is followed

<sup>7</sup> See further F. Griffel, *The Formation of Post-Classical Philosophy in Islam* (Oxford: 2021).

by al-Ṭūsī. He applies the notion of foundations (*uṣūl*, literally “roots”) and branches (*furūʿ*) to divine science and fits everything covered within al-Rāzī’s scheme into this structure [T26]. Ibn Kammūna uses the same idea, fusing it with the original Aristotelian tripartition of theoretical philosophy into physics, mathematics, and metaphysics [T33].

These various ways of dividing up the conceptual terrain may seem to be of little ultimate philosophical importance. But the debate covered in this chapter was not only a matter of labeling, intended to help authors structure their books clearly. Rather, the passages below help to show how it could have been that so many authors, who thought of themselves at least in part as theologians (*mutakallimūn*), wound up doing so much Avicennan philosophy. In this period, *kalām* and “divine science” could be construed narrowly, so as to include nothing but God and related topics; but it could also be construed broadly, so as to include all of ontology and even the study of natural philosophy under the heading of “the contingent.” This is part of the reason why these volumes on the Heirs of Avicenna cover more or less the same territory dealt with in Avicenna’s own works.

Texts from: Avicenna, Bahmanyār, al-Juwaynī, al-Ghazālī, ‘Umar al-Khayyām, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Suhrawardī, al-Āmidī, al-Kātibī, al-Nasafī, al-Ṭūsī, al-Samarqandī, al-Urmawī, Ibn Kammūna, Bar Hebraeus, al-Shahrazūrī, al-Ḥillī.



## The Subject Matter of Metaphysics and *kalām*

[T1] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* 1.1, 3.16–4.9 [trans. Marmura mod.]

[*God is not the subject matter of metaphysics*]

It is not possible that [God's existence] should be the subject matter. For the subject matter of every science is something whose existence is granted in that science, the only thing investigated being its states. This has been explained elsewhere. The existence of God, exalted in His greatness, cannot be granted as the subject matter in this science; rather, it is something sought (*maṭlūb*) in it. For if it were otherwise, then [God's existence] would have to be either (a) granted in this science [4] but sought in another, or else (b) granted in this science but not sought in another, and both alternatives are false. (a) For it cannot be sought in another science, since the other sciences are either moral, political, natural, mathematical, or logical. None of the philosophical sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-ḥikmiyya*) lie outside this division. In none of them does one investigate a proof of God the exalted. Doing so [in these other sciences] is not possible. This is something you will acknowledge after minimal reflection upon principles that have been repeatedly stated for you. (b) Nor can it be that it is [granted in this science but] not sought in any other, for then it would not be sought in any science at all. [God's existence] would then have to be either self-evident, or something one despairs of proving through theoretical reflection. But it is not self-evident, nor is it something one despairs of demonstrating; for there is indeed a proof for it. Besides, how could an existence which one despairs of demonstrating be legitimately granted [without argument]? It thus remains that the investigation into it is undertaken precisely in this science.

[T2] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* 1.1, 5.8–6.7 [trans. Marmura mod.]

[*causes are not the subject matter of metaphysics*]

*We say then:* examination of [causes] cannot be with respect to their being causes without qualification (*asbāb muṭlaqa*), such that the purpose of this science would be to examine features that belong to the causes inasmuch as they are causes without qualification. This may be shown in a number of ways.

Firstly, on the grounds that this science investigates notions that are not proper accidents (*al-aʿrāḍ al-khāṣṣa*) of causes just insofar as they are causes, [notions] such as universal and particular, potentiality and actuality, possibility

and necessity, and so on. Now, it is quite obvious that these topics in themselves call for investigation. Moreover, they are not among the proper accidents of natural and mathematical things. Nor are they among the accidents proper to the practical sciences. So it remains only that the investigation of these belongs to the last remaining science, namely this science.

Again, knowledge of causes taken without qualification arises only subsequent to the science that proves the existence of causes for those things that have causes. For, so long as we have not yet proved the existence of causes for caused things by proving that the existence of [the latter] is attached to something that precedes them in existence, reason will not yet infer that there is a cause without qualification [i.e. that there are causes at all], and that there is some cause in this case. Sensation yields only conjunction. And the fact that two things are in conjunction does not necessarily imply that one of them [6] is the cause of the other. The conviction that comes to the soul due to a number of things conveyed by sensation and experience (*tajriba*) is, as you have learned, made secure only through knowledge that the things that exist are, for the most part, either natural or voluntary. And this, in reality, depends on proving reasons (*'ilal*) and settling the existence of reasons and causes. This is nothing obvious or immediate, but just commonly held; and you have already learned the difference between these two. Nor is it the case, even if it is easily understood by reason that temporally originated things have some [causal] principle, that this must be self-evident. (Just like many geometrical issues demonstrated in the book of Euclid [sc. the *Elements*].) Moreover, the demonstrative proof for this does not belong to any of the other sciences. So it must belong to this science.

[T3] Avicenna, *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt* 1.2, 9.17–10.8 [trans. Marmura mod.]

[*the subject matter of metaphysics is the existent as such*]

It is thus clear to you from all [that has been said] that the existent, insofar as it is an existent, is something common to all these things and that it must be posited as the subject matter of this art, for the reasons given. Moreover, given that its quiddity need not be learned or proven, which would require that some other science explain what it is like (*al-ḥāl fīhi*) (because it is impossible [10] to prove the subject matter of a science, or to ascertain its quiddity in the very science whose subject matter it is; rather, [that science] just grants its being (*anniyya*) and quiddity), the primary subject matter of this science is thus the existent insofar as it is an existent.

[*the topics of inquiry are the accompanying features of the existent*]

And the things sought after in this science are those that accompany [the existent] insofar as it is an existent, without any qualification (*min ghayr shart*). Some of these things belong to [the existent] as if they were species, as for example substance, quantity, and quality. For, when divided into these, the existent does not need to be divided into divisions that are prior to them, as substance needs [prior] divisions in order to be divided into human and not human afterwards. Some [of the things that accompany the existent as such] are as if they were proper accidents, like one and many, potentiality and actuality, universal and particular, and possible and necessary. For the existent, in accepting these accidents and in being apt to receive them, need not [first] be specified as natural, mathematical, ethical, etc.

[T4] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* 1.2, 10.9–11.3 [trans. Marmura mod.]

[*metaphysics can still prove the principles of the existent*]

*Someone might say:* if the existent is made the subject matter of this science, then the principles of existents cannot be proved in it. For in every science, one investigates the accompanying features (*lawāḥiq*) of its subject matter, not the latter's principles.

*Response to this:* theoretical inquiry into the principles is also an investigation into the accidents of this subject matter. For the existent's being a principle is neither constitutive of it, nor impossible for it. Rather, it is accidental relative to the nature of the existent, and among its proper accidents. For nothing is more general than "existent," such that it could be a primary attachment for something else. Nor does the existent need to become natural, mathematical, or something else, in order for being a principle to occur accidentally to it. Moreover, the principle is not a principle for "the existent" as a whole. For if it were, then it would be a principle of itself. On the contrary, "the existent" as a whole has no principle, as the principle is a principle only for the *caused* existent. So the principle is a principle for *part* of the existent. Thus, this science does not investigate the principles of the existent [11] without qualification, but only the principles of some of what it includes, just like the other particular sciences. For, even if these [latter] do not demonstrate the existence of the principles they share in common (since they have principles shared in common by everything that they pursue), still they demonstrate the existence of that which is a principle for things posterior to those things that are included within them.

[T5] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* 1.2, 11.17–12.16; 1.3, 17.2–5 [trans. Marmura mod.]

[*designations for metaphysics*]

This, then, is the knowledge sought after in this art (*al-ṣināʿa*). It is first philosophy (*al-falsafa al-ūlā*), because it is knowledge of the first thing in existence, namely the First Cause, and the first thing in generality, namely existence and unity. It is also wisdom (*ḥikma*), which is the best knowledge of the best object of knowledge. For it is the best (that is, certain) knowledge of the best [12] object of knowledge, namely God the exalted, and of the causes after Him. It is also understanding of the ultimate causes of the whole (*al-kull*) and understanding of God. It has the definition of “divine science,” which consists in a knowledge of things separable from matter in definition and existence. For, as has been explained, the existent as such, its principles, and its accidents, are all prior in existence to matter, and none of them is dependent for its existence on the existence of [matter].

[*how metaphysics is about immaterial things*]

If, in this science, one investigates that which is not prior to matter, what is being investigated therein is only an idea (*maʿnā*), this idea not requiring matter for its existence. But the things investigated in [this science] fall under four headings. (a) Some of them are entirely devoid of matter and whatever attaches to matter. (b) Some of them are mixed with matter, but it is the presence of the cause in the mixture that is constitutive and prior; matter is not constitutive for it. (c) Some of them may be found with or without matter, for example, causality and unity. So what these share in common, taken as such, is that they do not need the existence of matter for their realization. This class also shares that they are not material in existence; in other words, they do not derive their existence from matter. (d) Some of them are material things, like motion and rest. But what is investigated in this science is not their state of being in matter, but only their mode (*naḥw*) of existence. Thus, if this last class is taken together with the others, they would all have in common that the manner of investigating them pertains to an idea whose existence is not constituted by matter. This is just like in the mathematical sciences, where one sometimes posits something delimited by matter, but the mode of inquiry and investigation concerning it is with respect to an idea that is not delimited by matter, and where the connection of the topic of investigation to matter does not make the investigation cease being mathematical. So it is here. [...]

[“before” and “after” nature]

[17.2] The meaning of “what is after nature (*mā ba’d al-ṭabī’a*)” is posteriority relative to us. For when we observe existence and come to understand its states, what we are observing first is natural existence. But considered in itself, this science deserves to be named “what is before nature,” because the things investigated in this science are, in essence and generality, prior to nature.

[T6] Avicenna, *Shifā’, Ilāhīyāt* 1.3, 14.11–15 [trans. Marmura mod.]

[benefit of metaphysics]

So the benefit of this science, whose approach we have explained, is to bestow certainty upon the principles of the particular sciences, and to verify the quiddity of the things they share in common, even when these are not principles. This is therefore the sort of benefit the ruler gives to the ruled, or of the master to the servant, since the relationship of this science to the particular sciences is the same as that between the object of knowledge pursued in this science and the objects of knowledge pursued in those sciences. For just as the former is a principle for the existence of the latter, so knowledge of [the former] is a principle for verifying the knowledge of these [latter sciences].

[T7] Bahmanyār, *Fī mawḍū’ ‘ilm mā ba’d al-ṭabī’a*, 2.5–3.9

[the subject matter of metaphysics]

The subject matter of the science known as “metaphysics (*mā ba’d al-ṭabī’a*)” is the existent as such (*al-mawjūd bi-mā huwa mawjūd*). The things sought in it are those items (*umūr*) that accompany the existent as such, without any qualification. Some of these items are like species for it, such as substance, quantity, and quality, since the existent is primarily divided into these. Other features are like proper accidents for the existent, such as unity and multiplicity, potentiality and actuality, the universal and the particular, the necessary and the contingent. For the existent [as such] does not need to be specified naturally or mathematically in order to receive those accidents and be disposed for them.

[principles and the existent]

The investigation into principles is an inquiry into the accompanying features (*lawāḥiq*) of that subject matter, since being a principle is neither a constitu-

ent for the existent, nor something impossible for it. Rather, being a principle is something accidental relative to the nature of the existent, and is among its proper accompanying features, [3] since there is nothing else more general than the existent, to which [being a principle] could belong as an accompanying feature; nor does the existent need to become natural, mathematical or some other way, in order that it have “being a principle” as an accidental feature.

Furthermore, the principle is not a principle for existence as a whole. If it were a principle for the whole of existence, it would be the principle of itself. Indeed, there is no principle for “the existent” as a whole. There only is a principle for *caused* existence. The principle is a principle for some existence or other. For this reason, [metaphysics] investigates the First Cause, from which emanates all caused existence as such. It is a science of the first thing in existence, the First Cause, and of that which is first in being common, namely existence and unity.

[T8] Al-Juwaynī, *Burhān*, 84.2–9 [trans. Eichner 2009, mod.]

[*the scope of kalām*]

*Kalām* means understanding (*maʿrifa*) the world and its parts, and its true realities, and its being originated, and knowledge (*ʿilm*) of Him who has originated it (*muḥdith*), and those attributes which must be ascribed to Him, those that cannot be ascribed to Him, and what might apply in His case. In addition: the knowledge (*ʿilm*) of prophecy, and how it is distinguished by miracles from the claims of the fraudulent, and the features (*aḥkām*) of prophecy, as well as the discussion of which universals of the law are permitted and excluded. The goal in *kalām* does not fall under a definition, but it can be derived from how we grasp the distinction between knowledge and other kinds of beliefs (*iʿtiqādāt*), from what we know about the difference between demonstrations and spurious arguments, and from what we attain about the methods of inquiry.

[T9] Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, 4.1–10 [trans. Eichner 2009, mod.]

[*kalām is only theology*]

There are four intended axes [of *kalām*]. All of them are restricted to the investigation (*naẓar*) concerning God. If we investigate the world we do so not insofar as it is “world,” “body,” “heaven,” and “earth,” but insofar as it is the work of God.

If we investigate the Prophet we do so not insofar he is “human being,” “noble,” “knowing,” and “virtuous,” but insofar he is sent by God. If we investigate what he has said, we do so not insofar as it is “speech,” “discourse,” and “explanations” (*tafhīmāt*), but insofar as they inform us about God the exalted, through [the Prophet’s] mediation. It inquires into nothing other than God, and searches after nothing but God. All aspects (*aṭrāf*) of this science are included in the inquiry into God’s essence (*dhāt*), attributes (*ṣifāt*), acts (*afʿāluhu*), and messenger (*rasūluhu*), as well as into the information about God has conveyed to us by what He has said.

[T10] Al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh*, 72.9–14 [trans. Eichner 2009, mod.]

[*the path of kalām from theology to philosophy*]

Indeed, when the art of *kalām* arose and there was extensive engagement with it, after a time the *mutakallimūn* longed to go beyond the defense of the Sunna into the investigation of the true realities of things (*al-baḥṭh ‘an ḥaqā’iq al-umūr*), and they engaged in the investigation of atoms and accidents and their features (*al-baḥṭh ‘an al-jawāhir wa-al-a’rāq wa-aḥkāmihā*). But as this was not the aim (*maqṣūd*) of their science, their discussion of this has not reached its utmost limit, and so it has not yielded anything which entirely removes the shadows of perplexity among people’s differing views.

[T11] Al-Ghazālī, *Mustaṣfā*, vol. 1, 5.14–16.8 [trans. Eichner 2009, mod.]

[*kalām as the universal science of the existent*]

The universal science among the religious sciences is *kalām*. The other ones, like jurisprudence, the principles of jurisprudence, and Qur’ānic commentary, are particular sciences. [...] [5.17] The *mutakallim* is the one who investigates the most general thing, namely the existent (*al-mawjūd*). He divides the existent first of all into eternal and originated, then divides the originated into substance and accident. [6] Accident is divided into that for which life is a condition, like knowledge, will, power, speech, hearing, sight; and that for which [life] is not needed, like color, smell, and taste. He divides substance into animal, plant, and inanimate (*jamād*), and shows that they are differentiated either by species or by accidents. Then he inquires into the eternal, and shows that [God] is not multiple or divisible like the temporally originated things are. Rather, He must be one, and must be distinguished from originated things by attributes (*awṣāf*) that are necessary for Him, by things (*umūr*) that are impossible for

Him, and by features (*ahkām*) that are possible in His case, being neither necessary nor impossible. He distinguishes between the possible, the necessary, and the impossible with regard to Him. Then, he shows that action in general (*aṣ/ al-fi'l*) is possible for Him, that the world is a possible [creation] of His act, and that since it [the world] is possible, it is in need of an originator (*muḥdith*). Moreover: that the sending of prophets counts among His possible actions, that He is capable of it and of making their truth known through miracles, and that this possibility has actually occurred. At this point, the discussion of the *mutakallim* comes to an end, as does the remit of [human] reason. Indeed, reason argues for the veracity of the Prophet, but then it retreats and avows that it takes instruction from the Prophet by accepting whatever he says about God and the day of judgment, such that reason neither understands it independently [of revelation] nor deems it impossible.

[T12] Al-Khayyām, *al-Diyā' al-'aqlī*, 63.8–12

[*whether “existent” or “thing” is the subject matter*]

Any thing must have existence. So there is no existent of either sort [i.e. mental or extramental] that cannot but be a thing, and no thing that cannot but have one of the two kinds of existence. So “thingness” is among the necessary concomitants of the true realities of things, and if you attempt to conceptualize thing or existent, you will inevitably wind up going in a circle. Still, even though both are [maximally] general, the existent is more appropriately the subject matter of the universal science, since it is more evident in conception.

[T13] Abū al-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 2.11–13.2; 3.16–6.6

[*all sciences are about existents*]

Understanding and knowledge (*al-ma'rifa wa-al-'ilm*) are, on our view, two attributes that relate our souls to the things that we understand and know. The things we understand and know are primarily those that exist in concrete individuals. Our understanding and knowledge of them are attributes that relate (*al-ṣifa al-iḍāfiyya*) them to our minds. Furthermore, we understand the mental relational attributes [themselves], and we understand understanding and knowledge [themselves], and know them both. We call these two, that is, the understanding of concrete existents on the one hand and the understanding of mental relational forms on the other hand, “knowledge” and “understanding” only equivocally. [...] [2.18] The most deserving of sciences (*ʿulūm*) in respect



of knowing and the most entitled among them to be meant by “knowledge (*‘ilm*)” is the knowledge of concrete existents. The knowledge of mental relational forms of knowledge comes close to it in this respect, since even though these are not among the primary existents, which are what one knows primarily, they are nonetheless attributes that exist in minds [3] and souls, which [in their turn] are concrete existents. And the attributes of existents are existent as well, albeit that the existence of the latter is consequent and accidental to the existence of the former. [...]

*[is metaphysics a study of existence, or a study of the divine?]*

[3.16] Sometimes the inquiry into the existent is a general one. There is no more general inquiry into [the existent] than insofar as it is an existent. It was Aristotle who singled out as a science the inquiry into the existent as such. The ancient scholars had already agreed in dividing the sciences of existence (*al-‘ulūm al-wujūdīyya*) into natural, mathematical, and divine things (*ilāhiyyāt*). But [Aristotle] said that the science of divine things is the science of the existent as such, since it inquires into the principles of existent things. That is why he singled it out as a science. He called it the science of “metaphysics,” “first philosophy,” and “divine science.”

By calling it metaphysics [lit. “what is after nature”], [Aristotle] meant that which comes after sensible, natural things in our understanding, even though it is prior to them in existence. For whatever is in the nature prior in existence is posterior for us in understanding, as has been explained in the opening section of natural philosophy. For this reason some people used to speak of the science of “pro-physics” [lit. “what is before nature”]. But there is no real difference between “after” and “before” here, [4] apart from relation to different conceptions.

By calling it “first philosophy,” [Aristotle] meant that it is the understanding of first principles, and of the common, universal attributes whose understanding paves the way for the understanding of its principles. Knowing [principles] is primary knowledge, through which the science of metaphysics is completed.

By calling it “divine science,” [Aristotle] meant that the understanding of God the exalted and His angels is a fruit of this science and its result. The subject matter of this science, on which its inquiry focuses, is the existent as such. For this reason, its inquiry is general in respect to the rest of sciences. The understanding of God the exalted and His angels is among the results, sought-for objects, and goals of [this science].

*[hierarchy of principles in sciences]*

Its inquiry is a general, universal one, dealing specifically with its objects of inquiry, so as to issue in the principles of particular sciences, through which science is brought to fruition. For the principles of particular sciences are among the existing things, and “the existent” as unqualified is more general than them. A particular science that falls under [metaphysics] takes its principles for granted from that science [i.e. metaphysics], and does not itself bring the inquiry [into the principles] to fruition, since the understanding of something more specific becomes complete and perfect only by understanding the more general, as we have stated in the science of demonstration, when we said that the particular is understood through its universal [predicates]. [...]

*[the arbitrariness of Aristotle’s division of sciences]*

[5.1] This is the gist of what Aristotle intended, and a complete account of his remarks about this science insofar as he singled it out from other sciences and made it a single science due to its focus. However, the science of all existents—be they natural or divine—is one and the same: when a mathematician inquires into sizes, shapes, and numbers, he inquires into the existent as well. If one wishes to divide and separate [the sciences], one can specify each division on the basis of an idea held jointly by the objects after which it searches. I do not know how those scholars arrived here at the necessity of dividing the sciences into exactly three, no fewer and no more. What Aristotle posits concerning the division of the sciences, following the ancients in that respect, is possible, but not necessary.

*[each science is complete in itself, but all are arranged under metaphysics]*

Whoever has particular knowledge uncritically accepts the principles of his knowledge from wherever his inquiry began, and from whichever point of departure, since he knows something through its principles, and knows [its] principles through the principles [of these principles], and so on until he reaches the first principles which Aristotle specified as belonging to this science [sc. metaphysics]. So long as he does not reach the first principles, his knowledge is cut off at the point where he started, since his knowledge of whatever he seeks is brought to fruition through the proximate principles when he starts to inquire into that object of inquiry. For seeking knowledge of the proximate principles is starting out afresh for knowledge of that principle or principles. This [principle] or these [principles] are then the primary object, or objects, sought in [a further] science. The principles that are applied in coming

to know these objects of inquiry are different from the ones we called principles [at the first step]. This does not stop until one reaches the first principles. At that point, knowledge is the universal, encompassing science from which one takes principles for whatever comes after it.

*[the division of sciences has pedagogic aims]*

The ancients did not make [all branches of] knowledge one science because of what is said about teaching: some teaching is merely for practice, familiarization, and reminding (*al-tanbīh*), while some is for verification and [full] attainment. The kind of teaching used for mere reminding comes first, and starts from what is proximate for sensation, and then what is proximate [to these first things], then it takes us to what is remote, and finally that which is most remote. By contrast, the kind of teaching used for verification and attainment starts from the universal and the most general, and from the first principles, which are remote from sensation, and from what is innate (*ḡarīza*) for the soul. The soul is not innately capable of [understanding] whatever it has not yet seen and accepted, and [needs] to be reminded on the basis of some starting-points of the existing principles, starting from something that is more proximate to what is innate to it, on which it can rely through sensation. If you seek for true knowledge in this [more proximate starting-point], this comes through its principles, which one learns through [further] principles of [these principles], which one cannot [understand] innately. So [the soul] accepts them from scholars by simply granting them, in order that it may learn on the basis of them whatever particular sciences it comes to know. But once [the soul] has seen those [particular] sciences, and by this vision prepared itself for whatever is higher, then it ascends to the latter, insofar as [6] the former has provided a reminder of it. They [sc. the ancients] put down as the beginning particular sciences, whose principles are granted, and from these they ascended to the highest science, so as then to verify, on that basis, the knowledge of principles. The eminent scholar begins in this way from something particular, familiarizing himself with it, and ascending to the universal, through which he comes to understand the principle of that from which he started, and likewise on up to the highest science. When he reaches it, he takes a new beginning in his knowledge and learning from where he has stopped [viz. at the top of the ascent], and returns, now with true knowledge that provides full attainment (*fī al-'ilm al-ḥaqīqī al-taḥṣīlī*), to where he first began. Thus, when it comes to true knowledge that provides full attainment, he begins where he ended when it came to learning that was for practice and reminding, and ends up where he started.

[T14] Abū al-Barakāt, *Muṭabar*, vol. 3, 6.9–8.11

[*the structure of “divine science”: from ontology to theology*]

It is clear from the usage of the ancients that the expression “divine” has a relative meaning, in relation to that for which it is a divinity. “Divine” is that to which the soul of the thing is devoted which has it as its divinity, in [the soul’s] action and in the motion of the body in which it dwells, in a voluntary way and in accordance with its wish, setting [the body] in motion. Thus a student may call his teacher, to whom he is devoted, “divine” and “lord.” Hence it is also clear that the divine is something that performs an action without being seen, and it has sovereignty (*sulṭān*) over humans, while they have no sovereignty over it. According to the doctrine of [the ancients], souls are active without being seen, and they have sovereignty over humans; yet [humans] also have sovereignty over them, since human souls can harm one another and exercise sovereignty over each other. They also used [the expression “divine”] to refer to the spiritual angels; we already mentioned this in *On the Soul*, and the inquiry there was sufficient.

Divine science (*‘ilm al-ilāhīyyāt*) is thus the science through which we understand divine attributes without qualification, and then the attributes of the Divinity of Divinities and Lord of Lords. He is the one who acts without being acted upon, and who is the first principle for every existence and every existent, whether an object or an act, as will be shown in the philosophical inquiry of this section. For it begins and then undertakes an inquiry, until it ends with understanding of the divine. It understands [the divine] in terms of the divine without qualification, then in terms of the divine in relation to existence, and then in terms of the first Divinity, insofar as it connects them and inquires into the relational idea by which a divinity is “divine.” [Divinity] is more specific than what makes the principle a principle, the cause a cause, and the agent an agent. The divine is indeed a principle and a cause, but not every cause and a principle is something divine. The divine is an efficient and a final cause but not every efficient and final cause is something divine. So one must first inquire into principle and cause [in general], putting this first in the method of inquiry, before going on to inquire into the divine. The same goes for the efficient and the final cause. And the existent, above all, [7] should be dealt with at the beginning of the inquiry, since it is more general than all this. So the beginning of inquiry in this science lies with the existent. At this stage, one inquires into it insofar as it is an existent, this being the most general [subject matter of inquiry], without any qualification. Then, one goes on to inquire into principle and cause, since they are

among the attributes of the divine and are more specific than the existent. Then, one inquires into the efficient and final cause, since they are more specific than principle and cause. Then one inquires into the divine in general; then into the Divinity of divinities, if indeed the inquiry indicates that there is one. [...]

*[a preferred tripartite division of sciences, against Aristotle's]*

[7.15] The ancients called this science “divine science” because they were accustomed to use the notion of divinity by applying it to spiritual, angelic individuals, and to human souls that have separated from bodies. They believed that [human souls] separate and then remain as they are, while separated, in the realm (*zumra*) of the spiritual angels. Some of [the ancients] believed that angels and spirits belong to this group, that is, the group of human souls that have separated from bodies and been freed from them. When mentioning the names of angels, they used to say “so-and-so, son of so-and-so,” and “so-and-so, son of so-and-so.” This was common usage and generally accepted among them. So they called this science, whose inquiry includes [those entities] within its remit, and which shows whether they are, what they are, how they are, and why they are, “divine science.”

Now, natural science is the science of sensible things. So according to [the ancients], the science of the existent may be divided into natural and divine, so long that is as one is inquiring into concretely existent things. [8] As for mental conceptions, they belong to the science of the existent as well as to psychology, insofar as one inquires into forms of the mind, which do belong to the whole class of existents. The form of the existent itself is something that exists in existence. But logic also inquires into [mental conceptions] in a way, namely insofar as it helps in teaching and understanding some [existents] on the basis of others, and leads in its inquiry from some of them to others. Mathematics, in its turn, is that which inquires into numbers and sizes that are numbered and delimited by shapes, without further qualification, as minds freely move between them, connecting and relating some of them to others. Its inquiry is not specifically concerned with shapes, sizes, and numbers of [only certain] existents among them. Thus it is this [general inquiry into mathematical features] that is specifically designated by the term “mathematics,” so that if the inquiry were specifically concerned with the number of the stars and the sizes and shapes of the spheres, then this would doubtless belong not to the science of the existent, but to natural science. It is in this way that they ordered the sciences, by dividing them into these three divisions, namely natural, mathematical, and divine science.

[T15] Abū al-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 10.14–11.23

[*metaphysics as the highest perfection for humans*]

We have already explained in [the section on] psychology that philosophical sciences share in common one and the same benefit, namely the attainment of the human soul's perfection in actuality, and thereby its preparation for happiness in the afterlife. However, sciences differ in this respect. Some of them are beneficial in themselves, namely the knowledge of God the exalted and His angels, as well as the soul's knowledge of itself, its principles and its activities. Others provide this benefit accidentally, in that the knowledge that is beneficial in itself is benefitted by from them, for instance geometry and logic, as has been said. [...]

[11.1] This science, which is the divine science, is beneficial in itself for the attainment of human perfection. In fact, it is intellectual perfection itself (*bal huwa al-kamāl al-'aqlī bi-'aynihi*), since the perfection of the understanding is the understanding of the utmost perfection. The other sciences are pursued only for the sake of this one, insofar as the soul benefits from them in the attainment [of this science]. Just as every existence and every cause of existence comes from the Necessary Existent in Himself, so likewise every good and every cause of goodness comes from Him also. The good of the understanding is understanding of the absolute good, which is absolute existence, that is, the Necessary Existent in Himself. And it is understanding of Him that we attain in this science. This is the most beneficial of sciences, indeed, it is *the* beneficial science. [...]

[11.15] [Divine science] is the science of sciences, even if logic is the sciences of sciences in a different way. The benefit from this science [i.e. divine science] is perfection of knowledge for all the other sciences. Whoever reaches this science obtains intellectual human perfection, to the extent that this may be achieved. [This science] is in truth the excellence of humans. Or rather, it is the excellence of human excellences. None of the scholars have ever disagreed with this, except insofar as they were ignorant of what they were disagreeing with. For the ancients did disagree with and reject what Aristotle and other philosophers said regarding this science, or what others said who came after; but they never rejected the science in itself. They rejected only whatever they believed to be ignorance, not what they believed to be knowledge. *They said*: this is an error, and a mistake which does not deserve to be called human excellence. But if one asks them about true knowledge, they will not deny that it is human excellence.

[T16] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 90.19–91.5 [trans. Eichner 2009, mod.]; 91.6–93.17 [our trans.]

[*reconsideration of the division of sciences*]

We have ordered this *summa* (*majmūʿ*) in three books. We want to give [first] a general clue as to the order (*tartīb*) of this *summa*; then we will write down a list of the chapters and sections, then we will get into the intended discussion (*al-maqṣūd*).

(a) Know that it has been established that the more general something is, the more perfect and complete is our knowledge of it. Given that existence is the most general and most comprehensive thing, we cannot but begin our first book with an inquiry into [existence], and into its properties (*khawāṣṣ*) and features (*aḥkām*). Then we mention what is opposed to it, namely non-existence. Then we mention what comes close to existence in comprehensiveness and generality (*shumūl wa-ʿumūm*), namely quiddity, unity, and multiplicity. Then, [91] having finished with these topics of inquiry (*mabāḥith*) that are connected to these general things, we move on to the primary division made within the existent, namely “necessary” and “contingent.” We make a thorough enquiry into their true realities, their properties, and their features (*aḥkām*). Then, we pass on to topics of inquiry that are related to eternity and origination, because the existent is also divided primarily into these two, according to certain viewpoints (*iʿtibārāt*). All this is contained in the first book.[...]

[91.6] (b) As for the second book, it contains the divisions of contingent things. The contingent is primarily divided into substance and accident. [...]

[93.6] (c) The third book is about purely theological issues (*al-ilāhīyyāt al-maḥḍa*). It has four sections. (c1) The first deals with establishing the existence of God, His unity, and His transcendence over any multiplicity and any similarity with substances and accidents. (c2) The second is an exposition of His attributes, how He knows universals and particulars, His volition and power, His being complete, pure good, pure truth, and generosity; and [it is shown] that human minds fall short of comprehending Him, or how many names He has. (c3) The third deals with His actions. Here we explain how His actions proceed from Him, and explore the claims made about the ten Intellects and how they are ordered, as well as how the elements are generated from them. Then we show that contingents can only exist through His decree and predestination. Then we explain how evil enters into what has been divinely decreed. (c4) The

fourth section deals with showing why the existence of a prophet is necessary, and indicates his proper characteristics. With this the book comes to a close.

[T17] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, vol. 3, 3.16–7.21

[*widening the scope of metaphysics*]

We have already mentioned in natural philosophy that there are three sciences, namely metaphysics (*ilāhiyyāt*), mathematics, and natural philosophy. *We say then*: the accidents that occur to the existent might do so insofar as it is existent, or insofar as it is some specified existent.

[4] As for the first option, namely the accidents that occur to the existent as such, the Master [Avicenna] has mentioned three of them in this passage: its being one or many, its being universal or particular, and its being actual or potential. But I enumerate [more of them] here:

*First*: the existent is either space-occupying; or something that inheres in what is space-occupying; or neither of these. This division applies to the existent as such, since if the existent is necessary, one might still think, at first glance, that it could fall under any of these three divisions; and likewise if it is contingent. This shows that the existent, by virtue of being existent, is suitable to be divided into these three classes. *Second*: the existent is either only a cause; or only an effect; or both cause and effect in relation to two different things; or neither a cause nor an effect in any respect. One may also express this differently, by saying that the existent is either a producer (*mu'aththir*) and not an effect of production (this is the Necessary Existent), or an effect of production without itself producing (this is prime matter), or both an effect and a producer, like the spiritual existents whose existence occurs due the bestowal of existence by the Necessary Existent, but they are also productive in the governing of bodies. Or finally, an existent might be neither productive nor an effect of production. [...] *Third*: the existent is either actual in all respects and from all points of view (this is the Necessary Existent and the separate spiritual substances); or potential in all respects (albeit that this is absurd, since otherwise it would be a potentiality in a further potentiality, and so on, which is absurd); or actual in some respect but potential in other respects. [5] *Fourth*: the existent is either perfect, sufficient, or deficient. [...] [5.7] *Fifth*: the existent is either one or many. Under unity fall identity, equality, similarity, equivalence, resemblance, and correspondence. Under multiplicity fall the opposites of these. *Sixth*: the existent is either universal or particular. *Seventh*: the existent either has no beginning



and no end, or does have a beginning and an end, or it has no beginning, but does have an end. (Albeit that scholars say this is absurd, because the eternal cannot possibly fail to exist.) Or, it has an end, but no beginning. *Eighth*: the existent is either simple or composite. [...] [5.22] *Ninth*: the existent is either necessary or contingent. Or to put it in another way: it is either self-sufficient, or in need of something. To put it yet another way, the existent is either true or false. [6] *Tenth*: the existent is either eternal or originated. [...] [6.3] *Eleventh*: the existent has either stable or unstable essence. [...] [6.7] *Twelfth*: the existent is either finite or infinite. [...] [6.10] *Thirteenth*: the existent either is that which has an attribute, or is [itself] an attribute, or is neither of these. *Fourteenth*: the existent is either place or time; or it is neither of these but is either in place or in time; or it is none of the above. This is an important division which comprises much knowledge. *Fifteenth*: the existent may be difficult to perceive, or easy. [...] [7] *Sixteenth*: the existent either has another existent comparable to it (examples of this are obvious), or does not. [...] [7.3] Using this approach, one may refute the claim that there is a connection between the hidden and the observed [...]. [7.5] *Seventeenth*: the true reality of an existent either may be known independently of anything else, or not. [...] [7.10] *Eighteenth*: the existent exists either in concrete individuals, or in the mind, or in linguistic expression, or in writing. Then it might be said that the existent in the mind is also existent in concrete individuals, because the mental existent is a particular, perceptual form that exists in an individual, concrete soul. So the existent in the mind is existent concretely. So in what respect is the mentally existent mind distinguished from the concretely existent? As for the “existent” in linguistic expression and in writing, this is only a figure of speech. It just means that the expressions or writings refer [to something] by convention and usage. *Nineteenth*: the existent either exists through an existence that is not identical to it, or through an existence that is identical to it. [...] The existent that exists through an existence that is identical to it is existence [itself]. [7.21] *Twentieth*: the existent either is a substance or an accident.

[T18] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ ‘Uyūn al-ḥikma*, vol. 3, 8.14–19.16

[*the subject matter of metaphysics is the existent as such*]

*Proof that the subject matter of divine science is the existent as such.* On this, there are two divergent views. (a) *First*, that its subject matter is God the exalted, and its goal is an understanding of His attributes and His acts. (b) *Second*, that its subject matter is the four causes.

*We say:* (a) the first view is false, as may be shown in two ways. (a1) *Firstly*, because the existence of God is something sought by a proof. It cannot be established in any other science. But if it is among the sought conclusions of this science, it cannot be its subject matter. [9] (a2) *Secondly*, because this science inquires into universal and particular, potentiality and actuality, cause and effect, unity and multiplicity. These modes do not apply to the essence of God the exalted, insofar as it is what it is, but rather insofar as it is existent.

(b) The second view is false too, and for the same reasons: (b1) *firstly*, one needs a demonstration in order to establish the cause insofar as it is a cause. But this is established only in this science. If something is among the sought conclusions of a science it cannot be its subject matter. (b2) *Secondly*, this science inquires into things that are not among the proper accidents of causes, insofar as they are causes, like universal and particular, necessary and contingent, and one and many.

Now that you know the falsehood of both views, *we say:* the subject matter of this science is the existent as such. This is shown by the fact that those modes we enumerated are what is sought in this science; so the subject matter of this science must be something to which those modes occur, insofar as it is what it is. Since this can be nothing other than the existent, we know that the subject matter of this science is the existent as such.

[T19] Al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, vol. 1, 97.6–98.17 [trans. Eichner 2009, mod.]

[*the nobility of kalām*]

The nobility of the science [of *kalām*] may be shown in several ways.

*First*, the nobility of the object of knowledge. There is no doubt that the most important aim and the greatest object one may seek in the science of *kalām* is the knowledge of the essence of God the exalted and His attributes, and of how His actions [proceed from Him]. There is no doubt that He is the noblest object of knowledge, may He be praised and exalted, so this must be the noblest of sciences.

*Second*, the reliability of the proofs. There is no doubt that the proofs used in the inquiries of this science must be put together from items of necessary knowledge (*ʿulūm ḍarūriyya*), in such a way that it is known by necessity that they

have been put together correctly and that the objects of inquiry must follow from [the conjunction of those items of necessary knowledge]. There is nothing more powerful or reliable.

[98] *Third*, that there is great need for it. There is no doubt that the acquisition of happiness is the most important thing one may seek, and the greatest of intentions. Further, happiness in the afterlife can be acquired only by belief (*īmān*) in God and His prophets, and in the day of judgment. This can be grasped as it ought to be only with this science. As for happiness in this world, it can be grasped perfectly only through the arrangement of the states of this world, which is fully attained only by longing for reward and fear of punishment (*al-rahba fī al-thawāb wa-al-rahba ‘an al-‘iqāb*).

*Fourth*, the need of the other religious sciences for it. It is known that all other sciences are either religious, or not. The benefit of the non-religious ones falls short of procuring the advantageous and warding off the harmful; this is how things are with the sciences of trades and arts. There is no doubt that the religious sciences outrank them. Now, the correctness of all the religious sciences is based on the correctness of this science. Until it is established that the world has a Maker who is knowing and powerful, how would it be possible for a scriptural commentator, a *ḥadīth* scholar, or a jurist to undertake their sciences? Thus all other religious sciences need it, but it does not need them. From this it necessarily follows that its nobility surpasses that of the others.

*Fifth*, a thing's nobility may also be taken from the inferiority of its opposite. Since making a mistake in this science constitutes unbelief and innovation, which are among the most base of things, it necessarily follows that hitting on the truth in this [science] is among the most noble of things.

[T20] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārī‘, Ilāhiyyāt*, 196.10–15

[*metaphysics has two parts: universal and theological*]

Theoretical philosophy (*al-ḥikma al-naẓariyya*) is divided into three parts. The first among them is the one connected to immaterial things, which have no need for material conditions in order to be realized, like the Necessary Existent, the Active Intellects, and the primary divisions of existence. Even if some of these are mixed with matter, this is not because they need to belong accidentally to matter in order to be rendered concrete, the way it is with contingency or causation, for instance. They have called this division the highest science.

Its subject matter is the most general of all things: the existent as such. [This science] consists of the universal science, which focuses on the divisions of existence, and divine science. [The remaining two parts are mathematics and natural philosophy.]

[T21] Al-Āmidī, *Rumūz al-kunūz*, fol. 94v2–16

[*the subject matter, absolute existence, is immediately evident*]

You have already learned that the subject matter of every science is that whose essential accidents are investigated in the science. The investigation in this science confines itself to an inquiry into the modes (*aḥwāl*) of the essential accidents of absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*). So absolute existence is its subject matter. Knowledge of this is not acquired, since everyone knows his own existence immediately, and it is more appropriate that absolute [existence] be immediate [than specified existence]. The subject matters of all other sciences do not go beyond particular instances of existence.

[*the nobility of metaphysics, in light of its goal*]

The aim of the investigation in this science is understanding of pure goods, which are separate beings, and the principles of generated things, and understanding of the Necessary Existent, and of how goods emanate from Him and trace back to Him. The aim of the investigation in other sciences is more base than the aim of this science: the nobility of each science is in accordance with the nobility its subject matter and its end. As the subject matter of this science is the noblest of subjects, and its end is the highest of ends, this science is the noblest and most exalted of sciences.

[*designations for metaphysics*]

In consideration of what is understood through this science concerning the Divinity and His states (*aḥwāl*), this science is called “divine science.” But in consideration of its investigation into the states of universal, absolute existence, and of the fact that other sciences are understood by understanding this science, and that the practitioner of every particular science accepts his premises from this science, either as starting-points [of demonstrations] or as postulates, this science is called the “universal science.” One must learn this science after other particular sciences: [after] logic, because [logic] brings one to the understanding of its sought conclusions; [after] natural philosophy and mathematics, because [metaphysics] is separated from matter both in conception and in existence. The natural is subject to change, and is separated from

matter neither in conception nor in existence. The mathematical is separated from matter in conception, but not in existence. Whatever is more remote from matter is more remote from our understanding in comparison to our senses, while whatever is closer to [matter] is closer to our senses. But it is more appropriate to [...] <sup>8</sup> with that which is closer to us than with that which is more remote. That is why the natural science is prior to the mathematical science. For the same reason this science is called metaphysics. Sometimes it is called “what is before physics,” insofar as that which is investigated in it, like the Creator, the exalted, and the separate beings, are essentially prior to nature, and insofar as the principles of all sciences are demonstrated in it.

[T22] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 67.10–68.2 [trans. Eichner 2009, mod.]

[*the task of kalām*]

Since the perfection and fulfillment (*tamām*) of anything is achieved by obtaining the perfections which are possible for it, the perfection of human souls arises through their perfections. This is comprehension of intelligibles and knowledge of what [was previously] unknown. The sciences are many, and the things to be known are numerous. Time does not allow for thoroughly acquiring them in their entirety, and life is too short for comprehending them as a whole. Additionally, aspirations fall short, motivations are weak, there are many distractions, and hindrances may be overwhelming. So one must aspire to attain the most perfect of them, and to comprehend the best among them. One prioritizes whatever is most important, and that whose understanding offers the most complete utility. And so it emerges that the most appropriate thing for the insightful to set their sights on through inquiry and for the limit of aspirations and thoughts to strain towards, is that whose subject-matter is the most elevated of all, and whose end is the most noble of all, and which is needed for attaining eternal and unending happiness. The religious sciences trace back to it, and the rules of the religious Law (*al-nawāmīs al-sharʿīyya*) depend on it. Through it come the welfare of the world and its arrangement, its loosening and tightening. The ways and paths that lead to it are certainties [68] and decisive arguments (*qaṭʿīyyāt*). This is the science known as *ʿilm al-kalām*, which investigates the essence of Necessary Existent, His attributes, His actions, and what is connected to them.

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8 We were unable to read the text here.

[T23] Al-Kātibī, *Munaṣṣaṣ fī sharḥ al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 187v3–15

[*metaphysics as the study of general features*]

By “common things (*umūr al-āmma*)” [al-Rāzī] means things that the Necessary in itself and the contingent in itself share in common. These are existence, as will be shown, and unity. [Unity is shared in common] because every existent has being (*huwiyya*), and this being is unity, so that unity occurs [even] to multiplicity as such, so that one may say, “this multiplicity is one.” When he says, “things that are along the same lines as the common things,” [al-Rāzī] means those things that are shared in common between most [but not quite all] existents; namely, essence, for every existent apart from the Necessary in itself has an essence distinct from its existence, and necessity through another, since this is something shared in common by most existents. [...] [176v9] Also contingency, that is, the fact that all [existents apart from God] are such that their essences demand neither existence nor non-existence; rather, each of these two [options] arises only through an extrinsic cause. And multiplicity: even though it does not include all contingent existents, it must belong to most of them, since the species whose instances are multiple outnumber those that are proper to just one individual. Then there is impossibility. In itself, it is something shared in common by multiple non-existents (*ma’dūmāt*) from which existence is excluded. So it is also counted among those things that are along the same lines as common things, even if in truth, and according to what we have offered in explanation (*tafsīr*), it is not really so. Then, by “things that are along the same lines as species of common things,” [al-Rāzī] means those things into which the common things are divided. These are necessary and contingent existence, since the division of existence into these two is obvious; and eternity and origination, since the existent is divided into the eternal existent, that is, the existent not preceded by non-existence, and the originated existent, which is preceded by non-existence.

[T24] Al-Kashshī, *Ḥadā’iq al-ḥaqā’iq*, fol. 22r4–17

[*the place of the study of common notions*]

As for the second division of divine science, it is further subdivided. [First], that for which the object of knowledge cannot be in matter. This is knowledge of the essence of God the exalted, the attributes of His transcendence, the properties of His Majesty, His acts, judgments, names, and the angels that are near [to Him]. This science is called the “science of unity (*tawḥīd*) and

Lordship (*rubūbiyya*).” [Second] that for which the object of knowledge may or may not be in matter. Here the topics of inquiry are the common things (*al-umūr al-‘amma*), like existence, non-existence, necessity, contingency, cause, quiddity, universality, particularity, unity, multiplicity, eternity, temporal origination, and the Lights. This division is called “universal science.” Logic too is included in this division. This division of divine science is the most general of divisions in the sciences, and the most readily known, so it should come first in the [order of] instruction. For this reason, we come to these topics of inquiry right after logic. Then after this section [on the common things], we inserted natural philosophy (*al-ṭabī‘ī*), since it is an imprint (*tab‘*) of made and created things, which are signs and indications for their eternal Maker and wise Governor. Indeed, signs and indications must be mentioned first, before those things that are sought and intended. Then we add to it the divine science.

[T25] Al-Nasafi, *Sharḥ Asās al-kiyāsa*, 263.7–264.5

[*metaphysics is about the existent*]

Know that the universal goal of occupying yourself with scientific inquiries is divine science. How could it be otherwise, given that among the sciences, this science is one without which no other science could be [properly] considered? It is the universal science, with no other science above it. Hence, it inquires into the most general of all existents, namely unqualified existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*). Because it inquires into this, it [also] inquires into the attachments connected to it and into its principles, by contrast with natural philosophy and mathematics, since these are particular sciences. [...]

[263.14] The divine science is one: otherwise it would not be universal. If it were in itself multiple, then it would be composed out of sciences, and whatever is like this is more specific in comparison to that from which it is composed. [264] As this science inquires into existence and its attachments, it also inquires into unity and its attachments, since a thing cannot be rightly called “existent” without being rightly called “one.” Thus even multiplicity, its remoteness from the nature of unity notwithstanding, is said to be “one.” Given that this science does inquire into unity, and multiplicity is something opposed to [unity], it inquires into multiplicity, I mean, inquires into it insofar as it inquires into what is opposed to [unity].

[T26] Al-Ṭūsī, *Aqsām al-ḥikma*, 527.19–528.8

[*divine science arranged in a kalām structure of foundations and branches*]

Divine science has foundations (*uṣūl*) and branches (*furūʿ*):

Its foundations are five. *First*, common things, such as being a cause and being an effect. *Second*, an inquiry into the principles of those sciences whose subject matter falls below it. *Third*, establishing the First Cause and His unity, and whatever is connected with His majesty, great and exalted. [528] *Fourth*, establishing the spiritual substances. *Fifth*, [an inquiry] into how passive, earthly things are connected with the power of celestial agents, how contingent things are arranged, and how they trace back to the First Principle.

Its branches are two. *First*, investigation into how revelation [occurs] and how the intelligible becomes sensible, in order that the kingly prophet can see it, and hear its words; and regarding the understanding of revelations and of the guardian spirit. *Second*, the knowledge of the spiritual return, and that the intellect can neither perceive nor verify anything bodily independently.

[T27] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 59.4–60.3; 65.5–66.8

[*the relation between metaphysics and kalām*]

The sciences may be distinguished as species into several divisions, and further distinguished as branches within these divisions, but divine science is the noblest among them in rank and highest in position. By way of decisive demonstrations and clear proofs, it inquires into the divine modes and lordly secrets, which are the highest of objects of inquiry and the utmost of goals for the genuine sciences and certain understanding. For through [those objects of inquiry] one arrives at an understanding of the essence of God the exalted and His attributes, and at a conception of His making and the things He has made. In addition, [this science] includes [60] noble inquiries and subtle points by which the soul is disposed for the verification of true realities (*taḥqīq al-ḥaqāʾiq*), and becomes independent in understanding fine details. These ideas led us to write a book that would succinctly cover the questions within this science, and the splendid benefits of this discipline (*fann*), according to the canon of Islam: it is called the science of *kalām*. [...]

[65.5] *On the quiddity of kalām and its subject matter*. Given that the science of *kalām* itself inquires into the essence of God the exalted, His attributes, His



names, and into the modes of angels, prophets, saints, imams, the obedient and disobedient, and other matters besides in both this and the next world, and given that it is distinguished from divine [science], which shares in common with it [66] those objects of inquiry, by proceeding in accordance with the method of this [religious] Law—[given all this,] the definition [of *kalām*] is “the science in which one inquires into the essence of God the exalted, His attributes, and the states of contingent throughout the procession and the return (*fī al-mabda’ wa-al-ma’ād*), in accordance with the canon of Islam.” With this one may know that in [*kalām*] we inquire only into the essential accidents of the essence of God the exalted, as such, and into the essential accidents of contingent things, inasmuch as they stand in need of God the exalted. Its subject matter is thus the essence of God the exalted, as such, and the essence of contingents insofar as they are bound by their need [for God], since it is known that the subject matter of every science is that whose essential accidents are investigated in it.

[T28] Al-Samarqandī, *Ma’ārif al-Şahā’if*, fol. 2v21–3r3

[*the relation between kalām and metaphysics in falsafa*]

By the “canon of Islam,” I mean the foundations of Islam, consisting in the Book of God, the customs of His prophet, consensus (*ijmā’*), and any deliverance of reason (*ma’qūl*) that does not contradict them, since these too are among the foundations of Islam. The philosophers (*falāsifa*) too inquire into the [same] things [investigated by *kalām*], but according to the foundations of philosophy, for instance that only one proceeds from one; that one and the same thing cannot be [3r] active and passive at the same time; that contingency is an existential attribute; that the return [of what no longer exists] is impossible; that revelation and [God’s] sending the ruler is absurd. They call [their investigation] “divine science.” The distinction between *kalām* and divine science is that *kalām* is in accordance with the foundations of this religious law, whereas the divine science is in accordance with the foundations of philosophy (*al-falsafa*).

[T29] Al-Samarqandī, *Ma’ārif al-Şahā’if*, fol. 2r12–23

[*on the division of his work on kalām into principles and problems*]

The parts of sciences are three: subject matters, principles (*mabādī’*), and problems (*masā’il*), since whichever science you take, it must have certain propositions (*aḥkām*) that are intended (*maqşūda*) to be shown in it. But we may

also mention things in [a science] which are not intended in themselves, but are rather for the sake of showing the propositions intended in [that science]. These things are of two kinds: necessary and not necessary. The necessary are either common to all sciences, such as the principle of non-contradiction [...] [2r16] or they are specific to one science or to several sciences, like the fact that what is equal to the equal is itself equal [...]. [2r18] The unnecessary is either intended in some other science, and shown in it (such as the fact that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, this being among the propositions found in the book of Euclid), or not. In the latter case, [those propositions] may not be shown in any other science at all, and then the practitioner of *kalām* should consider them doubtful and refute them, such as the claim that one infinite cannot be bigger than another; or [those elements that are not shown in any other science] are shown in this science on some other occasion. There are many such [propositions]. Thereby, one may know that among the things mentioned in a science, some are intended in themselves, others accidentally. Those things that are intended in themselves are the “problems” of the science, while those that are intended accidentally are its “principles.”

[T30] Al-Urmawī, *Risāla fī al-farq*, 101.4–102.5 [trans. Eichner 2009, mod.]  
[*kalām does not properly prove God's existence*]

The specific existent which is God, mighty and exalted, is the subject-matter of the science of *kalām*, which is [also] called “foundations of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*).” In it are investigated His attributes and the actions proper to Him. You have already learned repeatedly at other places that the subject-matter of each science is that whose proper concomitants are investigated. So, this specific existent is the subject-matter in the science of *kalām*. But that there is this specific existent, that it exists (*inniyyatuhu wa-wujūduhu*), is investigated in divine science, in which one investigates the existent as such; thus it may be taken for granted in this science [i.e. *kalām*] that there is God, that He exists. The subject-matter of a science is not something sought in [the science]. One does not investigate whether there is the subject-matter, but rather the items proper to it that are its concomitants. Therefore, the fact that there is the Necessary Existent, and that it exists, is not something sought in this science, but is taken for granted in it.

*If you say:* we see that the theologians persist in establishing the Necessary Existent in this science, arguing at times from the contingency of essences,

sometimes from the contingency of attributes, and sometimes from the origination of both.

*I say:* by this, they intend not to establish that He is, and that He exists, but that all [102] existents terminate in Him and that He is the principle for them. This is one of His proper attributes, even though it may follow from this that He exists, that He is. This is like the philosopher (*hakīm*) who establishes that there is a Necessary Existent on the grounds that all existents depend on it. His intention is not that God is the principle of all existents, even if that may follow from this.

[T31] Al-Urmawī, *Risāla fī al-farq*, 102.6–16

[*on the name “divine science,” and why kalām is not called this*]

*If you say:* why is divine science called “divine science,” while this science is called “the science of *kalām*”?

*I say:* the first is because its utmost goal is understanding the existence of the Divinity, great and exalted. This is its most significant (*aʿzam*) question, and the noblest thing it seeks, even though it does seek other things too. Often a whole or aggregate is called after individual members or parts, especially after the most perfect part and the noblest individual member.

*If you say:* all the things sought in this science, that is, the science of *kalām*, or at least most of them, are the attributes of the Exalted and the actions that are proper to Him. Would it not be more appropriate, then, for *this* to be called “divine science”?

*I say:* the essence of a thing is nobler than its attributes. Given that it is in divine science that one inquires into the existence of the essence of the Divinity, the name “divine science” is proper to it, and the science of *kalām* has a different name.

The second [science is called the science of *kalām*] because it was a custom for the first practitioners to say, regarding the things sought in this science, “the *kalām* about this issue is ...,” as if saying, “on this issue what one says (*qawl*) is ...” Hence it came to be called the science of *kalām*. The reason why it is [also] called “the science of the foundations of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*)” is obvious.

[T32] Al-Urmawī, *Risāla fī al-farq*, 105.10–106.3

[*God is not proven in kalām*]

We do not concede that [God's existence] is established in [the science of *kalām*]. Rather, the problem of establishing the Necessary lies outside the problems of the science of *kalām*.

*Let it not be said:* in which science, then, can it ever be established, given that *kalām* is the highest of sciences? *Nor [should it be said]:* given that the inquiry [into proving God's existence] is mentioned in the middle of books on *kalām*, how can it not belong to it?

*For we say:* we do not concede that [God's existence] must be established in the highest science. Why can't other sciences find the solution and pass this on to the science of *kalām*? Then, the science of *kalām* would in the case of this individual, distinct problem need demonstrations that are not offered by *kalām*, but it would still be mentioned in books on *kalām*. Its occupying this later position, having been taken from elsewhere, does not require that it is later by nature, since it may simply be easier for it to occupy this position.

[*distinguishing kalām from metaphysics*]

*It might be said:* the subject matter of [*kalām*] is the essence of God and the essence of contingent things, insofar as they are traced back to the Exalted in a chain in which [each thing has] need [of the next]. For the theologian (*mutakallim*) inquires into both of these things, and, taken together, they are the subject matter.

*The objection to this* has already been mentioned [i.e. Avicenna's arguments against God's being the subject matter of metaphysics].

*It might be said:* the subject matter of [*kalām*] is unqualified existence, since [this science] inquires into the essential accidents of [existence], like eternal and originated, its divisions, like substance and accident, [106] and the divisions of these two, like the First, His Attributes, and His actions.

*To this it may be responded:* in that case, it usurps the role of divine science. But if one adds the qualification "according to the rule (*qānūn*) of Islam," then this will no longer be the case, since the metaphysician inquires according to the rule of reason alone.

[T33] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Tabwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 4.1–12

[*the structure of the theoretical sciences; the branches of metaphysics*]

Theoretical (*nazarī*) sciences concern either that which is separate from corporeal matter in both modes of existence [i.e. mental and concrete], or that which is not separate. In the former case, it is the highest science, also known as the universal science, first philosophy, metaphysics, and the divine science. In the latter case, if it can be separated from matter in the mind alone, it is the middle science, also known as mathematics. Otherwise it is natural science, which is called the lowest science. All [subordinate] sciences branch out from these.

The science of logic is one of the branches (*furūʿ*) of the highest science. But some [scholars] locate it in the initial division [of sciences], as follows: a science is either sought as an instrument for other sciences, or not. The former is logic, the latter is either practical or theoretical, in the way you have learned regarding the other division.

Other branches of the highest science are how revelation occurs and the states of the return (*al-maʿād*). Both have been mentioned in this book.

[T34] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Tabwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 6.14–17.2

[*the subject matter is existence and not “thingness”*]

[Suhrawardī] said: “the subject matter of [divine science] is the most general of things (*al-ashyāʾ*), namely unqualified existence, and [this science] investigates its essential accidents and its divisions.”

You should know that some people claim that thingness (*shayʿiyya*) is more general than existence, basing this on the [claim] that thingness may hold true of something intelligible that has no existence in concrete individuals, which is not the case with existence. And furthermore, on the [claim] that one can predicate [thingness] of existence itself, and of the quiddity to which existence occurs. But this is a mistake. The intelligible that lacks existence in concrete individuals still exists in the mind. Whatever is a thing in the mind is likewise an existent in it, just as whatever is not existent in concrete individuals is not a thing there either. As for the point that thingness may be truly said of existence and quiddity, this may be refuted on the grounds that mental existence is truly said of thingness and a specific quiddity. So it is more general than both.

[7] Thereby it becomes clear that the existence which is the subject matter of this science does not mean specifically extramental existence, nor specifically mental existence alone, but rather unqualified (*muṭlaq*) existence, as the author of this book [i.e. Suhrawardī] has mentioned.

[T35] Bar Hebraeus, *Hēwath hekhmthā, met.*, 118.4–8

[*existence is transcategorical and known in itself*]

Things that can be separated from matter are either substances (*ūsīyās*), or quantities, or fall into other categories. As there is no other notion apart from “it is” (*it*) that can account for them, hence, this is the subject matter of this science. As it [i.e. existence] can be known by itself, it requires no other science in order to be made manifest.

[T36] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 12.6–9

[*existence is maximally evident*]

This science is above all [other] sciences, with no science above it in which its subject matter could be shown. So the subject matter of this science must be something that does not need to be shown, but is self-evident. The most evident and obvious thing there is, is the existent as such. Hence it must be the subject matter of the divine science.

[T37] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 13.6–23

[*the unity of sciences; ascent and descent through the sciences*]

Someone who offers a correct division of existence in the universal science, will be able to arrive, through these divisions, at all the precepts (*qawā'id*) of natural philosophy, mathematics, divine science, and ethics, so that all sciences become one and the same science, as was the case in antiquity, before Aristotle came along. Philosophers have distinguished these sciences from one another because the distinction is easier, and more conducive to teaching and learning. For if the sciences were not distinguished and ordered as they are now, and were instead all a single science, then one would begin teaching with what is universal and most general, namely existence and the first principles, which are remote from sensation, imagination, and the instinct of the soul, which is too weak to perceive this, because of its connection to instances of matter,

and because influences from [these instances of matter] affect it. Therefore, the soul is at first incapable of perceiving universal, general items and the remote first principles, without prior practice, reminding, and familiarization with the particular sciences. But when the student (*tālib*) begins with instruction about whatever is closer to the instinct and nature of the soul, namely sensible things, he thereby relies on sensation and comes to understand whatever is close to it, accepting its principles and the principles of whatever is close to it, so that in this fashion the particular sciences are attained by him. If he should look to ascend from these to the highest, above which there is no other science, and in which all the principles of the particular sciences are shown, then at that point he will have verified the knowledge of principles. Then he can reverse his direction and return through the sciences from where he ended to where he started. The ancients called his return real instruction and attainment.

[T38] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 16.5–8

[*against existence as the subject matter*]

It will soon become evident to you that existence, and the existent as such,<sup>9</sup> are mental considerations that have no existence in concrete individuals. But that which does not exist in concrete individuals cannot be the subject to which real, existing things are attributed, and so cannot be the subject matter for metaphysics. Thus existence cannot be its subject matter.

[T39] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 411.16–412.2

[*against existence as the subject matter*]

The subject matter of this science is every existent, or the Necessary Existent, or the contingent existent. But each option is false. The first, because [this science] inquires into things that do not occur to every existent. The second, because this science has the task of proving it. The third, because in this case [existence] is subject to doubt.

*Objection:* this set of options has omitted existence as such.

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<sup>9</sup> Omitting *wa-wujūd*.

[412] *Response*: we will show that existence as such, being among things that accidentally occur to existents, is contingent, and so falls into the third division.

[T40] Al-Ḥilli, *Nihāyat al-marām*, vol. 1, 11.11–12.4

[*the subject matter and scope of kalām*]

In the science of *kalām*, one inquires into the most general of things, existence. Existence is divided primarily into the eternal and the originated. Then, the originated is divided into substance and accident. Then, accident is divided into that which has life as a condition and that which does not. Substance, meanwhile, is divided into animal, plant, and mineral. And one shows the way that [these all] differ from one another, whether the differences be essential or accidental. Then, one inquires into the eternal, showing the absence of multiplicity in it in all respects, and showing that it differs from originated things by virtue of the attributes that are necessary for it, and [by virtue of] those which are impossible. A distinction is drawn between the necessary, the possible, and the impossible. Then, one shows that action is in principle possible for Him, that the world is His action, and that the sending of prophets is among His effects, and that [12] they confirm that they are genuine by working miracles. Then reason must acknowledge the Prophet, whose genuineness may be inferred from what he says about God the exalted and about judgment day: this is something that reason cannot perceive, but nor can it judge that it is impossible. There is no doubt that these things are among the accidents of existence as such. Hence the subject matter of [*kalām*] is unqualified existence.



## The Essence-Existence Distinction

Avicenna's prominent place in the history of metaphysics would be secure solely on the strength of his famous distinction between essence and existence. Roughly speaking, this is the difference between *what* something is, and *whether* it is. When he introduces the distinction, Avicenna points out that these are distinct questions and objects of knowledge. One can understand the meaning of a triangle and know things about it, such as that it is a plane figure or has internal angles adding to 180 degrees, without knowing whether a triangle exists. Put in these terms the distinction may seem fairly obvious, to the point that it is scarcely credible that Avicenna "invented" it. Indeed, a glance back at the earlier history of philosophy shows various antecedents. Aristotle distinguishes between the two questions mentioned above at *Posterior Analytics* 2.1, 89b23–25 and in other contexts too distinguishes between statements of predication ("Socrates is human") and statements of existence ("Socrates is," that is, "Socrates exists").<sup>1</sup> It has also been urged that Plotinus anticipates the essence-existence distinction.<sup>2</sup> Scholarship has furthermore pointed to a background for the distinction in earlier philosophy of the Islamic world and in *kalām* literature.<sup>3</sup>

This is not the place to decide how original and groundbreaking Avicenna's distinction truly is. It should be sufficient, and uncontroversial, to say that he formulates the distinction in an unprecedentedly explicit way, introducing novel terminology to make the point and deploying the distinction throughout his metaphysics.<sup>4</sup> But in post-Avicennan philosophy, the tenability and pre-

1 See further e.g. M.J. Cresswell, "Essence and Existence in Plato and Aristotle," *Theoria* 37 (1971), 91–113; L. Brown, "The Verb 'To Be' in Greek Philosophy: Some Remarks," in S. Everson, *Language* (Cambridge: 1994), 212–236; J. Hintikka, "On Aristotle's Notion of Existence," *The Review of Metaphysics* 54 (1999), 779–805.

2 L.P. Gerson, *Plotinus* (London: 1994); K. Corrigan, "Essence and Existence in the *Enneads*," in L.P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge: 1996), 105–129.

3 For instance P. Adamson, "Before Essence and Existence: Al-Kindī's Conception of Being," *The Journal of the History of Philosophy* 40 (2002), 297–312, and for a possible *kalām* background R. Wisnovsky, "Notes on Avicenna's Concept of Thingness (*Shay'yya*)," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 10 (2000), 181–221, R. Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context* (London: 2003), chapters 7–9.

4 On essence and existence in Avicenna see further A. Bertolacci, "The Distinction of Essence and Existence in Avicenna's Metaphysics: the Text and Its Context," in *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas*, ed. by F.M.M. Opwis and

cise meaning of the distinction were anything but uncontroversial. For all its complexity, the debate centers on the question of whether existence is a real feature of the world. Avicenna gives at least two good reasons for supposing that it is. First, as we have seen with the example of the triangle, there is his “doubt argument”: the essence or nature of something can be fully understood by someone who is in doubt about its existence [T<sub>1</sub>, T<sub>2</sub>]. This argument is challenged by the Mu‘tazilites in [T<sub>16</sub>] and as reported in [T<sub>61</sub>], and by al-Kātibī for a logical weakness [T<sub>53</sub>]. Second, he offers a “priority argument”: Socrates’ existence cannot just immediately be implied by his essential features, the way that a specific difference could imply a proper accident (that is, the way that humans’ rationality explains why all humans have the ability to laugh). For then the essential feature that implies his essence would be “prior in existence” to his existence, which Avicenna considers absurd [T<sub>3</sub>]. Again, the upshot is that Socrates’ essence must be distinct from, or we might say “neutral,” with respect to Socrates’ existence.<sup>5</sup>

The apparent conclusion of these arguments is that there is a *real distinction* between essence and existence, which is to say that in an extramental thing like Socrates, essence is one item and existence another item. But Avicenna’s student Bahmanyār already expresses a worry about this inference, namely that it would lead to an infinite regress [T<sub>5</sub>]. If Socrates has real existence, then that existence would seem also to exist, yielding a further item—the existence of Socrates’ existence—that would also need to exist, yielding a third existence, and so on. Bahmanyār tries to escape this conclusion by introducing the notion of “being existent” (*mawjūdiyya*), which is meant to express the idea that existence is not something added to Socrates, but is just the fact of Socrates’ being

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D.C. Reisman (Leiden: 2012), 257–288; C. Belo, “Essence and Existence in Avicenna and Averroes,” *Al-Qanṭara* 30.2 (2009): 403–426; A.-M. Goichon, *La distinction de l’essence et de l’existence d’après Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne)* (Paris: 1937); O. Lizzini, “Wuḡūd-Mawḡūd / Existence-Existent in Avicenna: A Key Ontological Notion of Arabic Philosophy,” *Quaestio* 3 (2003): 111–138; F. Rahman, “Essence and Existence in Avicenna,” in: R. Hunt, R. Klibansky, and L. Labowsky (eds.), *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, volume 4 (London: 1958): 1–16; T.-A. Druart, “Shay’ or Res as Concomitant of ‘Being’ in Avicenna.” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 12 (2001): 125–142.

5 Technically speaking, the “doubt argument” shows that existence is not a constituent of a contingent essence (as rationality in part constitutes humanity), while the “priority argument” shows that it is not an essential concomitant (as being able to laugh is a necessary consequence of rationality). For this see F. Benevich, “The Essence-Existence Distinction: Four Elements of the Post-Avicennian Metaphysical Dispute (11–13th centuries),” *Oriens* 45 (2017), 1–52. For further discussion of the issue in the post-Avicennan period see the contributions of R. Wisnovsky and H. Eichner to D.N. Hasse and A. Bertolacci (eds), *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna’s Metaphysics* (Berlin: 2012).

“among concrete individuals,” that is, being a real thing. Still, Bahmanyār simultaneously calls existence an accident (*‘araḍ*) [T6]. Ibn Kammūna agrees with Bahmanyār’s analysis but avoids calling existence an accident [T55].

Another critical engagement with Avicenna’s theory is found in ‘Umar al-Khayyām. He is more famous as a poet than a metaphysician, but his views on this topic will prove to be very influential in the coming generations. ‘Umar al-Khayyām is also troubled by the prospect of a regress of existences [T8] and therefore proposes that existence as distinguished from essence is a purely mental or conceptual phenomenon [T9]. Consider again the doubt argument: all it shows is that our *judgment* that triangles have certain essential properties is distinct from our *judgment* that there is a triangle in the external world, that is to say, that the essence of triangle is extramentally instantiated. To put this in technical terms, existence is a “secondary intelligible” (here al-Khayyām may follow Bahmanyār’s understanding of existence in [T7]): to think of a triangle as existent is to apply one concept to another, that is, to apply the second-order concept of existence to the first-order concept of triangle. Out in the external world, by contrast, the triangle’s existence is not distinct from the triangle.

‘Umar al-Khayyām’s conceptualist theory of existence finds broad acceptance in the 12th and 13th centuries. Most familiar from previous scholarship is the position of the Illuminationist al-Suhrawardī, whose conceptualism is well captured in the remark that contingent existence is affirmed of real individual things only “from the perspective of the mind (*min qibal al-dhihn*)” [T36]. But the Illuminationists have no monopoly on the denial of a real essence-existence distinction or on the regress argument, which is also found for instance in the Mu‘tazilite theologian Ibn al-Malāḥimī [T15].

This standard criticism of the distinction was soon joined by a standard response, found in al-Sāwī and Abū al-Barakat al-Baghdādī: whereas an essence needs to have existence, existence does not [T12, T13, T14]. (The point is well summarized by Ibn Kammūna at [T54], though he does not accept this solution.) Abū al-Barakat compares this to the way that an existing whiteness does not need some distinct, further attribute of “color”: just as white is already a color, existence already exists.

This response, that existence is real without needing a further existence, is resisted by those who adopt a conceptualist position on the essence-existence distinction [T10, T19, T39, T40, T54]. After all, we can doubt whether existence exists just as much as we can doubt whether a triangle exists, so Avicenna’s original argument should apply here too—a point made by al-Suhrawardī [T39] and repeated by al-Shahrazūrī [T56]. To this Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī responds that it makes no sense to doubt whether existence exists (at least in a sense that would attribute a further existence to existence), whereas it does make sense

to doubt whether an essence exists [T28]. His position seems far from unreasonable. Just consider: once we have answered the doubt whether a triangle has existence by saying that the triangle does indeed exist, could it really be open to question whether the triangle's existence exists? The second-order existence, if there were such a thing, would already be presupposed by the claim that the triangle exists, since it could surely not exist through a non-existent existence; cf. [T34].

There is another way to deal with the problem of infinite regress. According to Bahmanyār [T5], cf. [T55], and al-Rāzī [T27] the real essence-existence distinction yields infinite regress if and only if we understand existence as an attribute (*ṣifa*) *through which* something exists, as Abū al-Barakāt does in [T14]. If existence is a real attribute, we can further ask whether that existence-attribute exists and so on. But for al-Rāzī, existence is not an attribute [T26, T27], cf. [T47, T52, T60]. It is just the very fact of something's being out there in the world.

A further argument against the real distinction focuses on the essence side of the contrast, rather than the existence side. How can essence "receive" existence, without already being real, and hence existent? But if essence is already existent, then it is superfluous for it to receive existence. This "priority problem" is already mooted by 'Umar al-Khayyām [T11] (and for a clear statement of the issue by al-Abharī see [T45]). Again, an answer to the difficulty is proposed by al-Rāzī [T23, T24, T25, T26], cf. [T27]. Effectively this amounts to asserting, more explicitly than Avicenna had done, the neutrality of essences with respect to both existence and non-existence. We need to give the essence a special status, marked by the phrase "as such (*min ḥaythu hiya hiya*)," in which it is fit to receive existence but does not in its own right exist.

The fact that al-Rāzī responds to these two objections—that is, the worry that existence can itself be doubted to exist, yielding a regress, and the worry that essence would first need to exist in order to receive existence—is a good clue to his overall position. Despite his reputation as a critic of Avicenna, al-Rāzī turns out to be the most prominent and determined proponent of the real essence-existence distinction. He not only fends off the arguments of the conceptualists, but also offers positive arguments of his own. Existence must be extrinsic to a contingent essence since it is neither identical to nor a part of that essence [T20, T21]; existence may be either necessary or contingent, but no one essence can be like this [T21]; and perhaps most importantly, existence cannot be merely conceptual, because then there would be no existence outside our minds [T29].

Al-Rāzī's endorsement of the real distinction does not require him to claim that essences taken in themselves have some sort of special *ontological* status,

such that they would, as it were, wait their turn in metaphysical space until they are granted existence. Rather, as Avicenna had proposed, all essences are joined to existence, either concretely or in the mind. Nonetheless, he was criticized for reifying the essences within extramental things. Al-Ṭūsī chastizes him for suggesting that essence and existence relate as “receiver and received” in the extramental world [T50]. It is only insofar as we focus on a quiddity just in itself rather than as being in concrete reality or the mind that we can think of it as having neither existence or non-existence [T51]. Al-Ṭūsī’s colleague al-Ḥillī agrees that it makes sense to speak of essences in themselves as being qualified by neither existence nor non-existence [T59, T60], but this “non-qualified” essence itself is simply the concept to which we attach the second-order concept of existence. It is not like an inhering property in the essence, the way that blackness would inhere in a body [T62] (actually though, al-Rāzī would deny that as well). Thus we find Ṭūsī’s circle upholding the standard conceptualist position, even while accepting the legitimacy of entertaining an essence in its own right, sometimes called *nafs al-amr* (“the thing in itself”).<sup>6</sup>

If essences are in the mind, how do they relate to *mental* existence? Rāzī raises the following puzzle: if I have a concept of triangle, doesn’t triangle *already* exist in my mind, whether or not I judge that a triangle exists extramentally? Not in the relevant sense, he argues [T32, T33]. When one grasps a triangle, one realizes that existence does not belong to this concept essentially. He makes the point by saying that existence need not occur “within (*fī*)” our awareness of the triangle, even though existence “belongs to (*li-*)” that awareness, which is just to say that we do have a real awareness of the triangle. This seems plausible, though al-Rāzī’s response will be subject to criticism by al-Āmidī [T42].

Authors of our period found this whole debate reminiscent of another dispute that had been waged within the *kalām* tradition.<sup>7</sup> Theologians had wondered whether existence is a so-called “mode” or “state (*ḥāl*)” that is additional to real objects.<sup>8</sup> Al-Juwaynī denies this [T4], arguing against what he

6 The concept of *nafs al-amr* will be further explored in our volume on Logic and Epistemology.

7 See R.M. Frank, “Abū Hāshim’s Theory of ‘States’: its Structure and Function,” *Actas do quarto congresso de estudos árabes e islâmicos, Coimbra-Lisboa, 1 a 8 de setembro de 1968* (Leiden: 1971), 90–99. For the connection to the essence-existence debate R. Wisnovsky, “Essence and Existence in the Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Islamic East (*Mašriq*): A Sketch,” in D.N. Hasse and A. Bertolacci (eds), *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Receptions of Avicenna’s Metaphysics* (Berlin: 2012), 27–50; F. Benevise, “The Metaphysics of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Šahrastānī (d. 1153): *Aḥwāl* and Universals,” in A. Al Ghouz (ed.), *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th to the 14th Century*, Göttingen: Bonn University Press 2018, 323–353.

8 On “states” see further the chapter on Universals below.

takes to be the Mu‘tazilite position. For him, in fact, it is not a “state” at all. The relevance of this to the essence-existence dispute was noticed by al-Shahrastānī [T17], and by Ibn Ghaylān, who suggests that the conceptualist approach that some authors had applied to states could also be applied to existence [T18].

Another piece of technical terminology that emerges in the dispute over Avicenna’s distinction is *huwiyya*, which we translate in this context as “concrete being.” Its use in this context begins with al-Suhrawardī, who uses it to express the extramental realization or facticity of such things as existence and contingency (for a later example of the same strategy in al-Shahrazūrī see [T57]). Al-Suhrawardī himself sets his face against this and denies that these items have concrete being. In fact they are mere mental concepts [T36, T37]. Al-Abharī adopts this terminology too, and uses it in variously upholding the conceptualist and realist versions of the distinction in different works [T43, T44, T45, T46, T47]. He says that essence and existence have only a single concrete being in extramental reality: the contingent thing is “in itself” both essence and existence, but the two are distinguished in the mind [T48].

Texts from Avicenna, al-Juwaynī, Bahmanyār, ‘Umar al-Khayyām, al-Sāwī, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, al-Shahrastānī, Ibn Ghaylān, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Suhrawardī, al-Āmidī, al-Abharī, al-Ṭūsī, al-Kātibī, Ibn Kamūna, al-Shahrazūrī, al-Ḥillī.

## The Essence-Existence Distinction

[T1] Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 47.4–14

*[essence-existence distinction and doubt argument]*

*You should know:* everything that has a quiddity is realized (*yataḥaqqaqu*) as existent in concrete individuals, or as conceptualized in the mind, while its parts occur together with it. If it has any true reality (*ḥaqīqa*) apart from its being existent in one of the two modes of existence, and is not constituted by [existence], then existence is something added to its true reality (*ma'nā muḍāf ilā ḥaqīqatihi*)—either as a necessary concomitant, or not. Also the grounds of its existence (*asbāb al-wujūd*) are different from the grounds of its quiddity. Take for instance humanity. In itself it is a true reality and a quiddity, but the fact that it is existent in concrete individuals or in the mind is not constitutive of it, but rather additional to it. If it were constitutive of it, then since it would be impossible to form a notion (*ma'nā*) of it in the soul in the absence of its constitutive parts, it would be impossible for an understanding (*mafhūm*) of “humanity” to have existence in the soul while one doubts whether or not it has existence in concrete individuals. As for human, perhaps there is no doubt concerning its existence, yet this not because of the understanding of [human] but because there is sense-perception of its particular instantiations. You can then find examples to make the same point with other notions.

[T2] Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 266.3–4

*[shorter version of the doubt argument]*

*You should know:* you understand the meaning of triangle, while doubting whether or not existence among concrete individuals is attributed to it. After it occurs to you that it consists of line and plane, it does not [thereby] occur to you that it exists in concrete individuals.

[T3] Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 270.4–8

*[priority argument]*

The quiddity of something may be the ground for one of its attributes (*ṣifa*), and one of its attributes can be the ground for another attribute, for example

a specific difference [may be the ground] for a proper accident. Nevertheless that attribute which is the existence of something cannot be grounded by its quiddity, which is not [itself] existence, nor can it be grounded in some other attribute. For the ground is prior in existence, and nothing is prior in existence to existence.

[T4] Al-Juwaynī, *Shāmīl*, 129.15–130.1

*If it is asked:* why do you deny that existence is a state (*ḥāl*) although you accept the reality of states? *We answer:* the claim that existence is a state fails on [both of] the two doctrines. (1) According to our doctrine, it fails because the true reality of the object is existence, and existence is not an entity (*ma'nā*) additional to the object. (2) On your own principles, it fails because there are two kinds of states in your theory: the attributes of self (*ṣifāt al-nafs*), which do not include existence; and the attributes [130] that are caused (*yu'allala bi-al-'illa*), which do not include existence either. And Abū Hāšim did not imagine any kind of states different from these two.

[T5] Bahmanyār, *Tahṣīl*, 280.18–281.5

[*infinite regress and "being existent (mawjūdiyya)"*]

As for establishing the existence of the subject-matter of this science, namely existence, this is unnecessary. For, when we say "this is existent," we mean two things by this. First, that it possesses existence (*dhū wujūd*), as we say: "head is related (*muḍāf*) to somebody who possesses a head." This statement is [however] metaphorical. In reality the existent is existence and the related is relation. For existence is not that through which (*mā yukūnu bihi*) something is among concrete individuals, but is "something's being (*kawn*) among concrete individuals" or "coming-to-be (*ṣayrūra*) in concrete individuals." If something were among the concrete individuals through its being among concrete individuals, it would lead to an infinite regress, with the result that nothing could ever rightly be said to be among concrete individuals. Thus, the existence which is [something's] being among concrete individuals is "being existent (*mawjūdiyya*)," and the Existence necessary in itself is [just] its being existent.



[T6] Bahmanyār, *Tahsīl*, 282.10–283.10

[*extramental existence is an accident intrinsically related to that which exists*]

If existence is something common (*āmm*), then its existence must be in the soul. For existence exists in the soul through existence, since it is like other conceptualized meanings. As for the [existence] which is among concrete individuals, it is [only] “something existent (*mawjūd mā*).” The specification (*takh-ṣīṣ*) of each existent obtains through a relation (*bi-al-idāfa*) to its subject; that is, it is constituted by its relation to its subject and its ground, so that the relation does not attach to it extrinsically. For the existence of that which is caused is an accident, and every accident is constituted through its existence in its subject. The same goes for existence. For instance, the existence of the human is constituted by its relation to the human, and the existence of Zayd is constituted by a relation to Zayd. [...]

[283] The proof for this is that if [existence] were something self-subsistent, and then a relation to different subjects attached to it extrinsically, the relation would have to be existent for the existence,<sup>9</sup> which is assumed to be self-subsistent, through that very existence; but then the existence of the relation to a subject would have to pertain to the existence which is assumed to be self-subsistent, and this is a contradiction. Thus, the relation of each existence to its subject is not an attachment to it, but rather a constituent. But that which is constituted through an accident, that is, [through] a relation, is itself an accident. [...]

[283.7] The [specific] existents are entities whose names are unknown. Their names can be explicated as “existent as such-and-such” or “existent which does not have a ground.” Then, a common existence is associated with all of them in the mind. Likewise, if we did not know the names and descriptions of quantity, quality and other accidents, we would say about quantity e.g. that it is a particular kind of accident (*ʿaraḍ mā*) or a particular kind of existent in a subject (*mawjūd mā fī mawḍūʿ*).

<sup>9</sup> Adopting the reading *li-al-wijūd* from MS “J”.

[T7] Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 286.4–7

[*existence is a secondary intelligible*]

“Thing” is one of the secondary intelligibles that are traceable to the primary intelligibles. [“Thing”] has a role analogous (*ḥukm*) to “universal,” “particular,” “genus,” and “species.” No existent among the things that exist is [just] a “thing.” Rather the existent is either a human, or a sphere [etc.]. And then, when one grasps this intellectually, it follows that it is a thing. Likewise with “essence (*al-dhāt*),” and likewise too “existence (*al-wujūd*),” in relation to its different types.

[T8] Al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī al-wujūd*, 106.5–9

[*infinite regress argument*]

Before we enter into the solution of this doubt (*shubha*), we put forward a necessity demonstration that existence is something merely conceptual (*amr i'tibārī*). We say: if existence in an existent were something additional (*ma'nā zā'id*) to it in concrete individuals, then it would be existent. But it was said that every existent is existent through existence. Hence, existence would be existent through existence, and likewise its existence, and so on to infinity, but this is absurd.

[T9] Al-Khayyām, *Risālat al-dīyā' al-'aqlī*, 64.3–66.13

[*existence as a mental judgment that an essence is extramentally instantiated*]

As for [existence's] being something conceptual that exists in the soul (*shay'an i'tibārīyyan mawjūdan fī al-naḥs*), you must realize that everything has a true reality through which it is specified and distinguished from everything else. This judgment is primary and no intellect can reject it. If an intellect grasps that true reality intellectually, I mean if a trace (*athar*) of that true reality occurs (*ḥaṣala*) in some intellect, and this intellect furthermore relates that true reality and quiddity to a form that occurs as existent in concrete individuals, then “being in the concrete individuals” is something additional to the essence of that quiddity and true reality, but is nothing additional to the essence of the existent (*dhāt al-mawjūd*). For the existent in concrete individuals is not that quiddity, since that quiddity cannot exist in the concrete individuals as such (*bi-'aynihi*), given that intellect can only think of something by grasping it intel-

lectually as abstracted (*mujarradan*) from its individual accidents; and it is not possible that this exists extramentally insofar as it is something abstracted. [...]

[65.18] *As for the claim made by one who says, “if the existence of Zayd is not existent in the concrete individuals, how then is Zayd existent?”: this is a false, barefaced, sophisticated argument. Its absurdity may be seen in two ways. [First]: their saying “if the existence of Zayd is not existent, how then is Zayd existent?” is tantamount to saying that the existent exists due to existence, which is just to insist on the fallacies of the first investigation. [Second]: the existence of an intellectually grasped Zayd is something intellectually grasped, existing in the soul. Indeed, the fallacies fail to distinguish between two modes of existence: in concrete individuals and in the soul.*

*If they say “we mean that Zayd is a particular grasped by the senses and by the intellect, so that his existence is something additional to the quiddity in the soul,” we reply: universal predicates may be applied to the subjects only after they are intellectually grasped; but existence is a universal predicate, so it can be predicated of a subject only after [the subject] is intellectually grasped. It does not matter whether, upon grasping it intellectually, the intellect takes it to be one and without multiplicity—as in God’s case—or not. [...]*

[66.11] Thus, it is clearly right to say that the existent among concrete individuals is one and the same thing as its existence. The multiplicity occurs only once it is intellectually grasped and when it becomes an intellectually grasped quiddity, to which is added that intellectually grasped entity (*ma’nā*) that is called “existence.”

[T10] Al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī al-wujūd*, 107.11–110.4

*[rejection of the solution that existence needs no further existence]*

*Some of them say: the attribute of existence requires no further existence in order to be existent. Rather it is existent without any further existence. Response: the person who says this simply wants to ward off the infinite regress, but does not manage to do so [108]. Instead he falls into a number of other absurdities, including:*

*We ask whether an indicated existence is existent or not. [...] If they answer no, we ask: this existence that you believe in, is it something that has its*

own essence (*dhāt*) or not? If they answer no, [their notion of existence] is meaningless and absurd. But if they answer yes, we say: you have now accepted that there is an essence which is not existent through existence. Why then you would not accept this in respect of every existent and every essence, in order to be delivered from these contradictions and absurdities? Furthermore if your original claim was true, namely that the existent whiteness requires an existence additional to it, then it [sc. the existence of whiteness] also inevitably requires an existence additional to it, and this is absurd. [...]

[108.14] If the attribute of existence<sup>10</sup> is existent [109] in itself and not through another existence, and it is conjoined to the quiddity so that the quiddity becomes existent through it, then the predicate of the part would be applied to the whole, but this is absurd. Indeed, if this were so, the quiddity would not become existent. Instead, it would become conjoined to some existent item, so that the attribute of the part would not be predicated of the whole. For instance, whiteness is in itself whiteness. When it is conjoined to body, the composite does not become whiteness but rather becomes white. If whiteness were in itself white, then the body would not become white, but would rather become conjoined with something white. Admittedly, people in general do call whiteness “white” and say, “this is a white color.” However, this is metaphorical usage, not strictly accurate (*lā ‘alā sabīl al-taḥqīq*). If existence too were said to be existent in a metaphorical sense, and not with strict accuracy, then it is applied only as a metaphorical predication, and we have no quarrel with this. [...]

[109.14] I heard one of them say that existence is existent with no need of a further existence, just as human is human through humanity, yet humanity does not require another humanity in order to be human.<sup>11</sup> [110] Someone who says this fails to distinguish between humanity and human. For if humanity were described as “human,” it would require a further humanity. Rather it is described as “humanity.” But then why not say the same about existence: that existence is not described as existent, such that it would require another existence; rather it is described as existence, and nothing else? Thus one could avoid the absurdity.

10 Correcting the edition which reads *al-mawjūd* instead of *al-wujūd*.

11 Reading *insānan* instead of *insāniyyatan*.

[T11] Al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī al-wujūd*, 110.13–111.5

[*indication of the priority problem*]

It is essence [not existence] that derives [its being from something else] (*al-mustafād*); for essence is non-existent and then it exists. Therefore, the essence derives [its being from something else]. This kind of essence cannot be in need of existence or of a relation to existence, since essence is non-existent before existence, and how can one thing be in need of another before it even exists? A need for something can belong only to existing things, not non-existents. So, what really happens is that when the soul intellectually grasps that kind of essence, considers its states (*aḥwāl*) and distinguishes between them intellectually, some of them get classified as essential and others as accidental. [111] [The soul] then finds that existence in all things is accidental to them. So, it is beyond any doubt that existence is something additional to the intelligible quiddity. There is no quarrel about it. Rather, we quarrel about existence in concrete individuals.

[T12] Al-Sāwī *apud* al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārīʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 354.5–18

[*whether existence needs a further existence*]

Another proof whose weakness they [i.e. the proponents of real essence-existence distinction] [can show] is something mentioned by the author of the *Baṣāʾir* [ʿUmar b. Sahlān al-Sāwī] in several passages. The upshot of which is: “the existence of the quiddity that is in concrete individuals is either something occurring as an entity (*amran mutaḥaṣṣilan al-dhāt*) or not. If the existence [of the quiddity] does not occur as an entity, then the quiddity is non-existent. If however its existence occurs, then existence belongs to existence, and this yields an infinite regress.” This is nothing other than replacing the word existence by “occurrence (*ḥuṣūl*).” For occurrence is the same as existence, so it’s as if he asked, “is the existence of [the quiddity] existent or not?” Some of them say that existence is not existent. For nothing is attributed to itself (*yūṣafu bi-naḥsihi*). For instance, one does not say that whiteness is white. Others say that existence is existent and its being existence is identical to its being existent. This is the “being existent (*mawjūdiyya*)” of a thing in concrete individuals, with no further existence belonging to it. Instead, it is existent insofar as it is existent. That which belongs to things other than it—that is, the attribution “existent”—belongs to it in itself (*fī dhātīhi*), and is the same as its essence (*dhāt*). This is the basis of their position concerning these issues, and is the most prominent way they use to rebut the proofs of their opponents. Yet the argument is no

different just by using the word “occurrence.” It’s amazing that he [i.e. al-Sāwī] elsewhere mocked this argument [i.e. asking whether existence is existent or not], but [here], when he replaced the word “existence” with “occurrence,” he admired it, although it is just the same argument.

[T13] Al-Sāwī *apud* al-Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, 167.3–7

[*on the claim that existence needs no further existence*]

The author of the *Baṣāʾir* [ʿUmar b. Sahlān al-Sāwī], establishing existence as merely conceptual (*iʿtibārī*) by way of raising doubts, asked whether [existence] occurs as an entity or not. If it occurs as an entity, then existence belongs to it. However he [also] argued against those who ask whether existence is existent or not, claiming that it is incorrect to say that whiteness is white. Yet he commits the same sin he decries, since “occurring” is the same as “existent.”

[T14] Abū al-Barakāt, *Muʿtabar*, vol. 3, 63.14–64.14

[*infinite regress and whether existence needs further existence*]

One understands (*yaʿrifu*) existence primarily, along with the understanding of any existent or non-existent. We have already said that whatever one understands is existent. In light of this, existence [too] is existent; how could it be otherwise, given that whatever fails to exist (*laysa bi-mawjūd*) is non-existent (*maʿdūm*)? How then could existence, through which the existent exists, be non-existent or fail to exist? But if existence is existent, so that both the existent and the existence of this existent<sup>12</sup> exist, then the existent exists through existence, and the existence [likewise exists] through existence, which yields an infinite regress. Or [the infinite regress] stops with an existence that is existent in itself, not through some [further] existence that is attributed to it. This existence would inevitably be existent. When we say that such a thing is existent, we do not mean a composition of an attribute (*ṣifa*) and a subject of attribution (*mawṣūf*), that is, an existent to which existence belongs. Rather, we mean the existent whose essence is existence, like white color, not like white body. For white body is only white through white color, whereas white color is white through itself, not through [white] color yet again. For the existent essence of [this] color is existent whiteness, and color is a mental attribute (*ṣifa dhih-*

12 Correcting *al-wujūd* to *al-mawjūd*.

*nīyya*), [64] whereas whiteness is a concrete, simple, existent object (*al-‘ayn al-mawjūd*), in which there is no composition. The composition is purely mental, insofar as one passes from one conception to another as generic and specific, given that whiteness and redness are similar in both being colors. Likewise, “existent” is said about that simple, first existence (*al-wujūd al-awwal al-basīṭ*), just as the white is said to be color. This isn’t because of any composition of color and whiteness in its essence. Likewise, in the essence of the first existence there is no such composition of existence and existent. Rather, “existent” is said about [first existence] and other existents by way of similarity and participation in the mind, just as color is said about the white and other colored existents. In the first existence, the referent (*ma‘nā*) of “existent” and “existence” is one and the same, just as white color and whiteness in the white are one and the same in the concrete particular and being (*huwīyya*), not however in mental conceptualization.

[T15] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 62.20–63.5

[*infinite regress and substitution of wujūd with ‘ayn*]

*If someone asks:* Are the true reality and quiddity of body affirmed as real (*thāb-īta*) in the mind prior to its [sc. the body’s] existence, with it then becoming existent afterwards, so that existence may rightly be said to be accidental to the quiddity of body? And likewise for anything that is contingent in existence. *We respond:* The true reality of body is conceptualized before the existence of body, yet the true reality in itself is not prior to existence, so that existence would be added to this true reality afterwards. For if this were the case, then you would have to say that existence becomes [63] existent in the quiddity of body. Then the same would follow for the existence of existence that was necessary for the quiddity of body, thus yielding an infinite regress. It would [furthermore follow] that existence itself has a quiddity, just as body has a quiddity.

To the contrary, the meaning of “the existence of body” is that the Omnipotent created a body, and it entered concrete individuals in its essence and concrete being (*‘ayn*). So its concrete being is described as existent, that is, it is one of the concrete individuals (*huwa ‘ayn min al-‘ayān*). Evidently, the fact that it is described as being one of the concrete individuals is due to its concrete being itself (*li-‘aynihi*), not due to something additionally associated with the concrete being, that is, with the essence of body.

[T16] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 62.12–15

[*rejection of the doubt argument*]

The proof of our statement that the existence of each thing is identical to its essence (*dhāt*) is that, if it were additional to the essence or true reality of the thing, like body for instance, then it would be possible to know one of them without [knowing] the other. It is however impossible to distinguish between them [i.e. essence and existence] in knowledge. Given that this is unfeasible, then, since we never know a concrete body without knowing that it is existent, nor do we know that it is existent without knowing that it is body, we say that existence is nothing additional to corporeality.

[T17] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 161.18–163.3

[*the doubt argument clarified*]

Everyone [should] wonder about the proponents of real states that they made species, like [162] substantiality, corporeality, accidentality, and “being color,” something real even while they are non-existent (*ashyā’ thābita fī al-‘adam*). For, [these proponents reasoned,] knowledge is connected to them and whatever is known has to be a thing, in order that knowledge can depend upon (*yatawakka’u*) it. Furthermore, the same objects, that is, substantiality, accidentality, “being color” and “blackness” are states in existence that cannot be known in their own right, and are never existent by themselves. What can this be, that is known while non-existent, so that knowledge depends on it, but is not known when it is in existence?<sup>13</sup>

If they went the well-trodden path of intellects in their conception of things with their genera and species, they [sc. the proponents of states] would know that the conceptions of intellects are the quiddities of things with their genera and species, which do not call for realized existence (*mawjūda muḥaqqiqa*) or being postulated as real, extramental things (*ashyā’ thābita khārija ‘an al-‘uqūl*). And<sup>14</sup> what belongs to them in themselves and in respect of their genera and species in the mind (*fī al-dhihn*), in terms of essential constituents (*al-muqawwimāt al-dhātīyya*), by which their selves are realized, does not depend

13 This discussion is part of the argumentation for the reality of the non-existent. See further the chapter in the present volume on “Non-Existence.”

14 Reading *wa-* instead of *aw* with manuscript B.



on the act of any agent. So it is possible for them to be known while disregarding the question whether they exist. For the grounds (*asbāb*) of existence are different from those of quiddity.<sup>15</sup> And [the proponents of states] would know that sensory perceptions are the concrete things themselves. The way we become acquainted with them calls for their realized existence, and their being acknowledged as real things outside of sensation (*ashyā' thābita khārija 'an al-ḥawāss*). And what belongs to them in themselves as concrete beings and the way we become acquainted with them through sensation, in terms of accidental specifiers (*al-mukhaṣṣiṣāt al-'araḍiyya*), by which their concrete selves are realized, does depend on the act of an agent. So they cannot exist deprived of these specifiers. [Again,] the grounds of existence are different from those of quiddity.

When the Mu'tazilites heard the philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) drawing a distinction between the two cases, they thought [163] that conceptions in minds are real things among concrete beings (*al-mutaṣawwarāt fī al-adhḥān hiya ash-yā' thābita fī al-a'yān*), and concluded that the non-existent is a thing (*shay'*). And they thought that the genera and species existing in the mind are states that are real among concrete beings.<sup>16</sup>

[T18] Ibn Ghaylān, *Ḥudūth al-'ālam*, 74.4–12

[*conceptualism regarding existence and states*]

*We say:* there is no existent in concrete individuals apart from the objects themselves (*dhawāt*), which (with the exception of God the exalted) are either substances or existing (*wujūdiyya*) accidents, like white and heat, not like [the state of] “being a color” or “being an accident.” Existence is among the universals and the other accidents which we affirm as existing in the mind alone. [They are affirmed] when the mind makes a comparison between existent objects which differ in their quiddities, and finds both commonalities (*mushārikāt*) and differences (*mubāyināt*) among the attributes that follow from the variation in the quiddities. Hence, it predicates these attributes of them, even though in extramental reality, there are only objects that differ in their quiddities—precisely as we said in the case of white. For the mind predicates of it that it is a color, a quality, an accident, an existent, and the other attributes that we mentioned

<sup>15</sup> See [T1].

<sup>16</sup> Exceptionally, we quote this passage twice, also in [5T17].

in the preceding chapter. Yet we clarified that none of them is existent in concrete individuals, along with what we said about relational and associated items (*al-umūr al-nisbiyya wa-al-iḍāfiyya*), which we decided exist in the mind [only].

[T19] Ibn Ghaylān, *Hudūth al-‘ālam*, 75.13–20

[*rejection of the solution that existence requires no further existence*]

*One should not say:* existence requires no further existence, because its essence is existence and its existence is from the Bestower of existence (*al-mūjid*), not through another existence, whereas other existents exist through it [sc. existence]—just as body is white through whiteness, but whiteness is white through itself, since its essence is whiteness, not *through* whiteness. [This is wrong,] because white is said of those [objects] in which whiteness subsists and exists, since the white is that which has whiteness, or is the possessor of whiteness. By contrast whiteness does not subsist in whiteness, nor does it have whiteness; whiteness is not that which possesses whiteness, so it is not strictly (*bi-al-ḥaqīqa*) said to be “white.” If one calls it “[white] color,” this would be in an extended sense, which is metaphorical and equivocal. Strictly speaking, one should say that it is “a color which is whiteness,” not “white color,” that is, color possessing whiteness. If “existent” were a name for something in which existence subsists, and if existence were existent, then existence would have to subsist in [existence], just as white is predicated of something in which whiteness subsists.

[T20] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 112.2–6

[*essence is distinct from existence*]

*You should know that* the existence of contingent things is either the same as their quiddities or not. If not, then it is either intrinsic (*dākhil*) to their quiddities or not. These three are the only options. The first is that their existence is identical to their quiddities, the second that their existence is a part of their quiddities, the third that existence is extrinsic to their quiddities. The truth is the third, as arises from the fact that the other two are false.

[T21] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 112.10–15; 113.16–19

[*essence is distinct from existence*]

Let us mention in this chapter the proofs that existence is not [identical to] quiddity, of which there are four. First, existence is shared by the quiddities, whereas the quiddities, which are more specific than existence, share no specific aspect (*khuṣūṣiyya*) of any quiddity that is more specific than existence; hence existence is different from the quiddities. Second, if existence were identical to quiddity, then saying that a substance exists would be just like saying that a substance is a substance, and in general there would be no predication or assertion (*al-ḥaml wa-al-waḍʿ*) here, only the linguistic form of one. Since this is not so, we know that existence is distinct from substancehood. [...] [113.16] Third, existence does not need to be understood (*taʿrīf*) whereas quiddities, in their specificity, do require this. Hence existence is not identical to quiddity. Fourth, existence is opposed to non-existence and can be distinguished into necessary and contingent, whereas the specificities of quiddities are not opposed to these notions. Hence existence is distinct from the specificities.

[T22] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 126.19–127.2

[*priority of essence over existence*]

The fact that a quiddity is concrete (*taʿayyun*), insofar as it is quiddity, is either insufficient for the reception (*qubūl*) of existence, or it is sufficient. (a) If it is insufficient, then it follows that the quiddity's receptivity of existence depends on a further existence, so that it would be existent before being existent, leading to the absurdities you have mentioned. This being false, it must be right to say that the existence of contingent things is not additional to their quiddities, but rather identical to them. But in that case, existence would be predicated of existent quiddities equivocally. (b) Alternatively, if the fact that a quiddity is concrete, insofar as it is quiddity, is sufficient for the receptivity of existence, and the priority of the quiddity and its receptivity of existence do not conceptually imply (*yaʿtabiru*) its being existent before being existent, then why can't the fact that a quiddity is concrete be sufficient for its producing (*muʿaththiratan*) [127] existence, so that its priority to existence in being productive does not conceptually imply its being existent before being existent?

[T23] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 129.5–18

[*priority argument and the neutrality of essence with respect to existence*]

*If they say:* if by quiddity's "bringing about" you do not conceptually imply its "being existent," you must allow that it brings about existence even while being non-existent, which is absurd. *We say:* this is a unconvincing challenge. For the conception (*i'tibār*) of the quiddity is distinct from the conception of its existence and non-existence. We attach existence to this quiddity as such, not insofar it is non-existent. There are two things that indicate the truth of what we say.

*First*, they claim [themselves] that if the quiddity is qualified (*shurīṭa*) by existence or non-existence, then contingency does not occur to it, but contingency occurs to it as such. So, just as non-existence need not enter into it simply because it lacks existence at the level of the conception of the quiddity qualified as contingent, in the same way it does not follow in our problem.

*Second*, the quiddity receives existence without being qualified with (*lā bi-shart*) a further existence. Besides, they need not make the receiver of existence a non-existent quiddity, such that one would have to say that existence is attributed to the quiddity while it is non-existent. Likewise here, we do not make that which produces to be a non-existent quiddity, so that it would have to be producing even while being non-existent. Rather, what is producing is the quiddity itself.

[T24] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 309.18–22

[*more on the neutrality of essence*]

Contingent quiddity entails contingency as such (*li-mā hiya hiya*); as for existence, it arises only due to a distinct cause. What is through itself is prior to what is through another. Hence, the fact that the contingent quiddity entails contingency is prior to the attribution of existence to [the quiddity]. It is therefore established that the fact that the quiddity entails its necessary concomitants is prior to the attribution of existence, and it is established that the fact that the quiddity entails its necessary concomitants does not depend on that quiddity's being existent.

[T25] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 87.21–88.10

[*affirmation principle and the neutrality of essence*]

*The one who denies that existence is additional to quiddity offers the following proof:* if existence were additional to quiddity, then existence would subsist in the quiddity. But if it depends on the fact that the quiddity is existent, then it follows that either something is a condition for itself, [88] or there is infinite regress. Yet if it does not depend on [quiddity's being existent], then an affirmative attribute (*al-ṣifa al-thubūtiyya*) would have to subsist in pure non-existence. This is absurd, because essences are perceptible for us only through the attributes. And if we allow that the existent subsists in the non-existent, then [consider the example] of looking at a wall: we perceive nothing of it apart from its color, its density and its weight. If we accept that an existent attribute could subsist in a non-existent subject of inherence (*al-maḥall*), then we cannot rule out that something described as having a certain color, density and weight might be purely non-existent. This gives rise to a doubt as to whether the essence of the wall, or a man, is existent or not. But this is known to be false.

*The answer to which is:* the quiddity is the subject of inherence for existence. Furthermore the quiddity as such is a quiddity distinct from existence and non-existence. This does not imply the subsistence of something existent in something non-existent.

[T26] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 78v2–10

[*affirmation principle and priority problem*]

We do not say that existence is an affirmative attribute (*ṣifa thubūtiyya*) whose occurrence (*huṣūl*) to a quiddity can do without the [the quiddity's] occurring beforehand. Otherwise an infinite regress would follow [...] [78.6] For we answer that, obviously, attributing affirmation (*thubūt*) to something does not require a further prior affirmation as a precondition. Rather, it is obvious that this is impossible, and that [only] the attribution of a further affirmative attribute (*ṣifa thubūtiyya*) to a thing requires as a precondition the affirmation of the subject of attribution. Given that the difference between the two cases is obvious [i.e. an affirmative attribute and affirmation itself], any confusion between the two is ruled out.

[T27] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 133.9–134.6

[*existence is not an attribute*]

Existence is not that through which something is real (*mā yakūnu bi-hi thābitan*), rather, it is the fact of being real itself (*naḥs kawnuhu thābitan*).

*Verification:* We do not mean by existence anything but the occurrence (*ḥuṣūl*) of something, its realization (*taḥaqquq*) and its reality (*thubūt*). [...]

[133.14] *If someone says* that he means by “existence” an attribute (*ṣifa*) that entails the occurrence of a thing among concrete individuals, *we say:* the occurrence of a thing among concrete individuals cannot be caused by an attribute that subsists in it, and this for two reasons:

[*priority problem*]

*First*, the fact that this attribute which is the cause of existence is attributed to [that thing] would precede its occurrence (*ḥuṣūl*) in itself, whereas the occurrence of existence, if this means the occurrence of quiddity itself (*naḥs ḥuṣūl al-māhiyya*), is not like this. For it is [the quiddity’s] occurrence itself, not the occurrence of something to it, as has already been discussed. For the occurrence of something in itself precedes the occurrence of something else to it. So if the occurrence of something else to it were the cause of its occurrence in itself, a [vicious] circle would follow.

[*infinite regress*]

*Second*, the cause of the occurrence has to be different from the occurrence itself with respect to true reality (*fī al-ḥaqīqa*). Otherwise it would not be more appropriate that one is the cause of the other, rather than vice-versa. Yet surely some occurrence does belong to that cause [too], so that the occurrence of the cause of occurrence would require another [cause of occurrence], [134] yielding an infinite regress.

[*doubt argument concerning particulars*]

Then there was the argument put forward initially, namely that if existence were not the very being among concrete individuals (*naḥs al-kawn fī al-a’yān*), one could know a quiddity which has being among concrete individuals before knowing that this additional [attribute of existence] is established for it. In that case, we would not necessarily have knowledge of the existence of sensible things immediately, but would instead acquire it through proof, so that a doubt concerning that proof would be a doubt about this [sc. their existence]. Since

this is false, we know that existence is nothing but the very fact of occurring among concrete individuals.

[T28] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 115.14–116.19

[*the doubt argument and a solution to the infinite regress*]

*If someone says:* your argument [i.e. the doubt argument] can be turned and applied to existence. For we conceptualize the true reality of existence, and doubt whether it occurs to concrete individuals. Hence it follows that [a further] existence belongs to existence. *We say:* one can doubt something in two ways: in some cases, there is a doubt whether an item is affirmed of it, in other cases, there is a doubt whether it is affirmed of an item. The doubt concerning existence (*al-shakk fī al-wujūd*) is not a doubt whether a further existence is affirmed of it. For existence cannot be described either with existence or with non-existence. The former because, if existence were described with a further existence, then in that case one would posit three items: first the quiddity, which is receptive and not received; second the first-order existence, which is received by the quiddity and receptive [116] of a further existence; third, the further existence. There would be no escape from affirming these three levels, with nothing else in between them, whether or not there is an infinite regress. For if these items [sc. quiddity, first-order existence and second-order existence] did not exist at these [levels] as correlated (*mutalāqiyatan*), then none of them could have the others as attributes.

We say, then, that the quiddity's receptivity of the first-order existence either depends on the second-order existence or it does not. If not, then the first-order existence might be received by the quiddity while the second-order existence is non-existent. Then the existence of existence [of the quiddity] would be non-existent while the quiddity is existent, which is absurd. If on the other hand it does depend [on the second-order existence], then (a) it is absurd, and (b) even if we granted it, it would still yield the conclusion sought.

(a) There are two ways to show its impossibility. *First*, the first-order and second-order existence share a true reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*), and it is no more appropriate that one should inhere in the other than that it should be the other way around. This leads to the result that each of them inheres in the other, while both of them inhere in the quiddity, that two indistinguishable things occur together, that one thing is existent twice, that multiple existents are one, and that one thing inheres in two subjects of inherence—all of which is absurd.

*Second*, given that they are equal in respect of quiddity, and that the second-order existence provides (*yufīdu*) the first-order existence with a disposition to inhere in the quiddity, it follows that the first-order existence must provide itself with this disposition; for things that coincide in respect of species are equal in their characteristics.

(b) The reason why [it still yields the conclusion] even if we granted [that the first-order existence depends on the second-order existence] is that the fact that existence is accidental to the quiddity is one of the necessary concomitants of existence. This necessary concomitant is caused by the second-order existence. Hence it is impossible to separate the first-order existence from the second-order existence. Rather [the first-order existence] will not be receptive of non-existence so long as the second-order existence is together with it. Thus it will not be contingent in respect of existence and non-existence. Obviously then, existence cannot have existence and non-existence as attributes. Therefore, the doubt concerning the affirmation (*thābit*) of existence is not a doubt whether another existence is affirmed for it. Rather, it is a doubt whether or not existence is affirmed of the quiddity [to which it belongs], and it must be distinct from that item of which it is affirmed.

[T29] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 86.7–87.4

[*existence is not a mere concept*]

*If someone says*: yet we intellectually grasp two essences without knowing whether one of them is implied by the other, or vice-versa, or whether one of them has an effect (*athar*) on the other or is an effect of the other, or whether one inheres in the other or is its subject of inherence. It follows that one being implied by the other or vice-versa, one having the other as an effect or vice-versa, or one inhering in the other or vice-versa—[all of this] is additional to the essence. This is absurd, since it yields an infinite regress. [...] [86.23]

As for the argument about implying or being implied, and so on, these are [87] mere mental concepts (*iʿtibārāt dhīhniyya*), as opposed to extramental existents. By contrast, one cannot say that [existence] is a mere mental concept. Otherwise one would have to say that it does not exist in concrete individuals, and admit that its existence in concrete individuals is the quiddity itself (*nafs al-māhīyya*). But this would just take us back to the aforementioned agreement between what is denied [i.e. existence] and what is affirmed [i.e. quiddity] concerning one and the same thing, which is absurd.



[T30] Al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, vol. 1, 379.1–4

[*existence is not a mere concept, but its occurrence is*]

As for their statement that the occurrence of existence to a quiddity would have to be additional to existence itself, *we say*: the occurrence of one thing to another cannot be additional. Otherwise it would have to occur to this subject of inherence too, yielding an infinite regress. Rather the occurrence of one thing to another is a mere mental concept (*iʿtibār dhihni*) which has no extramental occurrence [in its own right]. As for existence itself, one cannot say that it is a mere mental concept. So the difference is clear.

[T31] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 112.17–113.8

[*compromise wording, close to al-Khayyām's terminology*]

*If someone says*: when we say “the substance is existent,” we mean that what the intellect conceptualizes as existent is occurrent (*muḥaṣṣil*) in extramental reality. This does not imply that its occurring in the extramental reality is additional to it, but only that its occurring in extramental reality is distinct from its being conceptualized in the mind. [...]

[113.6] *We answer*: as for the first argument, it just admits [our own] conclusion (*taslīm al-maṭlūb*). For we do not claim that existence is an item additional to the fact that [substance] occurs in extramental reality. Rather, we claim that its occurrence in extramental reality is something additional to the meaning of its substancehood, and you have now agreed to this.

[T32] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 115.4–12

[*solving how we can doubt mental existence*]

*If someone says*: let's grant that quiddity has to be distinct from its extramental existence, since it is possible to grasp it intellectually while it is non-existent in extramental reality. However it is impossible to grasp intellectually a quiddity while it is non-existent in the mind. How then does it follow from this argument that mental existence is additional to the true reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*)?

*We say*: because we can intellectually grasp the quiddity while doubting whether this intellectually grasped object possesses mental existence or not. For

many people claimed that “intellectual grasping” refers to a connection (*taʿalluq*) between the intellective power and the intellectually grasped object, without the intellectually grasped object occurring in the mind before it was affirmed by way of demonstration. Hence it is established that quiddity can be intellectually grasped even while one is in doubt as to its mental existence; but the demonstration of this is lengthy. The upshot is that mental existence is not a necessary concomitant *within* awareness (*fī al-shuʿūr*), although it is a necessary concomitant *of* awareness (*li-al-shuʿūr*).

[T33] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿūn*, vol. 1, 87.5–7

[*another solution to the impossibility of doubting mental existence*]

As for mental existence, the answer is that quiddity can exist among concrete individuals without mental existence, just as it exists in minds free from extramental existence. So one must distinguish [between essence and mental existence].

[T34] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 119.2–23

[*doubt argument and existence as occurrence itself*]

If existence were additional to quiddity, then the occurring quiddity could be grasped intellectually as being realized even while one is ignorant whether it exists; or one could grasp its existence intellectually even while one is ignorant of [the quiddity]. [...]

[119.17] This is a sophism. For existence is nothing other than the fact that the quiddity has occurred (*kawn muḥaṣṣalata*) in extramental reality. When we intellectually grasp the quiddity as occurring in extramental reality, existence is already included in this intellectual grasping. In light of this, how is it possible that [the quiddity] is grasped intellectually [as occurring and realized] even while one is ignorant of [its] existence? Granted, this argument might be supposed to follow, if existence were made the cause for the occurrence of quiddity. But it is ruled out for someone who makes existence just the same as occurrence (*naḥs al-taḥaṣṣul*) in extramental reality itself.

[T35] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārīʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 343.9–344.2

[*options in the debate*]

Some people take existence insofar as it is understood (*min ḥaythu mafhūmuhu*), as well as contingency and unity, to be items additional to things, while featuring among concrete individuals. Against them, others hold that these things as understood (*fī mafhūmihā*) are items additional to quiddities, but have no form among concrete individuals (*ṣuwar fī al-aʿyān*). These two groups are worth taking into account among the theoreticians (*ahl al-naẓar*), albeit that there is another group among laypeople (*tāʾifa min al-ʿawāmm*) who, according to the reports, say that contingency, existence and the like are not additional to the quiddities to which they are related, whether in the mind or in concrete reality. But there is no point quarreling with them. For you know that if you say, “horse is contingent in respect of existence,” or “human is contingent in respect of existence,” you do not mean by “contingency of existence,” in the case of the horse, the horse itself, nor do you mean by “contingency of existence,” in the case of the human, the human itself. Rather it is with one and the same meaning that [344] you apply [contingency of existence] to the horse and the human. If the meaning of “contingency of existence” were horseness, and one applied “contingency” to human with the same meaning that is applied to the things described with horseness, then the human would be a horse!

[T36] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārīʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 344.9–347.3

[*terminology: huwiyya*]

Those who say that contingency, existence, unity etc. are items that have concrete being (*huwiyyāt*) that is additional to quiddity, to which they attach in concrete individuals, argued as follows [...].

[*existence in concrete individuals applies to the concept in the mind*]

[346.3] You are wrong to say, in your first argument, that [something] is either contingent in concrete individuals or existent in concrete individuals, implying that [either way] its contingency and its existence are among concrete individuals. For from the fact that we truly judge [of something] that it is contingent in concrete individuals, it does not follow that its contingency occurs in concrete individuals. Rather it is from the perspective of the mind (*min qibal al-dhihn*) that [that thing] is judged to be among concrete individuals; and it can also be judged to be contingent in the mind. Contingency is a mental attrib-

ute (*ṣifa dhihniyya*), which the mind sometimes relates to something that is in the mind, sometimes to something concrete, and sometimes it makes a judgment absolutely, as equally related to both [what is in] the mind and [what is] concrete.

[*Those responding may also*] say: your way of arguing about contingency, unity and existence and such notions fails, when you say that such-and-such a thing is impossible of existence in concrete individuals. When we say “impossible in concrete individuals” we do not mean that impossibility has some form in concrete individuals. [...]

[*existence is a secondary intelligible*]

[346.14] Attributes are distinguished into those that have existence both in the mind and concretely, like the white, and those which describe quiddities yet have existence only in the mind; their concrete existence is their being in the mind. For instance being a species, which is predicated of the human, and particularity, which is predicated of Zayd. For our saying “Zayd is a particular in concrete individuals” does not mean that particularity has some form among concrete individuals that subsists through Zayd. The same goes for thingness (*shay’iyya*), [347] which many of them have acknowledged as a secondary intelligible (*min al-ma’qūlāt al-thāwānī*), although one can truly say, “X is a thing in concrete individuals.” Contingency, existence, necessity, unity, and such notions belong to this group.

[T37] Al-Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, 162.10–163.6

[*correspondence problem*]

Those who believed that existence, contingency, unity etc. have a form in concrete individuals argued on the basis of the fact that we say that something is contingent in concrete individuals or that it is one or that it is existent, so that they have to have some entitative realities (*dhawāt*) and forms (*ṣuwar*) in concrete individuals. Otherwise the aforementioned statements would not be true. One may object to them on the basis of our saying, “X is impossible in concrete individuals.” For its impossibility does not have to have a concrete being (*huwiyya ‘aynan*) [as] it would [also] imply the reality of that whose [impossibility] has been established. So, it is conceded that these things—i.e. existence, contingency etc.—are something additional to quiddity, yet it is not conceded that they have concrete being.

[163] *Question:* Is not it the case that everything in the mind is a resemblance (*mithāl*) of the concrete [extramental entities]?

*Response:* we talk about correspondence (*al-muṭābaqa*) only in the cases when there is an entity (*dhāt*) in concrete individuals, such as blackness and whiteness. As for the merely conceptual items (*al-iṭibārīyyāt*), they do not have any concrete being (*huwiyyāt ʿayniyya*). Rather their concrete existence is just their mental existence. Sometimes it is related to the concrete, as when one says “a thing such-and-such is impossible as a concrete entity.” Sometimes it is related to the mental, or to both of them, as when one says “the occurrence of a form and its simultaneous non-existence in the mind and absolutely is absurd.”

[T38] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 46.1–5 [trans. Walbridge and Ziai, mod.]

[*doubt argument and infinite regress*]

Another consideration is that the opponents of these followers of the Peripatetics understand existence, yet doubt whether it occurs in concrete individuals or not, just as they did in the case of the quiddity. Existence then would have another existence, yielding an infinite regress. It is clear from this that there is nothing in existence which is a concrete individual of the quiddity of existence (*ʿayn māhiyyat al-wujūd*); for as soon as we conceive of its meaning, we may doubt whether or not it has existence. Thus it would have a further existence, leading to an infinite regress.

[T39] Al-Suhrawardī, *Talwihāt*, 193.10–20

[*doubt argument and answer to Abū al-Barakāt's solution that existence needs no further existence*]

One cannot say that existence is additional to quiddity among concrete individuals, because we can intellectually grasp [the quiddity] apart from [existence]. For we understand existence as such too, for instance the existence of phoenix, without our knowing that it is existent in concrete individuals. Hence, existence needs another existence, and that forms an infinite series whose elements are ordered and exist simultaneously, which you already know to be impossible.

*Counter-argument:* existence and being existent are one and the same. What is other than it [receives existence] from it, [however existence] belongs to [existence] in itself (*fī dhātihi*).

*Response:* we understand [existence] in relation to the *jinn*, for instance (as has been mentioned above), without knowing whether it in fact occurs. The existence of existence is different from [existence], just like in the case of quiddity. If [existence] were existent simply due to its being existence, then this would be so by virtue of its quiddity, and its non-existence would be inconceivable.

[*why there is no infinite regress*]

Furthermore, if the existence of existence is added to [existence], leading to an infinite regress, then existence would not occur for anything until the Agent makes the existence of its existence exist, and it would go on like this, so that nothing would be originated in time until a preceding infinity were originated. But that which depends on an ordered infinity has never occurred and will never occur.

[T40] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 45.2–13

[*infinite regress and another answer to Abū al-Barakāt's solution that existence needs no further existence*]

Existence applies with a single meaning and concept (*ma'nā wa-maḥmūm*) to blackness, substance, human and horse. It is an intellectually grasped meaning (*ma'nā*) which is more general than any of these, as are the concepts of quiddity taken absolutely, and of thingness, and true reality, and essence<sup>17</sup> taken absolutely. We claim that all these predicates are purely intellectual. For if existence were nothing but an expression of blackness itself, it could not apply with a single meaning to whiteness, blackness, and substance. If it were taken to have a meaning more general than substantiality, it would be either occurring (*ḥāsil*) in the substance, subsisting in it, or it would be independent in itself. If it were independent in itself, then the substance would not have it as an attribute, since its relation to [the substance] would be the same as its relation to everything else. If it were *in* the substance, it would certainly occur in it, but occurrence (*al-ḥuṣūl*) is existence; so that existence, if it occurred, would be

<sup>17</sup> Adding *wa-l-dhāt* from ed. Corbin, 64.12.

existent [yielding an infinite regress]. If though one takes its being existent as nothing but existence itself, then “existent” would not be [predicated] of the existent and other things with a single meaning. For its concept in respect to [other] things would be “something that has existence,” and in respect to existence itself, that it is existence. We ourselves apply [existent] to many things with a single meaning.

[T41] Al-Suhrawardī, *Talwihāt*, 194.1–4

[*priority argument*]

Furthermore, if existence is an attribute of quiddity in concrete individuals, then quiddity is receptive (*qābila*) of it, and would be existent either *after* it—in which case [existence] would occur independently of [quiddity], without any receptivity or attribution—or *before* it—in which case [quiddity] is existent before being existent—or *with* it—in which case the quiddity would be existent together with existence, not through existence, and a further existence would belong to it.

[T42] Al-Āmidī, *Kashf al-tamwihāt*, 56.23–57.6

[*rejecting Rāzī’s solution to the “no doubt regarding mental existence” counter-argument*]

*Our Master said:* the only meaning of the fact that something is existent in the intellect is that it is grasped intellectually. The disagreement [between the doctrine that knowledge is an impression in the mind and the doctrine that it is a relation] is not about the intellectual existence in this meaning, but about its modality (*kayfiyya*). Whether one says that intellectual grasp means the impression (*inṭibāʿ*) of the intellectually grasped form in the soul, or one says that it is a relation (*idāfa*) between the intellectual power [57] and the object of intellectual grasping, the disagreement is about the modality of existence and not the existence itself. Otherwise, if the meaning of the existence of something in something [else] to which it is related depended on the existence of its form in it, then it would not be correct to say that something has existence in word and existence in writing. For there is no form of it in either. Its existence in both of them only means that their meaning signifies it. If this is the case, then the counter-argument remains.

[T43] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*, 242.20–243.5 [trans. Eichner 2012, mod.]

[*essence is not existence, yet there is no priority in identity*]

*If someone says:* if existence were additional to the contingent quiddity, it would have a concrete being (*ḥuwīyya*) in concrete individuals apart from the concrete being of the quiddity, in which it would inhere. Then its subject of inherence (*maḥall*) would have an existence which precedes it with respect to existence, so that quiddity would have existence prior to its existence. This is absurd. For [243] if it were additional, it would follow that existence would subsist by virtue of something non-existent. *We say:* we do not concede the inference that the subject of the inherence of the concrete being of existence has another existence. Why can't it precede it by virtue of itself (*bi-nafs dhātihā*), rather than by virtue of a further existence?

As to his inferring the subsistence of existence by virtue of something non-existent, *we say:* we do not concede this. Rather, what follows is the subsistence of existence by virtue of the essence so long as the essence is existent. Nonetheless, its existence is different from it.

[T44] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*, 248.9–250.7 [trans. Eichner 2012, mod.]

[*on al-Suhrawardī and the priority argument*]

The author of *The [Philosophy of] Illumination* [al-Suhrawardī] takes another approach to existence. He says that the existence of contingent things in extramental reality is identical to the quiddities, since if they were distinguished from one another, then the quiddity would have one concrete being (*ḥuwīyya*), the existence another, and they would be two [different] existents in extramental reality. Then the quiddity would have to have a further existence, and existence would also have a further existence. [Again] the quiddity would have concrete being, and *that* [second-order] existence would also have concrete being, and these two would be two existents. So it would follow that the quiddity has infinite existences. Therefore, existence and quiddity are one and the same thing in concrete individuals, but the intellect distinguishes the extramental quiddity into two things, quiddity and existence, so that two forms arise in intellect which correspond to the extramental quiddity. “Common existence (*al-wujūd al-āmm*)” does not occur among concrete individuals; it is only in the mind. The only existence that occurs [among concrete individuals] is the necessary existence that is free of any quiddity. When it arises in the intellect,



intellect does not distinguish [249] it into two things, quiddity and existence. Rather the only thing that arises from it is existence. Its existence among concrete beings is not connected to any kind of quiddity. [...]

*[rejection of al-Suhrawardī's position]*

[249.6] This calls for investigation. *For we say:* we do not concede that, if quiddity is distinct from existence and both of them are existent, then essence must have a further existence. Why can't the quiddity be existent by virtue of an existence that is distinct from it, while the existence of existence is identical to itself?

As for his statement that the intellect distinguishes the extramental quiddity into two things, quiddity and existence, so that two forms arise in intellect which correspond to one thing, this is absurd, because it cannot be that two different forms correspond to one thing.

And as for his statement that "common existence" does not occur in concrete beings, this means that existence is a merely mental concept (*i'tibār dhīnī*), which does not arise among concrete individuals; but this is not true. If it were, the nature of existence would be something non-existent (*'adamī*) among concrete beings, and the quiddity of the Necessary in itself, and as such, would be something non-existent among concrete individuals. But this is absurd. [...]

*[his own doctrine]*

[250.3] The truth is what the Master [sc. Avicenna] teaches, namely that existence is shared among existents, that existence in contingent things is additional to their quiddities, and that the necessarily existent in itself is not connected to any quiddity, as we have established. The Imām [Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī] disagrees with [Avicenna] about whether [God's existence] is free of quiddity. [Al-Rāzī] claims that it is connected to some quiddity, this quiddity being a cause for [God's existence], with [God's quiddity] not preceding [existence] with regard to existence. But this is unconvincing, as has been explained.

[T45] Al-Abharī, *Maṭālī'*, fol. 114v15–18

*[general priority problem]*

Extramental existence cannot be distinguished from the extramental quiddity. For if it were distinguished from it, existence would occur to the extramental

quiddity in extramental reality and [the quiddity] would be prior in existence to the extramental existence, and would be existent before existence, but this is absurd.

[T46] Al-Abharī, *Talkhīṣ al-ḥaqāʾiq*, fol. 89v19–90r1

[*more on concrete being (huwiyya)*]

Existence cannot be distinguished from quiddity in concrete individuals such that the quiddity would have a concrete being (*huwiyya*) different from the concrete being of existence. Otherwise, the quiddity in extramental reality would be receptive of existence and would be prior to existence in extramental reality. Rather, they have [90r1] one concrete being and are distinguished through their “selves (*fī anfusihim*).”

[T47] Al-Abharī, *Muntahā al-afkār*, 280.9–281.23 [trans. Eichner 2012, mod.]

[*summary of al-Rāzī’s position, with responses*]

The opinion is widespread that the existence of contingent beings among concrete individuals is additional to their extramental quiddities. They argue that existence is either (a) identical to essence or (b) intrinsic to it or (c) extrinsic to it. The first two [options] are false.

(a) *The first [option is false] for several reasons.* (a1) We have an intellectual grasp of blackness while doubting about its extramental existence, and what is known is different from what is doubted. (a2) Blackness as such is susceptible of non-existence, whereas blackness-as-existent is not susceptible of non-existence. Hence blackness as such is different from blackness-as-existent. Therefore, existence is different from essence. (a3) Existence is common to all existents, whereas blackness is not common. Hence existence is different from blackness. (a4) If existence were identical to blackness, then our saying “blackness is existent” would be tantamount to our saying “blackness is blackness,” but this is not the case.

(b) *The second [option is false],* because (b1) if existence were intrinsic to the essences it would be the most general essential [property] common to them. So it would be genus for them, and the Necessary in itself would be composed from genus and specific difference, which is absurd. (b2) Further, because if it

were intrinsic, it would be either a substance or an accident. If it were a substance, then a substance would be intrinsic to an accident. But if it were an accident, then the reverse [would be the case].

Since both possibilities are false, the third is to be considered true, which is what we wanted to prove.

But all this is unconvincing.

(a1) As to the argument that one can know blackness while doubting its existence, *we say*: we do not concede that from this, it follows that the existence of blackness in concrete beings is distinct from its extramental quiddity. What follows is that the concept (*mafḥūm*) of blackness in the intellect is distinct from existence. (a2) As to the argument that blackness as such is susceptible of non-existence, whereas blackness-as-existent is not susceptible of non-existence, *we say*: if you mean by its “being susceptible of non-existence” that it is possible that it can be eliminated from [reality], then we do not concede that blackness-as-existent [281] is insusceptible of non-existence in this sense. But if you mean that blackness in the state of non-existence occurs in extramental reality and non-existence is ascribed to it, this is impossible. For blackness cannot have a concrete being (*ḥuwiyya*) in extramental reality while it is in a state of non-existence. (a3) As to the argument that existence is common between all existent things: you already know that it is unconvincing. (a4) As to the argument that if existence were identical to blackness, then our saying “blackness is existent” would be tantamount to our saying “blackness is blackness,” *we say*: if you make the subjects of both propositions the extramental blackness, we do not concede the difference between them. But if you make their subjects that which is understood (*mafḥūm*) by blackness, [your] desired conclusion does not follow. For from this follows their being different in the intellect, not in extramental reality.

(b1) As to the argument that if existence were part of a quiddity it would be the most general essential [property], *we say*: we do not concede this. This would only follow if existence were common (*mushtarak*) to all existents, and that this is unconvincing has just been shown. Even if we assume that it is common, it must be the most general essential [property] only if it is essential for the quiddity of the Necessary Existent. But its being essential would only follow if it had a quiddity beyond existence. Why would you say this is so? (b2) As to the argument that if it were intrinsic, it would be either substance or accident etc., *we say*: if you mean by “substance” the quiddity which, when it

exists among concrete individuals, is not in a subject (*mawḍūʿ*), and by “accident” you mean “existent in a subject,” then we do not accept this division [as exhaustive], because a third possibility remains. Namely that—if it exists in concrete individuals—then it is in a subject. If you mean by [“substance”] the quiddity which, if it exists in concrete individuals, is in a subject, then existence is neither a substance nor an accident, because it does not have a quiddity beyond existence. If you mean by “substance” “what does not require a subject” and by “accident” “what requires a subject”—why is it not possible that on this reckoning substance is a constituent (*muḥawwim*) of the accident, since it is possible that the whole requires a subject while one of its parts does not?

[*his own doctrine*]

The truth is that existence is identical to the extramental quiddity in concrete individuals. For otherwise, existence would be either a part of [quiddity] or an attribute (*ṣifa*) of it.

*The first is absurd*, since existence would be something prior to [the quiddity] due to the fact that the part has to be prior to the whole, and this is absurd. Also, if existence were intrinsic for the extramental quiddities, then all the simple quiddities would be composite, and this is absurd.

*The second is also absurd*, for if existence were an attribute of quiddity, then [existence] would presuppose (*muftaqir*) the [quiddity]. When one thing presupposes another, the concrete being (*huwiyya*) of the latter must inevitably be prior to the concrete being of the former. Therefore, the quiddity would have a concrete being in extramental reality that is prior to existence, and this is absurd.

This is the doctrine which some eminent [scholars]<sup>18</sup> transmitted from the First Teacher.

[T48] Al-Abharī, *Bayān al-asrār*, fol. 411r–20

[*the doubt argument and the tautology argument*]

Existence is distinct from quiddity (*al-wujūd ghayr al-māhiyya*), because we can conceptualize quiddity while doubting whether existence is attributed to

18 A marginal note adds, “al-Suhrawardī.”

it. If existence were not distinct from quiddity, this would be impossible. Also, because if existence were not distinct from quiddity, our saying “human exists” could be replaced by saying “the human is a person (*bashar*).”

[*priority problem and conceptual distinction*]

Yet when we say that existence is distinct from quiddity, we do not mean that the quiddity, which possesses existence, is realized in concrete individuals and existence occurs to it. Otherwise, [such a quiddity] would be individualized (*mutashakkhīṣa*) before existence. Rather we mean that the contingent is in itself (*fī nafsihi*) a quiddity and existence. The intellect analyzes a concrete human into humanity and existence, and on this basis two different objects of intellection (*ma‘qūlāni*) occur in the mind, so that the concrete human would be composed from humanity and existence.

[T49] Al-Abharī, *Risāla fī ‘ilm al-kalām*, 51.5–52.6

[*existence is “having a form in extramental reality”*]

Even if we were to concede that existence is distinct from the quiddity as such, why would it follow from this that existence is distinct from the extramental quiddity (*al-māhīyya khārijīyya*)? For quiddity is sometimes mental and sometimes extramental. Existence can be distinct from the quiddity as such, just as it is distinct from the mental quiddity, without being distinct from the *extramental* quiddity. Why do you deny that this is so? The answer to other aspects [of the argument] emerges from this. For these show that existence is distinct from the quiddity as such, but from this it does not follow that [existence] is distinct from the extramental quiddity itself. For, according to me, existence is identical to the extramental quiddity but distinct from the quiddity as such.

[52] Our judgment that blackness is sometimes existent, and sometimes non-existent, is a judgment that it sometimes has a form in extramental reality (*lahu ṣūra fī al-khārij*) and sometimes does not. When we judge that the triangle is not existent, while being in doubt as to whether it exists in extramental reality, we mean that it has no form in extramental reality. When we judge that black can receive existence, we judge that it may have no form in extramental reality.

[T50] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 3, 576.15–577.6

[*anti-realism about essence qua essence*]

[Regarding al-Rāzī's theory of the neutrality of essence.] *The answer is:* this reasoning of his is based on his notion that quiddity has some reality (*thubūt*) extramentally apart from its existence, and furthermore that existence inheres in it. This is false. For the being (*kawn*) of quiddity is its existence. The quiddity can be separated from existence only in the intellect—not that it is deprived of existence in the intellect, since being in the intellect is an intellectual existence too, just as being in the extramental world is extramental existence. Rather, the intellect's role is to consider it [577] by itself, without considering existence. The absence of considering something (*'adam i'tibār al-shay'*) is not the same as considering an absence.

Therefore the attribution of existence to quiddity is an intellectual procedure (*amr 'aqlī*), and is not like the attribution of white to body. For the quiddity has no distinct existence (*wujūd munfarid*), and its accident that is called "existence" has no further existence, such that [quiddity and existence] would relate to one another as receiver (*al-qābil*) and received. Rather if there is the quiddity (*al-māhiyya idhā kānat*), then its being (*kawn*) is its existence.

The result is that quiddity is receptive of existence only when it is existent in the intellect, and cannot be the efficient cause for an extramental attribute so long as its existence is only in the intellect.

[T51] Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Murāsālāt bayna al-Ṭūsī wa-al-Qūnawī*, 104.13–106.5

[*status of essence as such*]

As for [al-Qūnawī's] question whether [quiddities], just in being quiddities, are existing items, [105] the answer is no. For a quiddity just as such cannot be anything other than the quiddity. But when he glosses this by asking whether [quiddities] have some sort (*ḍarb*) of existence, the answer is yes. When they are conceptualized, they come to have intellectual existence. But if they are posited in concrete individuals, they have concrete existence. Concrete existence belongs to them only through the Bestower of Existence, whereas intellectual existence comes from whoever grasps them intellectually. Both existences are contingent.<sup>19</sup> When they say that quiddity has existence before [concrete

<sup>19</sup> Dropping "lahu" with the ms "Tah".

individuals], they thereby mean the intellection of it [by God], which is the cause for its concrete existence and is [called] active knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-fi‘lī*). When they say that [the quiddity] has existence together with [concrete individuals], they mean concrete existence. When they say that it has existence after [concrete individuals], they mean its intellection after its existence, that is, passive knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-infi‘ālī*) [in humans]. If one however considers the quiddity alone, there will be nothing in the intellectual intention apart from the quiddity. Neither existence nor non-existence are included in this way of considering it. That is why they say that [quiddity as such] is neither existent nor non-existent. But then, when one considers its state insofar as it is being considered, [106] and is occurring in the intellect, then it must have existence, either intellectual or concrete. It is in respect of this existence that it is contingent. Likewise, if one considers either of its two modes of existence insofar as it is existence, it will be only that existence alone. If one however considers the affirmation of that existence for [the quiddity], then that existence will have another existence and so on, so long as the mind does not stop.

[T52] Al-Kātibī, *Jam‘ al-daqa’iq*, fol. 131v1–132r1 [trans. Eichner 2012, mod.]

[*the doubt and priority arguments, with a conceptualist response*]

The existence of contingent things is not the same as [their] quiddity, nor intrinsic to it. For we conceptualize a triangle while being in doubt as to its extramental existence. So, in this state, one passes the judgement about the triangle in the intellect that it is a triangle, but one does not pass the judgement that it is existent extramentally. If its extramental existence were identical to its being a triangle or intrinsic to it, then it would be impossible to judge that it is a triangle without judging that it is existent extramentally. Therefore, existence is not identical to triangle, nor intrinsic to it. The same goes for the other quiddities: one may grasp them intellectually while being unaware whether they exist extramentally. Thus existence is not identical to contingent quiddities, nor is it intrinsic to them.

*If it is said:* if existence were distinct from the contingent quiddity, then existence would be attributed to the extramental quiddity and would be an attribute (*ṣifa*) of it. An attribute stands in need of a subject, and what is needed must be prior. Hence, the quiddity must be prior in existence to the existence; but then it would have another existence, and it would have to be prior to this [second-order] existence too. Thus, between quiddity and existence there would be an

infinite number of existences, and something infinite would be fall between two limits, which is a contradiction. *Then we say:* we do not admit that if existence were distinct from quiddity, then the existence would be attributed to quiddity extramentally. This would follow only if the extramental quiddity were different from existence. Why do you say that it follows from existence being different from quiddity as such (*al-māhiyya li-nafs al-māhiyya*) that it is different from the extramental quiddity? This is so because extramentally, quiddity and existence are one thing, and when they are in intellect, intellect splits them into two things: quiddity and existence.

*If you say:* if it is affirmed that existence is different from quiddity in intellect, it follows that they are different extramentally too. Otherwise, the judgement of intellect that they are different would not correspond to what actually is the case (*fī naḥs al-amr*). *Then we say:* we do not admit this, because intellect judges them to different in the intellect, but united extramentally. This judgement does correspond to what actually is the case, for the very reason that they are in fact different in the intellect but not extramentally.

*If you say:* if they are different in the intellect but unified extramentally, then one extramental thing would yield two representations (*mithlāni*) in the intellect, one for the quiddity, the other for the existence. *Then we say:* why can't one extramental thing yield two representations in the intellect? After all, from an isosceles triangle result two representations in intellect, namely those of "triangle without qualification" and "isosceles triangle,"<sup>20</sup> although it is one and the same thing extramentally. [Extramentally], it does not have two different aspects (*jihatāni*) such that the triangle [as such] would correspond to one of them and the isosceles triangle would correspond to the other. Likewise, from blackness result two representations in intellect, those of color without qualification [132r] and blackness, even though extramentally they are one thing. Many other cases will occur to you, God willing.

[T53] Al-Kātibī, *Munaṣṣaṣ fī sharḥ al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 190r15–20

[criticism of the doubt argument]

This way of arguing [i.e. the doubt argument] would establish a distinction between the existence of each contingent being and its quiddity, only if we

20 We delete the apparent corruption *wa-ka-dhālīka al-sawād ḥaṣala minhu mithlāni fī al-ʿaql*, which mixes up the following example of blackness with the previous one about triangle.



could grasp intellectually every contingent being even while doubting whether they exist extramentally. But this is impossible. The Master [sc. Avicenna] indicated this objection in a chapter of the *Ishārāt*, saying “as for human, perhaps there is no doubt concerning its existence, yet this not because of the meaning (*mafḥūm*) of [human] but because there is sense-perception of its particular instantiations.” The Master said in response to this objection that “you can then find examples to make the same point with other notions.” This calls for investigation. For it [only] entails that the existence of this [other] example would be additional to its quiddity, not that the existence of anything else would [be additional] to their quiddities. The goal [of the proof] is the fact that the existence of each contingent being is additional to its quiddity, and what he mentioned does not imply this.

[T54] Ibn Kammūna, *Šarḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 103.1–4

[*the solution that existence needs no further existence*]

The existence of existence is not additional to its being existence. For existence has no quiddity apart from being existence. To the contrary, its quiddity and essence is that it is existence. Quiddities other than it are existent through it, but existence [is existent] through itself, not through an existence additional to it. The existence of other things is through it. This is like the beforeness and afterness that belong to time; they belong to it in itself, that is, they are not additional to it, and they belong to other things through it.

[T55] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 80.7–12; 81.7–13

[*extramental existence is “being existent,” as proposed by Bahmanyār*]

Existence in concrete individuals is identical to “being in concrete individuals (*kawn fī al-aʿyān*)” and it is not “that through which something is in concrete individuals (*mā bihi yakūnu fī al-aʿyān*).” If something were in concrete individuals *through* its being in concrete individuals, then it would go on *ad infinitum* and being in concrete individuals would not be true [at all]. Therefore, existence, which is being in concrete individuals is “being existent (*mawjūdīya*).” [...]

[81.7] That [aspect] of existence which is in concrete individuals is “something existent (*mawjūd mā*).” [Moreover], not only every existence is concretized by its subject, as redness for example is concretized by its subject; every existence

is [also] specified through some [item] which behaves like a specific difference [for this existence]. And then it is associated with some subject. [Particular] existences are meanings whose names are unknown and which are expressed as “existence as such-and-such” and “as such-and-such.” The common existence is attached to all these [particular existences] in the mind. If one did not know the species of accidents through their names and descriptions, they would still say that quantity is such-and-such accident and quality is such-and-such accident.

[T56] al-Shahrazūrī, *Sharḥ ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, 182.14–183.1

[*on the doubt argument*]

If from this argument [sc. the doubt argument] it followed that existence is additional to quiddity in the concrete individual, then the existence of existence would be additional to that existence, as he [i.e. al-Suhrawardī] mentions in the book [*Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, saying]: we conceive of an existence, like the existence of phoenix and we doubt whether it occurs in extramental reality or not. If both existences were one and the same, i.e. the existence of phoenix and the existence of that existence, then it would be impossible to grasp of one of the existences intellectually while doubting the other—as they [i.e. the Peripatetics] mention in the case of the quiddity and its existence. Thus, the discussion turns to the existence of existence [183] and leads to an infinite regress.

[T57] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 214.13–14

[*stating the real essence-existence distinction in terms of huwiyya*]

The Peripatetics believed that [existence] is additional to quiddities in extramental reality and that it has a concrete being (*huwiyya*) which lies among concrete individuals.

[T58] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 415.8–9

[*the priority problem in terms of huwiyya*]

The judgment that existence is additional [to quiddity] is [true] only as concerns that which is grasped intellectually; it is not the case for concrete individuals. Otherwise quiddity would have a concrete being (*huwiyya*) besides existence. In this case there would be two existents, not one, which leads to an infinite regress.

[T59] Al-Ḥillī, *Taslīk al-naḥs*, 29.11–13

[*acceptance of essence qua essence*]

*They argue* [against the essence-existence distinction]: if the subject of inherence for existence is non-existent, then existence is attributed to the non-existent, and this is necessarily false. If on the other hand it were existent, a circle and infinite regress would follow. *The answer is*: the subject of inherence is quiddity, understood with neither qualification (*lā bi-ʿtibār al-qayyidayn*).

[T60] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 9.21–10.16

[*the ontological place of the essence qua essence*]

[Al-Ṭūsī] said: [existence] subsists in the quiddity as such.

*I say*: This is an answer to the opponent's proof that existence is identical to quiddity. The upshot of their proof is: if [existence] were additional to quiddity, then it would be an attribute (*ṣifa*) that subsists in it, [10] since it cannot be a self-subsistent substance independent of the quiddity, and since no attribute can subsist without that to which it is attributed. This being so, it subsists in the quiddity either (a) while it exists or (b) while it does not. Both options are false.

(a) *The first [is false]*, because the existence that is the condition for the subsistence of this existence in the quiddity, is either *this* very existence, in which case it would follow that something is a condition for itself; or [the posterior existence] is distinct from [the prior existence], which implies that there are several existences in one quiddity. [That makes this option false], since we may shift the question to the [prior] existence that is the condition of [this posterior existence], leading to an infinite regress.

(b) *The second [is false]*, because an existing (*wujudiyya*) attribute would have to subsist in a non-existent subject of inherence, and this is false.

Given that both options are false, the idea that [existence] is additional [to quiddity] is rejected. The upshot of the answer is that existence subsists in the quiddity as such, not insofar as it is existent nor non-existent; thus the limitation [to the two aforementioned options] is rejected.

[10.10] [Al-Ṭūsī] said: The addition [of existence] is in the conception.

*I say:* this is the conclusion of the preceding. The subsistence of existence in the quiddity as such can be grasped intellectually only in the mind and the conception, not in extramental existence. For no quiddity can be realized in concrete individuals so long as it is deprived (*munfarida*) of existence. How then can the addition [of existence], or its subsistence in the quiddity, be realized in extramental reality? Rather the existence of the quiddity is additional to it as it is in itself (*fī naḥs al-amr*) and in conception, not in concrete individuals. The subsistence of existence in the quiddity is not like the subsistence of black in the subject of inherence.

[T61] Al-Ḥilli, *Nihāyat al-marām*, vol. 1, 42.11–43.2; 43.14–18

[*Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's argument against the essence-existence distinction*]

*The first argument* against [the idea that existence is additional to essence] comes from Abū al-Ḥusayn [al-Baṣrī]: if the existence of a substance were an attribute additional to its being space-occupying (*mutaḥayyiz*), then we could know it to be space-occupying without knowing it to be existent. Or we might know it with the attribute of existence without knowing it to be space-occupying. For there is no connection (*ta'alluq*) between them that would exclude this. But in fact we can know [a substance] to be existent only when we know that it is space-occupying, and know it to be space-occupying only when we know it to be existent, so we understand that its existence and its space-occupation are one and the same. We say that there is no connection between them, simply because if one were connected to the other so as to be its basis (*aṣl*) (and it cannot be that each is [43] a basis for the other, because that would be circular), then one could know that basis without whatever is based upon it. But this is not affirmed in the case of space-occupation and existence, as explained above. [...]

[43.14] *Response to the first argument:* it is utterly incoherent. For conceptual separability (*al-inḥikāk fī al-taṣawwur*) does not follow from [mere] distinctness. No doubt, there is a mistake here that falls under “suppositious conversion.” For [in fact it is the other way around]: things that are conceptually separable are distinct. Or we can just accept that there must be [conceptual] separability: why do you deem it impossible? For we can conceptualize a space-occupying substance that is not existent.

[T62] Al-Ḥillī, *Nihāyat al-marām*, vol. 1, 44.12–45.4

[*existence does not relate to essence as an inhering accidental property*]

[Our saying] “existence is additional to quiddity” does not mean the same as when we say [for instance] that “blackness is additional to the quiddity of body.” For body exists in extramental reality while unconnected to blackness. In light of which [blackness] is judged to be additional to [body] in extramental reality. But existence, in relation to quiddity, is not like this. Body cannot exist in extramental reality while unconnected to existence, with existence then inhering in it the way blackness does in body. For body being (*kawn*) in extramental reality just is its existence. Quiddity can be only separated from existence in the intellect. This does not mean that it is unconnected to existence in the intellect. For being in the intellect is intellectual existence (*wujūd ‘aqlī*), just as being in extramental reality is extramental existence. Rather, we mean that the intellect can focus on the quiddity alone without paying any attention to existence. The attribution of existence to the quiddity is something [45] intellectual (*amr ‘aqlī*), unlike the attribution of blackness to body. It’s not as if quiddity has an existence of its own and its accidental feature, which we call “existence,” has another existence, and they then come together as receiver and received. Rather, if quiddity has being (*kānat*), then its being just is its existence. Quiddity is only “receptive” of existence when it comes to be (*kawn*) in the intellect.

## Univocity and Equivocity of Existence

To use a word “univocally” means using it with the same meaning on different occasions. If you first say “I have to go to the *bank* to get some money” today, and then “there was a run on the *bank* because of a crisis of confidence,” you are using the word “bank” to mean the same thing, namely a financial institution. The same word could however be used “equivocally,” that is, with two or more different meanings, as in “my money is at the *bank*,” “let’s have a picnic on the river *bank*,” and “the pool player made a nice *bank* shot.” The difference was pointed out by Aristotle in the opening chapter of his *Categories*, meaning that it would have been among the first things learned by students of philosophy in late antiquity, and also in the Arabic-speaking world (where a standard example of an equivocal word is the word *ʿayn*: see e.g. [T8] [T29]). Yet this basic and familiar distinction gave rise to a complex and central debate in metaphysics. The question at stake was whether “being” or “existence” is used univocally of different entities. If we say, “blackness exists,” and then “whiteness exists,” are we using “exists” in the same way in both cases?

While it may seem obvious that we are, some thinkers in the Islamic world, notably in the Ashʿarite tradition, would have denied this [T7] [T32] [T33].<sup>1</sup> For as we have just seen in the last chapter, they argued that there is no distinction between essence and existence. Since the essence of blackness and the essence of whiteness are obviously different, so must be their existence. If we consider items in different categories—so, not two qualities like blackness and whiteness, but a substance like human and a quality like blackness—there would be even more reason to deny that existence is applied to the two cases univocally. Avicenna takes on this view in [T3] and [T4], arguing that on the contrary, existence cannot be equivocal across its various uses. Rather we have a single concept that applies to all things we take to be real; his argument for this in [T3] is that otherwise, the law of excluded middle would not be of general application.

But things are not so simple. Avicenna is keenly aware of Aristotle’s doctrine that being is not a single genus [T1], cf. [T19] [T20], which would seem likewise to rule out that existence is used in all cases in an entirely univocal

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1 See further F. Benevich, “The Metaphysics of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Šahrastānī (d. 1153): Aḥwāl and Universals,” in A. al Ghouz (ed.), *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th to the 14th Century* (Bonn: 2018), 323–353; and F. Benevich, “The Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd*):

way. His solution is to offer a kind of compromise: “‘existence’ does not apply to the ten categories as a coincidental name”—that is, like “bank” and “bank,” where two unrelated things happen to have the same name—“nor does it apply as a univocal name” [T3]. Instead, it is used in an “analogous” (*mushakkik*)<sup>2</sup> fashion, as nicely explained by al-Rāzī [T16]. Avicenna’s point is that existence does have the same meaning when used of blackness and human, yet is applied to the human in a way that is “prior”—because blackness is an accident, human is a substance, and accidents depend for their existence on substances, as explained by Avicenna’s student Bahmanyār [T5].<sup>3</sup>

This doctrine will have a famous later echo in Mullā Ṣadrā, but already in the 12th and 13th century Islamic East it plays a central role in discussions of God’s existence. For more on that, see the next chapter. In this chapter, we consider only the more general question of whether existence is univocal, analogical, or outright equivocal. Avicenna’s position prevails insofar as almost no one embraces equivocity of existence; as we will see shortly, the exception is al-Āmidī. The most prominent defender of the univocity of existence is Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, who in numerous works insists that existence is used with a “common” or “shared” meaning. (An exception is two works that may stand more firmly in the Ash’arite tradition, the *Muḥassal* [T15] and *Risāla fī ‘ilm al-kalām*.<sup>4</sup>) Characteristically al-Ṭūsī leaps to the defense of the Avicennan view

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from Avicenna to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī,” in A. Shihadeh and J. Thiele (eds), *Philosophical Theology in Islam. Later Ash’arism East and West* (Leiden: 2020), 123–155.

- 2 Other ways of translating the notion of *tashkik* include “modulation,” “ambiguity,” “modulated univocity,” “modulated homonymy/univocity.” By choosing “analogy,” we are not suggesting by any means that the other possible translations are incorrect; we are just choosing the notion that is least interpretative.
- 3 On analogy of existence in Avicenna and post-Avicennian tradition see further A. Treiger, “Avicenna’s Notion of Transcendental Modulation of Existence (*taškik al-wujūd*, *analogia entis*) and its Greek and Arabic Sources,” in F. Opwis, and D.C. Reisman (eds), *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas* (Leiden: 2012), 327–363; D. De Haan, “The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being in Avicenna’s *Metaphysics* of the *Healing*,” *Review of Metaphysics* 69 (2014), 261–286; T.-A. Druart, “Ibn Sina and the Ambiguity of Being’s Univocity,” in M.A. Mensia (ed.), *Views on the Philosophy of Ibn Sina and Mulla Sadra Shirazi* (Carthage: 2014), 15–24; D. Janos, *Avicenna on the Ontology of Pure Quiddity* (Berlin: 2020), 424–489; D. Janos, “*Tashkik al-wujūd* and the *lawāzim* in Avicenna’s *Metaphysics*,” in D. De Smet and M. Sebti (eds), *Penser avec Avicenne. De l’héritage grec à la réception latine, en hommage à Jules Janssens* (Leiden: 2022), 91–147; D. Janos, “Avicenna on Equivocity and Modulation: A Reconsideration of the *asmā’ mushakkika* (and *tashkik al-wujūd*),” *Oriens* 50 (2022): 1–62; F. Zamboni, “Is Existence One or Manifold? Avicenna and His Early Interpreters on the Modulation of Existence (*taškik al-wuġūd*),” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 31 (2020), 121–149.
- 4 See al-Rāzī, *Risāla fī ‘ilm al-kalām*, 76.7–8.

by rebutting the arguments from [T15] in [T27]. Al-Rāzī's championing of univocity fits with his defense of the existence-essence distinction. If existence is distinct from, and neutral, to essence, then it seems only natural to suppose that it is one and the same kind of existence that is joined to various essences, either necessarily in God's cause or through a cause in the contingent case.

He duly offers a whole battery of arguments to show that existence is univocal, with three main arguments appearing in several of his works; for other arguments, including a charming one based on rhyme in poetry, see [T17] [T18]. They are laid out concisely in [T14]. First, we have the "opposition" argument, which echoes Avicenna's appeal to the principle of the excluded middle in [T3]: existence is opposed to non-existence, but non-existence is univocal, hence so must existence be univocal. Second, the "division" argument: when we contrast God to created things by saying that He is necessary and they are contingent, the division we are making must be within some shared notion, and this is existence. (Compare here al-Shahrastānī in [T11]; but note that he thinks existence is used equivocally in the one case of God.) Third, a version of the "doubt" argument familiar from the last chapter: we can believe that something is existent while doubting, or simply having no view, as to whether it is necessary or contingent, substance or accident. An earlier version of this argument is found in al-Juwaynī's defense of the reality of the properties called "states (*aḥwāl*)" at [T6].<sup>5</sup> These properties must be real, since it is one thing to think generically about existence, another to think about a specific given property. This argument is not found in Avicenna, but it resonates with his thought. For one thing, it sounds very much like the "doubt argument" with which he used to establish the essence-existence distinction. For another, Avicenna distinguished between a kind of blanket concept of existence which is just the "affirmation" of something and the "proper" existence that belongs to each thing, which is simply the "true reality (*ḥaqīqa*)" of that thing [T2]. One response to al-Juwaynī is found in Ibn al-Malāḥimī: what all essences have in common is not existence, but the fact that they are essences [T9].

Al-Rāzī's arguments are rehearsed and critiqued by al-Kātibī [T28], and also greeted with a spirited rejoinder by al-Āmidī [T21] [T22] [T23] [T24]. Against the opposition argument, he points out, one can say that the negation relevant to each essence is not the negation of sheer non-existence but of that particular essence. In other words, what is opposed to the existence of a cow is not just non-existence but specifically *cow's-not-existing*. As for the division argu-

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5 For more on *aḥwāl* see the chapter on Universals below.



ment, he protests that we do not need to introduce a shared meaning. We can divide just the name “existence” itself. We can and do divide equivocal things; indeed this is just what it is to point out the equivocality of a term like *‘ayn*, as Kātībī points out [T29]. Ibn al-Malāḥimī points out another flaw in the division argument, namely that the division between, for instance, necessary and contingent existence is one within the class of being a concrete object (which is applied equivocally), not one within existence itself [T8]. Al-Abharī makes a similar complaint, arguing that the division between necessary and contingent is actually about essences, not existence [T26].

That leaves the third, epistemic argument for univocity. This fails too, says al-Āmidī, because belief about existence can just be a generic commitment that some essence is realized, a belief that can further be fully specified concerning some particular essence that has been instantiated [T24]. This seems a good response. Analogously, if I tell you I will be at the bank tomorrow you might readily believe me, but then ask whether I mean that I’ll be depositing money or having a picnic. Finally, al-Āmidī also dismisses another argument from al-Rāzī reminiscent of Quine’s example of “Plato’s beard.”<sup>6</sup> Al-Rāzī argues that the very statement that there is no such thing as univocal existence commits us to a univocal understanding of existence. Not unlike Quine, al-Āmidī replies in [T23] [T24] that saying “There is no univocal existence” amounts to saying that “existence” has no referent, and thus commits us to nothing. It should be noted that al-Āmidī, who gives this and numerous other perceptive responses to the Rāzian arguments for univocity, himself embraces univocity in another work [T25]. So neither al-Rāzī nor al-Āmidī, the two leading protagonists of the debate as we have just sketched it, maintains a consistent position across all their works.

It might seem that the univocity of existence would be especially attractive to those who accept a distinction between essence and existence, either real or merely conceptual. Indeed al-Shahrazūrī argues for the distinction (in his case, the conceptual one) precisely on the grounds that existence is univocal. It is received, in the same sense, by essences which are different in other respects [T32]. The two theses are also connected by al-Ḥillī [T34], who also argues for the univocity of existence in [T35]. This is the reason why even those who adopted a “conceptualist” stance on the essence-existence distinction were happy to accept univocity of existence, with the caveat that this concerned only the *concept* of existence. For these thinkers, in other words, we have a single idea

6 W.V.O. Quine, “On What There Is,” in W.V.O. Quine, *From the Logical Point of View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1961), 1–19.

of existence that we can apply to anything, but in the real world being is different for each type of thing. This is how the conceptualists understood Avicenna's idea of the "analogy" of existence, as we see in Ibn Kammūna. "Universal" existence is only in the mind, while real existence is "analogical" since it is simply the realized essence of each thing [T30]. This way of understanding analogy is already found in al-Suhrawardī, who speaks of four degrees of existence: the Necessary (i.e. God), contingent substance, and then two kinds of "stable" accidents, namely non-relative and relative [T13]. Analogy could also be applied to articulate the difference between mental and concrete existence, as 'Umar al-Khayyām points out [T10]. His example is the first man Adam, who is long dead and so exists only in our minds, thus having a lesser degree of existence than that which belongs to a presently existing extramental object. Abū al-Barākāt al-Baghdādī agrees, but emphasizes that a thought of something is itself something that really, not only mentally, exists [T12]. To use 'Umar al-Khayyām's example, Adam exists only insofar as he is represented in my mind, but my idea of Adam exists concretely in my soul.<sup>7</sup>

Most modern readers will probably favor the position usually adopted by al-Rāzī: existence is simply univocal. We do not normally think, when we say that something "exists," that we mean different things by this on different occasions. This is so even if the entities we have in mind are as different as humans, properties, times, numbers, and God. (Bear in mind that even atheists apply the notion to God, when they affirm the proposition that God does *not* exist.) This indiscriminate understanding of existence is captured by the use of the existential quantifier:  $\exists x$  means "there is an x" or "there exists an x," and anything can be put in for the variable x. A point like this is made by al-Samarqandī at [T33]. But among our texts, perhaps the one that comes closest to capturing the "modern" intuition is [T31], where al-Nasafī points out that *something* or other (*amr mā*) must be common to everything that there is. And what could this be, if not existence?

Texts from: Avicenna, Bahmanyār, al-Juwaynī, al-Shahrastānī, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, 'Umar al-Khayyām, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, al-Suhrawardī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Āmidī, al-Abharī, al-Ṭūsī, al-Kātibī, Ibn Kammūna, Burhān al-Dīn al-Nasafī, al-Shahrazūrī, al-Samarqandī, al-Ḥillī.

7 This position forms an important part of the debate about the status of mental object in post-Avicennian philosophy. See further F. Benevich, "Representational Beings: Suhrawardī (d. 1191) and Avicenna's Mental Existence," *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 87 (2020), 289–317.

## Univocity and Equivocity of Existence

[T1] Aristotle, *Met. B* 3, 998b22–27 [trans. Ross, mod.]

[*being is not a genus*]

But it is not possible for either unity or being to be a genus of things; for the specific differences of any genus must all have both being and be one, but it is not possible for the genus to be predicated of the specific differences taken apart from the species (any more than for the species of the genus to be predicated of the proper differences of the genus); so that if unity or being is a genus, no specific difference will either be one or have being.

[T2] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* 1.5, 24.9–13 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*proper vs. affirmative existence*]

“The thing,” or its equivalent, may be used in all languages to indicate some other meaning (*maʿnā*). For, to everything there is a true reality (*ḥaqīqa*) by virtue of which it is what it is. Thus, the triangle has a true reality in that it is a triangle, and whiteness has a true reality in that it is whiteness. This is what we might call “proper existence” (*al-wujūd al-khāṣṣ*), not intending by this the meaning given to affirmative existence (*al-wujūd al-ithbātī*); for the expression “existence” is also used to denote many meanings, one of which is the true reality in accordance with which it is the thing that it is. Thus, [the true reality] according to which it is the thing that it is, as it were, is its proper existence.

[T3] Avicenna, *Dānishnāma, Ilāhiyyāt*, 36.14–38.10

[*existence and the categories: equivocity, univocity, or analogy?*]

Those who lack exact insight supposed that the word “existence” (*ḥastī*) applies to the ten [categories] equivocally, [37] since each of them has one and the same name [namely “existent”], yet the meaning of that name is not the same [in each case]. This is incorrect.

[*tautology argument*]

For if this were so, then saying that substance exists would be the same as saying that it is a substance, so that the meaning of the existence of substance would not be different from the meaning of substancehood. Likewise, the meaning of

the existence which is found in quality would not be different from the quality. Hence, if one said “a quality exists,” this would be the same as saying “a quality is a quality”; and when one said “a substance exists,” it would be the same as to say “a substance is a substance.”

[*opposition argument: the meaning of “non-existence” is one*]

Nor [on the view that existence is equivocal] would it be true that each thing either exists or does not exist. For existence would not have one meaning, but rather ten meanings, and non-existence too would have not one meaning, but rather ten. Therefore, there would not be a twofold division [into existence and non-existence]; there would be no shared meaning for this utterance [sc. “existence”].<sup>8</sup> Yet all philosophers have acknowledged that, when we say that a substance exists and that an accident exists, we thereby intend one meaning, given that non-existence has [only] one meaning.

[*specific and universal existence*]

Of course, if one renders existence specific, then the existence of each thing is different. Just as the specific substance of each thing is different. This however does not prevent its being the case that there is a universal substancehood, in whose meaning all things agree (*muttafaq*), or that there is a universal (*‘amm*) existence [38] in whose meaning all things agree.

[*from univocity to analogy*]

Although this is so, still existence does not apply to the ten [categories] in the same way as animality applies to human and to horse, such that none is prior to any other. Nor does it apply like whiteness to snow and camphor, where neither is prior to any other, so that [existence] would be univocal (*mutawāṭī*), as those cases are called univocal, since they apply indifferently to many instances with the same meaning. Rather existence primarily (*nukhust*) pertains to substance and by means of substance to quantity, quality and relation, then by means of these to everything else. For the existence of the black, the white, the long and the broad is not like the existence of time or change. For the former persist (*thabāt ast*), whereas the latter do not. Thus, existence applies to these things in terms of priority and posteriority as well as in terms of more and less, even though it applies with the same meaning. This is what they call analogical (*mushakkik*).

8 M. Achena and H. Massé translate this last sentence as “mais, de plus, ce discours n'aurait aucun sens” (Avicenne, *Le Livre de Science*, Paris, Société d'édition “Les Belles Lettres,” 1955, p. 115), which is also a possible alternative translation.

[T4] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Maqūlāt* II.1, 59.10–62.11

[*existence and the categories: equivocity, univocity, or analogy?*]

A term may be multiplied in three ways: either by way of univocity (*al-muta-wāṭiʿ*) among its subjects; or by way of pure coincidence, which includes both similarity and equivocity (*al-ishtirāk*); or by way of analogy (*al-mushakkik*). If someone refuses to acknowledge that “existent” has the same meaning in those ten [categories], they have already departed from natural insight (*al-fiṭra*). This is especially so if they try to prove that those ten differ in the meaning of existence on the basis that substance exists through itself, whereas accident exists through another; and that substance is an existent which does not require the existence of another for its own existence, whereas accident is an existent that does require this. For they already made these two cases share something, namely the expression “existent”, and only then distinguished them, on the basis of being through itself or being through another, and of requiring [something else] or not. [...]

[*opposition argument*]

[60.7] The truth is that things share reality and existence by virtue of a concept that occurs to the mind.<sup>9</sup> This is self-evident and cannot be shown. If someone denies it, they have already committed a mistake against themselves, by directing their thought away from the goal and towards something else. Otherwise, it would not be right [to say] that nothing can fall outside two contradicting extremes (*ṭarafay al-naqīd*) [i.e. nothing can violate the law of the excluded middle]. For each of the two extremes would be many things and would not truly be just one extreme. In fact, existence is understood as having one and the same meaning (*maʿnā wāḥid fī al-mafhūm*) in all of them.

[*from univocity to analogy*]

If this is so, then “existence” does not apply to the ten categories as a coincidental name, nor yet does it apply as a univocal name. For the mode of existence in these ten is not the same, rather the existence of some of them is prior while the existence of others is posterior. You know that substance is prior to accident, and that the existence of some of them is truer while the existence of others is not. You know that the existent through itself is truer in terms of existence than the existent through another, and the existence of some of them is

9 This statement is a possible source for Bahmanyār’s position in T6 from our chapter on the Essence-Existence Distinction.

firmer whereas that of some of them is weaker. For the existence of the stable (*al-qārr*) ones among them, such as quantity and quality, is firmer than the existence [61] of that which lacks stability, such as time and being-acted-upon. Therefore, existence does not apply to [these accidents] with the same status, the way the natures of the genera apply to their species, which is purely univocal. Therefore [existence] is not a genus.

*[existence is not a genus, because one can grasp the quiddity while doubting existence]*

Even if it were univocal, it would not be a genus, since it signifies no meaning that would be intrinsic to the quiddities of things. Rather it is something concomitant to them. [...] [61.7] In order to conceive of the quiddity of triangle you do not have to conceive that it is existent, as you would have to conceive that it is a plane figure. Plane figure belongs to triangle because it is triangle, and it is intrinsic to its constitution. Therefore [triangle] is constituted by [plane figure], extramentally, in the mind, and in every which way. By contrast the quiddity of triangle is not constituted by existence, which is why you can understand the quiddity of triangle while doubting its existence. [...] [62.2] Genus is indeed among the notions (*ma'ānī*) similar to plane figure, through which an entity becomes an entity and a quiddity becomes a quiddity. Existence, by contrast, is something that attaches to quiddity, sometimes in concrete individuals and sometimes in the mind. Hence, it is clear that the name “existent” does not apply to the ten categories univocally (*bi-al-tawāṭu'*), and that even if it did apply univocally it would not be among the items that constitute the quiddity [i.e. it would not be a genus]. Therefore, existence is not a genus.

*[against an argument from differentia]*

A well-known response would say, as a proof that existence is not a genus, that if it were, then its specific difference would be either existent or not existent. If existent, then the difference would take the place of the species, as the genus would be predicated of it. But if it is not existent, how then can it differentiate? This is an inadequate argument on this topic. For the specific differences of substances are substances, despite being differences.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cf. al-Āmidī, *al-Nūr al-bāhīr* vol. 5, 15.3–9.

[T5] Bahmanyār, *Tahṣīl*, 281.10–21

[*analogy (tashkīk)*]

Know that existence is predicated of what falls under it analogically (*ḥaml al-tashkīk*), not univocally. This means that uncaused existence is prior in nature to caused existence. Likewise, the existence of substance is prior to the existence of accident. Also, some existences are stronger and others weaker. Clearly then it is incorrect to say that existence is common (*āmm*) and is equally predicated of the existence of human, donkey, and celestial sphere, like yellowness and redness. You will learn that some bodies are prior to others, meaning that the existence of such bodies is prior to the existence of others, without [one] corporeity being prior to [another] corporeity. Likewise, if we say that cause is prior to effect, we mean that its existence is prior to the existence of the effect, and likewise if we say that two is prior to four, and so on. For if existence is left out of consideration, there is neither priority nor posteriority. Priority and posteriority, just like being stronger or weaker, are something like constituents for existences, that is, for existents.<sup>11</sup>

[T6] Al-Juwaynī, *Shāmil*, 637.3–21

[*univocity of existence as an argument for aḥwāl*]

A reliable basis for establishing the *aḥwāl* is to say: if two different things occur to a person with understanding (*al-ʿāqil*), and he knows the difference between them, then unavoidably, either they differ for him through their existences, or through a *ḥāl* that is additional to them. But that they differ through their existences is absurd for several reasons. First, the true reality of existence does not differ in intellectual judgment, since existence is reality (*thubūt*), and blackness does not differ from whiteness in respect of the attribute of reality. If two different items did differ in terms of existence, then [even] two similar things would differ. Thus positing their difference entails an attribute that is additional to existence.

*If someone says:* how would you respond to somebody who claims that their difference goes back to their existences? For in respect of its existence, blackness is different from whiteness. *They [further] say:* it would not follow for

11 For more of Bahmanyār's discussion of existence see the chapters on the Essence-Existence Distinction and on God and Existence.

[someone who holds this] that whiteness is different from whiteness. For we do not say that blackness differs from whiteness through existence taken absolutely, so that we could be forced to concede the existence of two similar items [as a counterargument]. Rather we say that blackness differs from whiteness through *its* existence. This does not eliminate either of them; nor is the term “existence” here used as a common one, so that we could be forced to concede [that existence is the same] for similar things, as well as for different things [as a counterargument]. They verify this by saying that, if we proceed on the basis (*aṣl*) that blackness’s being blackness is identical to its existence, and is not an attribute additional to existence, then, so long as blackness differs from whiteness by being blackness, [blackness] will differ from [whiteness] through its existence. This is tantamount to saying that this existence differs from that existence.

*[response: one can doubt essence while knowing existence]*

So far their argument, but it does not allow them to escape from what I want for them. For we know that the true reality of the existence of blackness is its reality, and the true reality of its existence does not imply its being blackness. This is evident from the fact that one can know its existence without knowing that it is blackness. When the true reality of existence is realized in the soul, it is not associated with blackness’s being blackness, or whiteness’s being whiteness. Hence, it has been shown that the difference does not arise through pure existence. This proof is convincing, when taken together with the previous one.<sup>12</sup>

[T7] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 158.2–6

*[equivocity of existence in traditional Ash‘arism]*

*Those who deny [the reality of aḥwāl] respond:* the existence of something, its concrete reality (*‘ayn*), its essence, and its being an atom or an accident, according to us all express the same thing (*‘ibārāt ‘an mu‘abbar wāḥid*). That which the Bestower of Existence renders existent is the essence of something, and [His

12 The back reference is to 635.19–22: “What shows [that knowing existence of something is different from knowing its *aḥwāl*] is that, among the attributes which we supposed to be the *aḥwāl* of the existent, there are some that are not affirmed necessarily. Rather they are affirmed after investigation and inference. Existence, by contrast, is known necessarily. If knowing [the *aḥwāl*] were identical to knowing existence, the result would be that one and the same object of knowledge would be affirmed both necessarily and by inference. And this is absurd.”



creative] power is connected with the essence of thing in just the same way as it is connected with its existence. He affects its being an atom in just the same way as He affects its occurrence or its origination. The distinction between existence and thingness (*al-shay'yya*) is not a matter of different meanings, but of different words (*ilā ma'nā wa-ma'nā bal ilā lafẓ wa-lafẓ*).

[T8] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 63.14–17; 63.22–64.5

[*against the division argument*]

The philosophers (*falāsifa*) offered proofs for their statement that existence is accidental to quiddities, and is something additional for them.<sup>13</sup> *They said:* division applies to existence, and it is said that existence is either necessary or contingent. Yet division (*al-qisma*) cannot apply to equivocal names (*al-asmā' al-mushtarika*), as when we say that 'ayn is used equivocally of the organ of sight [sc. the eye], the disc of the sun ('ayn *al-shams*), the tilt of the scales ('ayn *al-mizān*), and a wellspring. [...]

[63.22] *The answer is:* what you have said does not show that existence is something additional to the concrete being ('ayn) of something, or to its quiddity. Division applies to existence (so that one can say that it is necessary and contingent) only insofar as the name (*ism*) applies to each concrete being. Furthermore, different concrete beings can be divided [into classes], for some are concrete beings through themselves, not due to any power or necessitation, like the essence of the Creator, may He be exalted. Others are [64] contingent, like the concrete beings which are the acts of God, may He be exalted, for instance bodies and so on. That is why division is rightly applied to existence. In the same way, we call specific things concrete beings. For we say that “concrete being” applies to each of them, even though they are different from one another. Thus, a division of this kind may rightly be applied to our notion “concrete being,” so that one may rightly say that “concrete beings” are divided into that which *must* be a concrete being and that which *can* be. Yet the application of this division to “concrete being” does not imply that something's being a concrete being is something additional to its essence and true reality.

13 Though Ibn al-Malāḥimī thinks that this argument shows that existence is additional to essence, it is actually an argument against equivocality of existence.

[T9] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 233.15–17

[*rejection of al-Juwaynī's participation argument*]

*One may say to them:* don't you say that different essences share in being an essence? Why do you deny that the aspect you find to be shared between them goes back to their being essence (*kawn dhātan*), and not to existence?

[T10] Al-Khayyām, *Jawāb ʿan thalāth masāʾil*, 165.3–16

[*“existence” is analogical in extramental and mental existence*]

Existence is something merely conceptual, and is applied<sup>14</sup> to [its] referents analogically, neither purely univocally nor purely equivocally. The difference between the three terms is evident according to logical principles.

The two meanings [of existence] are [firstly] being in concrete individuals, which is the [meaning] of the term “existence” truer to common usage (*inda al-jumhūr*); the second is existence in the soul, for instance things conceived (*taṣawwurāt*) by sense-perception, imagination, the estimative faculty, and the intellect. But this second meaning is [actually] the same as the first meaning. For entities (*maʿānī*), insofar as they are perceived and conceptualized, are existent in concrete individuals, since the perceiver is a concrete individual and what exists in some concrete individual is [itself] existent among concrete individuals. Yet the thing whose representation (*mithāl*), figure (*rasm*), and image (*naqsh*) is perceived and conceptualized may, in some cases, be non-existent in concrete individuals. For instance, we intellectually grasp<sup>15</sup> Adam. What we intellectually grasp concerning Adam is an entity that is existent in the soul and in concrete individuals, since soul is a concrete individual. Yet Adam, whose representation and image is the entity existent in the soul, is not existent in concrete individuals [that is, because he is no longer alive]. This is the difference between the two kinds of existence. Clearly the difference between them is a matter of being truer and more appropriate, and being prior and posterior, which is called an “analogical” meaning (*maʿnā*), not the meaning known as “equivocation.”

14 Reading *yunṭaliqu* with mss S and Ṭ.

15 Reading *taʿaqqalna* for *taʿallaqna*.

[T11] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 145.10–16

[*accepting the univocity of existence for worldly things*]

Know that essences are distinguished from one another only generically and specifically (*jinsīyyan naw'īyyan*), not through the most common of their attributes, like existence, but rather through their most specific attributes, on the condition that [these attributes] are universal and common. If substance were distinguished from accident through its existence, just as it is [distinguished] by occupying space, then one would judge that the accident too occupies space, and of substance that it stands in need of something that occupies space. For existence and the occupying of space would be one and the same. Hence, that through which they are distinguished would be the same as that which they share, and what makes them similar would be the same as what makes them different. Thus the very idea of similarity, difference, and opposition would be eliminated.

[T12] Abū al-Barākāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 21.18–22.9

[*analogy of extramental and mental existence*]

“Existent,” as it is said, is used in two ways: first the existent in concrete individuals, second the existent in minds. The existent in concrete individuals is understood by perception (*bi-al-idrāk*), and some perceivers can refer and direct other perceivers’ [attention] to it, so that they share it in perceiving it. It is one and the same (*wāḥid bi-‘aynihi*), commonly shared by many perceivers, for instance the sun, which people and others see as one and the same, without its being multiplied by their perception of it.

The existent in the minds is not like this. For each human individuates (*yanfaridu ... khāṣṣatan*) by his perception that which is in his mind. No other human shares it with him, or if someone does share it with him, then this is only insofar as he has in his mind something similar (*mithl*) to that which the first person has in his mind, without their [sc. the existents in both minds] being identical (*huwa huwa*). If one of us imagines [22] a form of Zayd, then he has imagined a form in his mind and perceived it with his mind. If anybody else refers to [this form] with a verbal expression, then the conceptualization in the mind of this other person would [merely] be something similar (*mithl*) to [that form in the first person’s mind], not identical to it. Each of them would, through their perception of that which is in his mind, individuate it apart from what the other [has in his mind], unlike the case of the sun, which is one and the same even as many share in its perception.

Nevertheless, existents in minds do exist in concrete individuals, by virtue of existing in something that exists in concrete individuals, namely the mind or the soul, in which is conceptualized whatever is conceptualized about this [sc. the real existent]. Hereby existents in concrete individuals differ from existents in minds, according to anyone who investigates and verifies the upshot of his investigation. But what exists in the existent is also existent.

Hence, existence is in some respect and from a certain point of view (*min jiha wa-bi-ʿtibār*) equivocal, and refers to various meanings (*maḥsumayn*); yet in another respect it is univocal and refers to one and the same meaning in all cases, even if its belonging to one of these two [existences] is more appropriate and primary than to the other.<sup>16</sup>

[T13] Al-Suhrawardī, *Talwīḥāt*, 188.5–11

[*analogy of existence*]

You know that existence and accidenthood are not essential for quiddities. Existence applies analogically: to the necessary more appropriately and primarily, then to substance, and then to the [accident] which is stable in essence; among [such accidents] the non-relative is more perfect.

There are quantities that do not precede any quality, since instances of knowing (*ʿulūm*) arise from qualities.

“True reality” is a mental concept that is predicated of something *after* existence [is predicated], even if the meaning (*maḥsumuhu*) of [the true reality] is grasped intellectually before either of them.<sup>17</sup>

[T14] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 291.16–24

[*three arguments for the univocity of existence: from opposition, division, and belief*]

*First*: the intellect judges as evident that nothing other than non-existence is opposed to existence, and that nothing other than existence is opposed to non-

16 For other aspects of Abū al-Barakāt's contribution to the theory of analogy, see the chapter on God and Existence.

17 Al-Suhrawardī's criticism of the equivocity of existence is a part his criticism of the identity of essence and existence; see further [T35, T40] in the chapter on the Essence-Existence Distinction.

existence. Hence, existence must be one and the same concept (*mafhūm*), just as non-existence is one and the same concept, such that it is right that there be this opposition between the two.

*Second:* existence may rightly be divided into necessary and contingent, and also into substance and accident. The source of a division is shared by each member of the division.

*Third:* the belief that [something] is existent is not incompatible with the belief that it is necessary or contingent, or substance or accident. Therefore, the concept of being existent needs a certain measure (*qadr*) of commonality in all [cases].

[T15] Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 54.4–55.3

[*responses to these three arguments*]

Many philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) and Muʿtazilites, as well as a group among us [the Ashʿarites], believed that existence is a description shared [univocally] by existent things. But it is more plausible to say that this is not so. We may say that, if it were so, existence would be distinct from quiddity and existence would subsist in something that is [itself] non-existent. If one allows this, it leads to a doubt as to whether bodies even exist.

They argued that (1) the opposite of negation is one; otherwise, intellectual reckoning (*ḥaṣr*) would be invalid. Hence affirmation (*ithbāt*), which is the opposite of negation, must be one. (2) Also, because the existent can be divided into the necessary and the contingent, but the source of a division is shared by each member of the division. (3) Also, because when we know that something exists, this belief does not change when the belief that it is substance or accident changes. This implies that existence is something shared between the two [substance and accident].

*The answer to (1):* eliminating the opposite of each quiddity yields that quiddity, and there is no intermediary between these two options; does this then indicate the reality of something common [i.e. of a common notion of quiddity]? [55] *The answer to (2):* the source of the division in terms of necessity and contingency is quiddity. What it means [when we say that the existent can be divided into the necessary and the contingent] is that the persistence (*baqāʾ*) of that quiddity is either necessary or contingent. *The answer to (3):* this

would entail that there is another existence for existence, so that an infinite regress would follow.<sup>18</sup>

[T16] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ ‘Uyūn al-ḥikma*, vol. 3, 53.9–55.10

[*analogy*]

*The Shaykh said:* “existent” is predicated analogically of what exists not in a subject and of what exists in a subject.

*Commentary:* an analogical term is one that refers to a single meaning shared by many particulars, on the condition that this meaning occurs to some of these particulars more appropriately than it does to others. If we say that the term “existence” behaves like this, we have to show two things: (1) that what one understands by something’s being existent is the same for all existents. (2) that this concept belongs to substance more appropriately than to accident.

Regarding (1), you should know that some people said that the word “existent” applies to the necessary and to the contingent, to substance and to each kind of accident, only equivocally, so that there is nothing here understood univocally. Yet the philosophers (*al-ḥukamā*) agreed that the word “existence” refers to a single meaning for all types of existents. [...] [55.6] Regarding (2), which was to show that the necessary-in-itself is more appropriate for “being existent (*al-wujūdiyya*)” than the contingent-in-itself, and substance more appropriate for “being existent” than accident: by “more appropriate” is meant the number of concomitants and effects (*al-lawāzīm wa-al-āthār*). Once you know that this is what “more appropriate” means, you inevitably know that it is more appropriate for the necessary-in-itself to “exist” than for the contingent, and more appropriate for substance than for accident.

[T17] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 108.9–11

[*argument for univocity from primacy of conception*]

[Existence is univocal because] existence is conceptualized primarily, and if it were not univocal this would not be the case. For, if the existence of every

<sup>18</sup> Al-Rāzī accepts the equivocity of existence also in *Risāla fi ‘ilm al-kalām*. See [T30] in the chapter on God and Existence.

thing is identical to its true reality, whereas this true reality is not conceptualized primarily, how then can existence be conceptualized primarily?

[T18] Al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-‘uqūl*, vol. 1, 346.15–347.3

[*argument from poetry*]

The knowledge that existence is shared by existent things is necessary and obvious. Some of the excellent poets have clearly and elegantly shown this in their art [347], saying: if a poet recites a *qaṣīda* and makes all verses rhyme on the word “existence” or what is synonymous to it, any reasonable person will think that this is a repetitive rhyme (*al-qāfiya al-mukarrira*). Yet if they made the *bayts* rhyme on the same equivocal name, one used with a different meaning in each verse, nobody would say that this is a repetitive rhyme.

[T19] Al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-‘uqūl*, vol. 1, 347.5–348.15

[*if existence is univocal, it is not part of essence; existence is not a genus*]

Since it is established that existence is univocal, it must be additional to quiddities. For different quiddities differ in themselves and share their existences, and that which is shared is not the same as that which differentiates. Therefore, their existence must be additional to their quiddity.

*Let it not be asked: why can't existence be a generic part of quiddities? For we say: this is wrong and even if we granted it, it would do nothing to undermine our position. It is wrong for several reasons: (1) If existence were the genus of quiddities, one could not grasp them intellectually without knowing whether they exist. For it is impossible to grasp something intellectually without knowing its parts. [348] (2) If existence were the genus of quiddities, then the Creator—may He exalted—would fall under [this genus]. Hence the Creator—may He be exalted—would be composed from genus and differentia, and would thus be contingent, since every composite thing needs each of its parts. (3) Genus cannot be without a specific difference which renders its existence subsistent. So if existence were a genus, it would have a specific difference that renders its existence subsistent, and another [second-order] existence would belong to the [first-order existence]. But this is absurd. (4) Existence either needs a subject of inherence by its very nature, or it does not. If the former is the case, and [existence] is a part of substance, but that whose part requires a subject of inherence requires subject of inherence [as a whole],*

then every substance would require a subject of inherence, which is absurd. If however the second is the case, and [existence] is a part of accident, but that whose part does not require a subject of inherence does not require it either—for if it inhered in a subject of inherence its part would inhere in it too—then the accident would have to be a substance [i.e. because what needs no subject is a substance]. But this is absurd. (5) Existence belongs more appropriately to the necessary than to the contingent, and among contingent things it belongs more appropriately to substance than to accident. Yet there can be no variation (*tafāwut*) in a part of quiddity. For if the extent (*qadr*) of the variation were [a condition] for the realization of quiddity, then quiddity could not be realized without it. But if it is not posited for it, it is not a part of quiddity.<sup>19</sup>

[T20] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 118.1–7

[*argument from specific differences*]

If existence were a genus, then different things that fall under it would be distinguished from one another by constituent specific differences. Necessarily, the aspect that is shared has to be different from the aspect that is distinct, and that through which the distinction obtains has to be existent, since what is not existent cannot distinguish one existent from another. Hence, the specific difference would share the quiddity of the genus with the species and there would have to be a further specific difference. But the same argument will apply to it, so that each difference would require another difference and so on to infinity.

[T21] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 253.15–254.9

[*equivocity of 'being an essence'*]

Among the theologians (*mutakallimūn*), some said that there can be distinction due to a specific description only if essences share in that which is named (*musammā*) “essence” and “true reality.” This is not so. Rather the Necessary Existent differs from other essences through His essence and His true reality. He shares nothing with them apart from having a name (*al-tasmīya*). [...]

19 For similar arguments see al-Āmidī, *al-Nūr al-bāhir*, vol. 5, 15–16.



[254.6] Accordingly, the source of the division into the necessary and the contingent is not what is named by “essence,” but rather the name “essence” [itself]. Nor do we concede that what is named by “essence” does not differ, whereas beliefs about the meaning of substance and accident, necessary and contingent, do differ. Rather that which does not differ is only the name (*al-ism*), not what is named (*al-musammā*).

[T22] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 260.9–11

[*if God's essence is existence, existence is equivocal*]

Those who say that [existence] differs [in meaning] argue that the existence of the Necessary Existent is the same as His essence, and His essence is different from other essences—as has been shown by the preceding demonstrative proofs of both premises. Therefore, what is named by “existence” is different.

[T23] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 261.8–22

[*an argument for univocity of existence, with refutation*]

*The fourth argument* [for the univocity of existence] is: when one says that what is named by “existence” (*musammā al-wujūd*) is not shared by quiddities, one means by it either absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*) or specific existence (*al-khāṣṣ*). If one means specific existence, there is no quarrel about it and there is no need to reject something that is agreed upon. If however one means absolute existence, then the [very] judgment (*ḥukm*) that “there is no sharing in absolute existence” amounts to admitting absolute existence. For assent follows upon conceptualization, so that the statement would be self-contradictory: being shared is applicable to absolute existence, so to say that it cannot be shared is self-contradictory. [...]

[261.19] Regarding *the fourth argument*, when we say that essences do not share in what is named by “existence,” we mean that the name “existence” has no referent (*musammā*) that would be shared by the essences. Thus, one does not predicate “non-existence of sharing” of a genuinely named thing (*musammā mutaḥaqqiq*), regardless whether it is absolute or specific. There is a clear difference between the two ways of putting it.

[T24] Al-Āmidī, *Kashf al-tamwīhāt*, 59.23–60.17

[*rejecting al-Rāzī's arguments for univocity*]

As for [al-Rāzī's] statement that existence is commonly shared, it is conceded, if he thereby means the name (*ism*) of existence. If, however, he means the meaning (*ma'nā*) of existence, it is not conceded.

(1) When he says that only a single thing is opposed to negation, which is affirmation, this is not so. For the negation of *each* thing is opposed by the affirmation of *this* thing. If the affirmation of something is identical to its essence, then that which is opposed to the negation of each thing will be different from that which is opposed to the negation of something else. [60] (2) As for his statement that the source of division by contingency and necessity is commonly shared, we say: only in word, not in meaning. The former is conceded, the latter is not. (3) As for his statement that if different things were understood by existence, it would follow that one of them is to be understood as necessary, the other as contingent; our Master [sc. al-Āmidī], may God support him, said: what is absurd in saying that the name of existence is common, yet understood in different ways, one as necessary, the other as contingent? Granted, this would be impossible if what unified [the two cases] were the meaning of existence, rather than just the name "existence," but this is not the case. (4) As for his statement that existence is evidently conceptualized as different from the specificity of quiddities, this is based on the unity and commonality of existence, and on its being distinct from quiddities; yet this is far from being settled. (5) As for his statement that, when someone says that existence is not shared, they have *already* made a judgment in common about all existence, but this can be done only if existence is shared: this is wrong. For when one says that existence is not shared, one means only that what is named by "existence" is not a unified [thing] belonging to [different] essences. This holds true together with the difference [in the meaning of "existence,"] as when one says "what is named by 'concrete thing (*'ayn*)' is not shared." (6) As for his statement that we first know the existence of something, and only then know whether it is substance or accident, our Master [sc. al-Āmidī] said: this does nothing to show that existence is distinct from quiddity. For the opponent can say: the first knowledge is simply knowledge about essence in general, whereas the second knowledge is about it distinctively (*tafṣīlan*).

[T25] Al-Āmidī, *al-Nūr al-bāhīr*, vol. 5, 7.17–8.9

[*here he instead accepts univocal existence, as distinguished from specific existence*]

By the expression “existence” we only mean here affirmative existence (*al-wujūd al-ithbātī*) which is shared by all true realities, not specific existence (*al-wujūd al-khāṣṣ*), by which one expresses the specific true reality of each existent thing individually, such as the true reality [8] of whiteness, blackness, human, and so on. If the name “existence” is used in application to whatever is similar to these specific true realities, for each existent thing individually, then it does not mean the same as that existence which is synonymous with “reality (*ithbāt*).” Hence, if someone hears the notion “existence” as synonymous to “reality”, he forms in his mind a meaning that is shared by specific true realities, despite the fact that they differ. One may [also] predicate affirmative existence of a specific true reality, as when we predicate of a true reality which is specific for human that it is existent: this predication would impart a meaning (*mufīd ma’nā*) which obtains in itself. If however the referent of the notion “existence” were [the true reality itself],<sup>20</sup> then the meaning would not obtain; rather it would be as if one said that the true reality of human is the true reality of human.

[T26] Al-Abharī, *Muntahā al-afkār*, 279.15–280.7 [trans. Eichner 2012, mod.]

[*rejection of the Rāzian arguments for the univocity of existence*]

(1) We do not concede that the intellect divides existence into necessary and contingent. Rather, the intellect passes a judgement that every existing quiddity is either necessary in itself or contingent in itself. But this does not indicate that existence is common between the two things (*al-amrayn*). (2) We do not concede that non-existence insofar as it is nonexistence has one meaning. Whoever believes that the existence of every thing is identical to its quiddity believes that non-existence has various meanings. Even if we were to concede this, it is not possible that the elimination of nonexistence as such (*naḥsuhu*) is existence as such. Otherwise, all existents would be realized when there is one existence. This would be necessary because existence as such, which is the negation (*rafʿ*) of non-existence as such, is realized and necessitates (*mustalzim*)

<sup>20</sup> The text is damaged here.

the realization of all existents. (3) We do not concede that, if existence were not common, then belief in all existences would cease if belief in the specific cases were to cease. [280] This would only follow if predicating existence of the existents were not equivocal (*ishtirāk lafzī*). If it were like this, then the belief in one of the meanings of existence would remain whereas the belief in the specific cases would cease. Hence it does not follow that the belief in existence ceases just because the belief in the specific cases ceases.

The truth is that in concrete individuals, existence is not one nature commonly shared by the necessary and the contingent. Otherwise, it would either be necessary in itself or contingent in itself. The first is absurd, because—if its concrete being (*huwīyyatuhu*) were in virtue of its quiddity—it would be one of a kind, and it would be impossible that it is commonly shared. If however it were in virtue of something else (*ghayr*), then it would need it, and what needs something else is contingent in itself. [So] the second [option] is absurd, [since] otherwise each individual instantiation (*fard*) of [existence] would be contingent in itself because it needs something contingent. Therefore, the existence of the Necessary in Itself would be contingent in itself. This is self-contradiction.<sup>21</sup>

[T27] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 75.10–27

[responses to Rāzian counter-arguments against univocity in T15]

*I say:* (1) [al-Rāzī's] response to the first [i.e. the opposition argument], namely that the elimination (*irtifā'*) of any quiddity is opposed [only] to its own realization (*taḥaqquqahā*), is no answer [at all], because it does not contradict it. This is proven as follows: the elimination of A is opposed to the realization of A and the elimination of B is opposed to the realization of B. But absolute (*muṭlaq*) elimination, which is predicated of both [the elimination of A and of B] and of other things besides, is something univocal; and the realization that is opposed to it is something univocal, which can rightly be predicated of each of these two specific realizations [of A and of B], and others besides. By univocity of existence we mean precisely this absolute realization (*al-taḥaqquq al-muṭlaq*), not *this* or *that* realization.

21 Note that in the passages quoted in the chapter on the Essence-Existence Distinction, al-Abharī accepts the univocity of existence.

(2) His response to the second [i.e. the division argument] is no answer to what he has said [in the division argument], namely that existence is divided into the necessary and contingent. For that which he uses to explain the source of this division—that the persistence (*baqā'*) of a given quiddity is either necessary or is not—just is existence! For persistence is continued existence (*istimrār al-wujūd*). So this like saying that the continued existence of that quiddity is such-and-such [i.e. the source of division]. If continued existence were not univocal for both the necessary and other things, then it would not be right to make this division.

(3) What he says in response to the third [i.e. the belief argument] is no answer either. For there is no conceptualization of a second-order existence shared between both [first-order] existence and the substance that [in itself] lacks existence and non-existence, such that if one of them were to alter in conceptualization and change into the other [i.e. if substance became first-order existence], then the univocal [second-order] existence would remain the same, implying that another [third-order] existence belongs to that [second-order] existence.

[T28] Al-Kātibi, *Hikmat al-ʿayn*, 2.13–13.13

[arguments for univocity and replies]

[Existence] is univocal (*mushtarik*). (1) Otherwise belief concerning existence would perish along with beliefs about specific cases (*khuṣūṣiyyāt*). (2) Also, the opposition between existent and non-existent would be invalid: instead what would be opposed to non-existence would need to be some specific existence. (3) Also, it would not be right to divide [existence] into necessary and contingent. [All three] consequences are wrong.

[3] (1) The first, because if we believe that the contingently existent has a ground that is [likewise] contingently existent, we assume that the ground exists. But if we come to believe that this ground is necessarily existent, our belief that it is contingently existent perishes, yet the belief in its existence does not. (2)–(3) The two other [points] are obvious.

[Against (1)] But the first conditional is impossible. For it cannot be that the existence of every contingent quiddity is additional to it, since in some instances it can subsist by itself—namely the Necessary Existent. So belief in His existence cannot perish along with beliefs about [His] specific nature.

[Against (2)] Likewise, the second [argument is invalid], because the specific existence of every quiddity is opposed to *its* non-existence. [Against (3)] What was said about the absurd [third] consequence is feeble. For the participation can be merely nominal (*lafẓī*). It is for this reason that belief in existence does not perish when the belief about the specific nature perishes. This reveals the feebleness of the absurdity that is supposed to follow from the third conditional.

Still, it is more appropriate to say that existence is something's being among concrete individuals; and there is no doubting that all existents share this meaning.

[T29] Al-Kātibī, *As'ila 'an al-Ma'ālim*, 25.18–26.4

[*response to the division argument*]

We say: we do not concede that the source of a division (*al-taqṣīm*) has a meaning that is univocal with the divisions (*ishtirākan ma'nawīyyan*). This would follow only if the possibility of dividing into two items depended on [univocal meaning], but this is wrong. For according to us the possibility of dividing may depend on [26] either one of two things: equivocity or univocity. How else? For one may rightly say that 'ayn is either the seeing 'ayn, or the 'ayn of a fountain, or 'ayn gold, or other things one might understand by 'ayn, even though 'ayn is not applied univocally to these divisions.

[T30] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 80.13–81.6

[*analogy*]

Existence is not predicated of what falls under it univocally, but rather analogically. For the existence of the cause is stronger than the existence of the effect, likewise the existence of the substance in relation to the existence of the accident; the existence of a stable accident is [also] stronger than the existence of unstable accident, while the relational is weaker than the non-relational.

[*against outright equivocity*]

Yet if existence did not have a single meaning (*mafhūm*), we would not be able to judge that it is true of every existent, nor would we judge that when it is wrong [to ascribe] non-existence to something, it is true [to ascribe] existence

to it, since both might be false. [81] The fact that there is existence is conceptualized as obvious, and the fact that existence has a single meaning, but is predicated analogically, is not something that calls for a demonstration. What we have mentioned in order to show this was [only] a reminder (*tanbīh*), not a demonstrative proof.

[*universal existence is only in the mind*]

The commonality (*‘umūmiyya*) of [existence] is that of a necessary concomitant, not that of genus, nor of any essential constituent whatsoever. If existence is common, it must exist in the soul. For existence exists in the soul through [another] existence, because it is like other meanings that are conceptualized in the mind.<sup>22</sup>

[T31] Al-Nasafī, *Sharḥ Asās al-kiyāsa*, 266.3–9

[*an original argument for univocity*]

Existence is a univocal description for existents according to most philosophers (*falāsifa*), Mu‘tazilites and others. There are several proofs for this. The first is that even if existence were not shared, there would [still] have to be *something* among existing things (*amr mā min al-umūr al-wujūdiyya*) that is univocal to them. But that yields an absurdity, because this item could not be univocal without existence being univocal, given that this item includes existence. Alternatively, there is nothing [at all that is shared], but this too is absurd. For the individuals that belong to a single species, whichever species it may be, share univocally in the nature of that species. Thus animals for instance share the nature of animality. And that [nature] necessarily has to be something existing (*wujūdiyya*).

[T32] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 214.20–215.18

[*existence is additional to essence and is univocal*]

Some theologians (*mutakallimūn*), who are in reality just laypeople (*‘awwām al-nās*), came up with the idea that [existence] is not additional to quiddities, whether concretely or mentally. This is wrong. For if this were the case, then our saying [215] “human is existent” would amount to saying “human is human,”

22 Cf. [T6] in the chapter on the Essence-Existence Distinction.

and “existent is existent.” Similarly, when we said that void does not exist, it would be as if we said that void is not void.

Furthermore, that existence is additional to quiddities is proven by the fact that existence is univocal for existents, whereas none of the specific features of quiddities are themselves univocal for the existents. Therefore, no existence is among the specific features of quiddities themselves. Rather existence is additional to them.

As for the fact that existence is univocal, it can be shown in several ways: (1) We conceptualize existence and then predicate it as holding true of every existent. If existence were not univocal for all existents, one could not predicate it as holding true of them. (2) We understand the meaning of existence and non-existence, and judge that if one of them is false then the other is true, and vice-versa. If existence were not univocal for all existents, this wouldn't need to be so, since they could obtain at the same time. (3) When we judge that something is among the concrete individuals, we cannot but judge that it is existent. If existence were not univocal, then judging that existence is true for something would not follow from judging that it is among the concrete individuals, since it would be possible that other ideas [which make up the concept of “existence”] do not hold of it, albeit we judge that it is in concrete individuals. Therefore, existence holds univocally of all existents.

[T33] Al-Samarqandī, *Ma'ārif al-Ṣaḥā'if*, fol. 8r4–16

[*univocal and equivocal meaning of existence*]

People of sound mind differed concerning the question whether or not existence has a single meaning (*mafḥūm*) that is shared by all existents. Those who gave it proper thought (*muḥaqqiqūn*) said yes, but the philosophers (*falāsifa*), al-Ash'arī and Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī disagreed with them. The philosophers claimed that existence as such is a merely conceptual attribute that is shared by all existents, but only analogically (*‘alā sabīl al-tashkīk*). For, they said, the existence of the necessary self-subsistent is different from any other existence. Al-Ash'arī and Abū al-Ḥusayn said that the existence of each true reality is identical to it, whereas sharing (*al-ishtirāk*) obtains equivocally, like sharing in the word *‘ayn*.

*Clarification of this issue:* existence applies in language to two meanings: essence (*dhāt*) and being (*kawn*). Al-Ash'arī and Abū al-Ḥusayn believed in the



former, and we have no real dispute with this view. Yet it holds only if they also make existence, so understood, opposed to non-existence, about which the consensus says that it is negation. Those who said that [existence] has a single meaning, which is shared by all existents, believed in the second [interpretation of existence]. On this basis the imprecision of the philosophers becomes clear. Once this is understood, we say that evidently, if [by “existence”] one intends “being,” then it is a single shared meaning, but if one intends “essence,” then not. So perhaps this dispute arose simply for lack of disambiguating the question. Otherwise, [why did] none of the people of sound mind say that existence is identical to essence, meaning by [“existence”] “being”? The truth regarding this topic [lies in] the disambiguation of the question.

[T34] Al-Ḥillī, *Taslik al-nafs*, 30.2–5

[*existence is neither identical to essence nor a generic part of the essence*]

Since it is established that existence is univocal, it is established that it is additional to quiddities. It cannot be identical to them, for otherwise different true realities would share the same entire quiddity. Nor can it be a part of [quiddities], for otherwise it would be a genus, given that it is most common among the shared parts, so it would require a specific difference; yet the differentia of existence would be existent, so that genus would belong to the specific difference, and so on to infinity.

[T35] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 414.15–415.4

[*against equivocity of existence*]

Existence is univocal. For belief in the specific features perishes even as belief in [existence] remains, as has been said. Also, [because] existence may be divided into substance and accident. Also, because we can specify that something is either existent or non-existent.

*Counter-argument:* the opposition between reality (*al-thubūt*) and non-existence means an opposition between the realization (*taḥaqquq*) of a quiddity and its non-realization.

*Response:* we say “something is either existent or non-existent” in order to verify one of these two contraries by a demonstration. If this meant, for instance, that

blackness must either be blackness or not, then the fact that the truth is true and that the falsehood is false would be obvious.

[415] *Counter-argument:* if reality is something additional to quiddity and is not univocal, the division still holds good, because in that case it means that a quiddity is either real in its specific reality or is negated.

*Response:* Why do you say that our disjunctive statement that a quiddity is either real in its reality or is negated holds? For a quiddity can be real through the reality of another quiddity.

## Non-Existence and Mental Existence

Metaphysicians, you might think, are interested in everything that exists. But actually this would be to underestimate them, because they are interested in things that don't exist too. Things that are not yet existent, like tomorrow's breakfast; things that might have existed but don't, like Peter Adamson's sister or Sherlock Holmes; and things that could not exist, like round squares. What is the ontological status of such items? A natural answer would be that they have no ontological status at all, precisely because they do not exist. But there are reasons to suppose otherwise, as was argued in the Islamic world well before Avicenna by Mu'tazilite theologians [T2–3]. One of the signature doctrines ascribed to “the Mu'tazilites,” even though in fact not all Mu'tazilites accepted it, was that the non-existent (*al-ma'dūm*) is a “thing (*shay'*).”<sup>1</sup> Non-existent things are, of course, not existent (*mawjūd*), but they are “real (*thābit*).” Sometimes this is put by saying that the non-existent item is already an “object (*dhāt*).” The point then will be that existents are only a smaller subset of a larger class of entities, which are things or objects. Or to put it another way, being real does not imply being existent, the way that being existent implies being real.

The Mu'tazilites argued for this claim in part on a Scriptural basis. Examples would be the Qur'anic statements that when God “wills a thing (*arāda shay'an*) He says to it, ‘Be,’ and it is” (36:82, cited at [T63]),<sup>2</sup> and that “God has power over every thing” (2:284). These and other verses may seem to imply that the object of God's will (*irāda*) is already a “thing” before He creates it, though not everyone would agree with that interpretation [T39]. God also knows what He can create before He creates it. So if we make the plausible assumption that whatever is known is some “thing,” this will give us another reason to accept the Mu'tazilite doctrine [T11]. Also, if God doesn't make things “real” by creat-

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- 1 R.M. Frank, “*Al-ma'dūm wa-l-mawjūd*: The non-existent, the existent and the possible in the teaching of Abū Hāshim and his followers,” *MIDEO* 14 (1980), 185–209; F. Klein-Franke, “The Non-Existent is a Thing,” *Le Muséon* 107 (1994), 375–390. For the reception of the doctrine in our period see F. Benevich, “The Reality of the Non-Existent Object of Thought: the Possible, the Impossible, and Mental Existence in Islamic Philosophy (Eleventh–Thirteenth Centuries),” *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy* 6 (2018), 31–61.
  - 2 This passage also solicited attention from philosophers, perhaps precisely because they were in dialogue with the Mu'tazilites. See P. Adamson, “Al-Kindī and the Mu'tazila: Divine Attributes, Creation and Freedom,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 13 (2003), 45–77.

ing them He wouldn't have to change when He does so; on the other hand, if He has to bestow existence on what is already real, that too could involve a change, as pointed out at [T52].

Of course these ideas are generalizable to other agents and knowers, so the doctrine could be supported on non-Scriptural grounds. The latter-day Mu'tazilite Ibn al-Malāḥimī sets out for the reasoning for this, though he will not accept it himself: if someone has the power to do something then there must be a relation between this prospective agent and the thing the agent can do [T11]. This will hold whether the relation is between God and the universe or between a carpenter and the table she plans to make tomorrow. A similar argument applies in the case of non-existing objects of knowledge, such as things one knows one could make. To make this line of thought still more plausible, we may add that objects of knowledge and power must already be *distinct* from one another [T2, T19, T32]. For example the carpenter can distinguish the table she's planning to make from the chair she's planning to make, and even think that she will make *this* table and not *that* table. Al-Rāzī gives a series of further illustrations at [T27].

Though all this might seem intuitively convincing, it was rejected by a number of authors. In some cases they simply denied that anything can be distinct or individual before existing [T22, T25, T37, T45]. One clever criticism, found in Ibn Kammūna [T56] among others, is that if an individual table were already real before the table is made, then the existence of that table should also be real—after all, the existence is possible just as much as the table is. And this is the existence of *that table*. So the table's existence would already belong to the table before the table exists, which is absurd in itself, and leaves God with nothing to do when He creates something [T43, T50–51, T56]. An alternative explanation for how we make distinctions between non-existents was put forward by the Aš'arites and is well explained by al-Shahrastānī [T20]. We do so on the supposition (*taqdīr*) that the things in question already exist. So if we contrast a non-existent chair and a non-existent table as two different pieces of furniture, we are talking in a counterfactual mode, and saying what would be true if the table and chair existed. For the Ash'arites, being non-existent is the same as being “negated” and this is incompatible with being “real” [T38, T64].

Another worry about inferring reality from distinguishability is that even impossible things can be distinguished (though this is denied at [T60]). For instance a second God is impossible, and is different from other impossible things like a round square. But we surely do not want to say that impossible things are “real” [T29–30, T57, T65]. Or maybe we do? Impossible things are arguably objects of knowledge [T15–16], if only because we know of each of them that it does not exist. A related issue is the very idea of absolute non-

existence itself, where what is at stake is not, say, *this* not-yet-existing table, or even an unspecified non-existent table, but nothing at all. One can think about this as simply the denial of existence, without further restriction. It seems unlikely that absolute non-existence is an object of *power*. What would it be if God or anyone else made it exist? But it's harder to say whether or not absolute non-existence or "pure negation" is an object of knowledge [T35–36, T58, T61, T67–68].

One reason our authors were interested in the "absolutely non-existent" is that, as al-Samarqandī pointed out [T61], it seems to provide an exception to what we may call the "affirmation principle," which is stated succinctly by al-Rāzī as follows: "everything of which a positive predicate is said inevitably is positive (*kull mā kāna maḥkūm 'alayhi bi-ḥukm thubūti fa-lā budda wa-an yak-ūna thubūtiyyan*)."<sup>3</sup> This rule goes back to Avicenna, who remarked that "if an attribute is existent, that to which it is attributed is necessarily existent"<sup>4</sup> (see also [T5]). The rule can of course be used to support the Mu'tazilite doctrine. If I can affirm predicates of non-existent things, then they must be "positive" or "real" (*thābit*) [T27].

Let's stick then with true predications about non-existent things, like when we say that "Peter Adamson's sister is human" or "tomorrow's breakfast will be healthy." What exactly makes it possible for us to assert such truths? This brings us to a final major argument for the reality of the non-existent, namely that things have at least some of their properties whether or not they exist. These will be their essential properties, for instance the rationality of Peter Adamson's sister, which must belong to her even if she doesn't exist, since all humans are rational and she is human. (Other properties, like the occupation of space, may emerge only once the thing exists [T2].) This notion of "essential independence" was present from early on in the *kalām* tradition [T2], and Avicenna's essence-existence distinction offered a powerful framework for expressing it [T6–7]. Following Avicenna, for instance, 'Umar al-Khayyām clearly accepted essential independence [T9] [T10].

If creation is simply bestowal of existence with an essence that already has its distinctive properties [T17, T21], this would explain why it is possible to distinguish between non-existing things: they already have the attributes that make them what they are. As al-Sāwī says, no cause is needed to make human to be animal, since it belongs to the essence of human to be animal. A cause is, rather, needed to make human *exist*, and any cause that does this will inevitably

3 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 132.13.

4 Avicenna, *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt*, 1.5, 26.4.

and simultaneously make an animal exist [T18]. Yet a number of texts included here question the notion of essential independence. One idea, closer in spirit to Avicenna's apparent position, was to say that essences are indeed independent in respect of their essential features, but still need to be created by God [T49, 66]. Already Avicenna's student Bahmanyār thought that essence or "true reality (*ḥaqīqa*)" occurs only along with existence [T8]. Similarly, the Aš'arites argued that God gives things their properties, even the essential ones, by creating them, so that these properties belong to things only when the things exist [T4, T23, T40, T63]. This would avoid the consequence that essences already have some mysterious form of reality, hovering in logical space as it were, while they wait for God to give them existence [T24].

As for al-Rāzī, he bases his analysis on a distinction between "the essential (*al-dhātī*)" and "the essence (*al-dhāt*)," with the former being a part of the latter [T31]. Al-Rāzī differentiates between making a constitutive essential feature, making the whole essence, and making the necessary concomitants of that essence. So to borrow al-Sāwī's example, animal is something "essential" to human and is a part of the essence of human. Thus one would need to make animal on the way to making human. Of course these two acts are never performed in isolation from one another, but they are distinct. This analysis was however rejected by al-Āmidī [T44] on the grounds that an essence is not a real composition of its essential features. Therefore al-Rāzī's distinction has no bearing on the real act of the maker, which is just one act that causes the essence to be realized, with all its constitutive parts and necessary concomitants. Al-Ṭūsī also insisted that quiddities are indeed made by God when He makes the things with the quiddities exist [T53], the distinction between essence and existence being only conceptual. Asking a question like "does God make human to be human" is misleading, since for human to be an object of making, it must already be an existing quiddity [T54]. He presents this position as being, among other things, a critical response to Sufis who claimed to have had mystical experiences divulging that essences are not made, since they are eternally in God's knowledge. Al-Ṭūsī finds the Sufi position to be suspiciously close to the Mu'tazilite one [T55].

It did not escape readers of Avicenna that his metaphysics, with its fundamental contrast between essence and existence, seemed a good fit for the Mu'tazilite doctrine that things are real before they are made to exist [T26]. Nor, it seems, did this escape Avicenna himself. Though he distanced himself from the Mu'tazila, he was clearly engaging with their doctrine in his own treatment of non-existence and "thing-ness (*shay'yya*)."<sup>5</sup> But Avicenna made a significant

5 R. Wisnovsky, "Notes on Avicenna's Concept of Thingness (*shay'yya*)," *Arabic Sciences and*

ant contribution to the “realist” view on non-existents, by proposing that they in a sense exist after all (at least the possible ones). The reason they are “real” is that they exist in the mind [T5]. What we normally refer to as “existence” is in fact existence in concrete reality (*fī al-a’yān*).<sup>6</sup> This was seen by Avicenna’s successors as a real breakthrough, to the point that it became the majority view on the status of non-existent objects [T25, T46, T48, T59, T62, T68]. For them, even impossible objects may be supposed to exist in the mind [T46]. A view like this was embraced by Ibn al-Malāḥimī, following his “master” Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. He speaks of the non-existent as something “conceptualized (*muta-ṣawwar*)” [T12]. When we use the standard Mu‘tazilite argument for the reality of non-existents, that they are objects of knowledge, what we are talking about is concepts. Knowledge is a relation between the knower and the object, but the object could be conceptual or mental, rather than extramentally real [T13–15].<sup>7</sup>

Not for the first time, al-Rāzī emerges as the defender of an important minority position. He rejects the mental existence solution [T27] [T30], in part on grounds we have already mentioned: some non-existent things are impossible, and according to him these cannot exist even in the mind (at [T29] he is explaining the Avicennan position that he will attack in other works). But al-Rāzī does not want to retrench to the traditional Mu‘tazilite view [T39], so he tries out a couple of alternative solutions. One, which he may or may not mean with full seriousness, is that the “non-existent” things actually *are* existent, but not in the usual way. They may be Platonic Forms [T33], a proposal that goes all the way back to antiquity [T1].<sup>8</sup> But as al-Abharī pointed out, the example of impossible objects would seem at least as problematic for this proposal as it is for mental existence [T47]. Also in [T33] al-Rāzī speculates that non-existents could be in the corporeal realm but “hidden” from us, which seems rather *ad hoc* and would also not account for impossible items. Al-Kātibī nonetheless seems to like the idea, and interprets it as placing non-existent object in the Active Intellect [T48].

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*Philosophy* 10 (2000), 181–221; T.-A. Druart, “*Shay’* or *res* as Concomitant of Being in Avicenna,” *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 12 (2001), 125–142.

6 See Deborah Black, “Avicenna on the Ontological and Epistemic Status of Fictional Beings,” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 8 (1997), 425–453; D. Black, “Mental Existence in Thomas Aquinas and Avicenna,” *Mediaeval Studies* 61 (1999): 45–79; T.-A. Druart, “Avicennan Troubles: The Mysteries of the Heptagonal House and of the Phoenix,” *Tópicos* 42 (2012): 51–73.

7 See further M.S. Zarepour, “Avicenna on Empty Intentionality: A Case Study in Analytical Avicennism,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, published online: DOI 10.1080/09608788.2022.2115006.

8 See further the chapter on Platonic Forms below.

Fortunately al-Rāzī also has a more convincing alternative account, which is a kind of “reductionist” solution [T34].<sup>9</sup> Take again the case of Peter Adamson’s sister. We are dealing here with a composite of two things that do exist, namely Peter Adamson and sisters. Since the “parts” of this complex notion exist, we are actually not talking about a non-existent thing after all. This proposal has the advantage that it could handle impossible or contradictory things: a round square would be simply a composition of round and square, both of which do exist. Al-Rāzī anticipates a possible objection, too, which is that some non-existents are simple, not composite: he gives the familiar example of a second God (or actually an “opposite to God”). But that too can be reduced to a something that does exist, namely the real God, since this non-existent is thinkable only on analogy to Him (see also [T16, T42]).

In all, the topic of the non-existent provides a nice window into philosophy in the 12–13th centuries: it displays the intimate connections between *kalām* and *falsafā*, with Avicenna’s view being assimilated to an earlier Mu‘tazilite position. It also shows how an Avicennan view could be taken up by a wide range of intellectuals, many of whom did not consider themselves to be *falāsifa*. Characteristically, al-Rāzī emerges as both an acute expositor of other views and defender of an original account with some philosophical plausibility. And finally, the topic connects in obvious ways to more recent metaphysical reflections, especially those surrounding the Austrian philosopher Alexius Meinong (d. 1920) and his postulation of “intentional” objects that are real, but not existent.

Texts from: Aristotle ap. Alexander of Aphrodisias, Abū Rāshid al-Nīsābūrī, al-Anṣarī, Avicenna, Bahmanyār, al-Khayyām, al-Sāwī, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, al-Shahrastānī, Ibn Ghaylān, al-Suhrawardī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Bābā Afḍal, al-Āmidī, al-Abharī, al-Kātibī, al-Ṭūsī, Ibn Kammūna, Bar Hebraeus, al-Nasafī, al-Samarqandī, al-Ḥillī.

9 For a possible Avicennan inspiration for this move see Benevich, “The Reality of the Non-Existent Object of Thought.”



## Non-Existence

[T1] Aristotle, *Peri Ideon*, Reported by Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Met.*, 81.25–82.7 [trans. G. Fine]

[*the non-existent objects of thought are Platonic Forms*]

If, whenever we think of man, footed, or animal, we think of something that is, and of none of the particulars (for the same thought remains, even when they have perished), then clearly there is, besides the perceptible particulars, something we think of whether they are or are not. For we do not then think of something that is not. This is a form and idea. He says that this argument also establishes ideas of perishing and perished things, and in general of perishable particulars, such as Socrates and Plato. For we think of them and we retain an appearance of them and preserve it even when they no longer are. For there is some appearance even when they no longer are. Indeed, we also think of things that in no way are, such as hippocentaur and chimera. So neither does this sort of argument prove that there are ideas.

[T2] Al-Nisābūrī, *al-Masā'il fī al-khilāf bayna al-Baṣriyyīn wa-al-Baghdādīyyīn*, 12.6–19; 14.2–8; 21.15–22.2; 22.6–7; 23.4–7

[*Mu'tazilite doxographical account of their own position*]

Know that the doctrine of the two masters Abū 'Alī [al-Jubbā'ī] and Abū Hāshim [al-Jubbā'ī] is that the substance (*al-jawhar*) is a substance while not existing (*fī ḥāl 'adamihī*). The master Abū 'Abdallāh [al-Baṣrī] asserted the same, though sometimes the apparent meaning of his statements suggests that the attribute of space-occupation (*al-taḥayyuz*) occurs for the non-existent. But any sort of qualification (*al-ḥukm*) that cannot occur for [the substance] as such, will only occur once [the substance] is existent. Therefore, he made “existence” a condition (*shart*) for this qualification [i.e. space-occupation], as well for the fact that it bears accidents, and for the fact that it can be perceived by the two senses. [On the other hand], our master Abū Ishāq [b. 'Ayyāsh] believed that the non-existent is not specified by any attribute which would distinguish it from other things. Rather it is distinguished only by a “prospective” attribute (*bi-ṣifa muntazira*). So he did not affirm for the substance an attribute additional to its being space-occupying, existent, or being in any given direction (*jha*), and said that the disagreement concerns space-occupation only. Our master Abū al-Qāsim [al-Balkhī al-Ka'bi] believed that

the non-existent is described neither as substance nor as accident. He ruled out the application of any such name for the non-existent apart from our calling it “something” (*shay*), “object of power (*maqḍūr*),” “object of knowledge (*ma‘lūm*),” and “that which becomes space-occupying (*mutaḥayyiz ‘anhu*).” Sometimes he also described it as “affirmed as real (*muthbit*),” since his doctrine concerning reality (*ithbāt*) differed from ours, according to the definition which we will mention later. [...]

**[*God does not make the substance to be a substance*]**

[14.2] *If someone says:* why would [God] have to be able to bestow existence upon [a substance] and make it blackness, if He were able to bestow existence upon it and not make it a substance? *It may be replied:* if the substance could be a substance due to the Agent (*al-fā’il*), and blackness could be blackness due to the Agent, then no generic attribute would be established for any object (*dhāt*) nor could we say that it is possible for one object and impossible for another. If this were the case, every object would have to be able to become a substance or blackness. The occurrence of such an object with this or that description would depend on the choice (*ikhtiyār*) of the Agent. [...]

**[*distinction argument*]**

[21.15] *Another proof* [that the substance is a substance while not existing]: we have already shown that every object of knowledge can be known in a detailed way (*alā ḥadd al-taḥṣīl*). For if it cannot be known in a detailed way, then neither can it be known in general (*alā ḥadd al-jumla*) as was made clear in the books. This being established, since we have learned that one can only know in a detailed way if [the object of knowledge] has an attribute by which it is distinguished from everything else, objects of knowledge in all cases, regardless whether they are existent or non-existent, must have attributes by which they are distinguished from everything else.

*Another proof:* if God the exalted wants to create a substance, He must surely intend (*yaqṣidu*) to bestow existence on something He knows will necessarily occupy space once [22] it exists. This would not be the case, if [substance] were not distinguishable for Him from other [kinds of entities], yet it can be distinguishable only if it is specified with an attribute. [...]

**[*counterargument to the Mu‘tazilite position and a response*]**

[22.6] *Another [counterargument]:* attributing existence (*wujūd*) to the substance is nothing additional (*zā’id*) to its being a substance. So if one says that

[substance] is a substance in all cases [i.e. even during non-existence], this is like saying that it is existent in all cases [including non-existence]. [...]

[23.4] As for the second point mentioned, this is a serious mistake. For attributing existence to a substance is something additional to its being a substance. What proves this is what we already inferred about the fact that [the substance's] being a substance cannot be due to the Agent, whereas it has been established that its existence is due to the Agent. An attribute that does occur due to the Agent cannot be the same as an attribute which cannot occur due to the Agent.<sup>10</sup>

[T3] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 151.1–10

[*a report of the Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite positions on the non-existent*]

The Ash'arites do not distinguish between existence (*al-wujūd*), reality (*al-thubūt*), thing-ness (*shay'yya*), essence (*dhāt*), and concrete being (*'ayn*). It was al-Shaḥḥām from the Mu'tazilites who came forward with the statement that the non-existent is something, an essence, a concrete being, for which he affirmed [in non-existence] certain specific features that one would [normally] associate with them in existence, like the subsistence of accident in substance, its being an accident and a color, and its being black or white. Most of the Mu'tazilites followed him on this point, except that they did not affirm [in non-existence] the subsistence of accident in substance, nor "space-occupying" for substance, nor its receptivity of accident. Another group disagreed, including those who refused to ascribe any [notion to the non-existent] apart from thing-ness. Others rejected even this ascription, like Abū al-Hudhayl and Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. Others said that "thing" is the everlasting (*al-qadīm*). As for that which is temporally originated (*al-ḥādīth*), it is called "thing" only metaphorically, and in a broad sense. Jahm ibn Ṣafwān by contrast came to the idea that [only] the temporally originated is something, whereas God—may He be praised—is the one who makes things to be things (*mashī' al-ashyā'*).<sup>11</sup>

10 In these passages, Abū Rashīd defends one Mu'tazilite position that substance is a substance in non-existence against another Mu'tazilite position that it is only an unspecified *shay'*. The Ash'arite and the later Mu'tazilite position that the non-existent is not even a *shay'* is not discussed by Abū Rashīd at all.

11 Al-Shahrastānī's account is based on al-Anṣārī, *Ghunya*, vol. 1, 279–281 as well as al-Juwaynī, *Shāmil*, 124–126.

[T4] Al-Anṣarī, *Ghunya*, vol. 1, 284.2–10

[*essential dependence and modalities*]

*If they say:* attributes are divided into necessary (*wājib*) and possible (*jā'iz*). The necessary ones do not depend on the Agent for its necessity. As for the possible ones, they depend on the volition (*khiyāra*) of the Powerful (*al-qādir*). If He wants, He provides them. If He does not want, he does not. The only [attributes] that behave like this are origination (*al-ḥudūth*) and existence (*al-wujūd*). *We say:* you are passing arbitrary judgment. For what you called “necessary,” like being a substance, being an accident, being blackness, and so on, is on our view merely possible. All of these depend on the volition of the Powerful. The existence of a substance and an accident means nothing but they themselves (*dhātuhumā*). Nor does their being brought into existence mean anything other than making them real objects (*ithbāt dhātihimā*), after they were not any “object,” “thing,” or “itself.” As for those attributes you affirm as following upon origination, like space-occupation, the subsistence of the accident in the substance, and so on, you have said that they necessarily follow origination. Yet, the attributes which you called the attributes of the things themselves (*ṣifāt al-anfus*), like being a substance, being an accident, and being an object (*dhātīyya*), according to our view, follow origination in just the same way as space-occupation and the subsistence of an accident in a subject of inherence.

[T5] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* 1.5, 25.8–26.17 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*the non-existent is mentally existent*]

It's true to say that “the thing is that about which information is given.” But when it is further said, “the thing may be absolutely nonexistent,” this stands in need of investigation. If by “the nonexistent” is meant the nonexistent in concrete individuals, then it could be the case, for it is possible for a thing that does not exist extramentally to exist in the mind. But if anything else is meant, this would be false, and one could give no information about it at all. It is known only as [something] conceptualized in the soul. As for the notion that [the non-existent] might be conceptualized in the soul as a form that refers to some external thing, definitely not.

This goes for the informative statement because information is always about something realized in the mind. One never gives affirmative information about the absolutely nonexistent (*ma'dūm muṭlaq*). And even if information about it is given negatively, then in some respect it is given existence in the mind. For

our saying “it” entails a reference (*al-ishāra*), and it is absurd that there should be reference to the nonexistent that has no form in the mind, in any respect. For how could one apply “thing” to the non-existent, given that when we say “the nonexistent is such-and-such,” the meaning of this is that the description “such-and-such” occurs to the nonexistent (*ḥāṣil li-al-ma’dūm*)? There is no difference between the occurring (*al-ḥāsil*) and the existent, so it would be like our saying, “this description *exists* for the nonexistent.”

[*the affirmation principle*]

In fact, *we say*: [26] what describes the nonexistent and is predicated of it must either exist for the nonexistent and occur for it, or not exist and not occur. If it does exist and occur for the nonexistent, then it must, in itself, be either existent or nonexistent. If it is existent, then the nonexistent would have an existing attribute (*ṣifa*). But, if the attribute exists, then that to which it is attributed necessarily exists (*idhā kānat al-ṣifa mawjūda fa-al-mawṣūf bihā mawjūd*). The nonexistent would, then, be an existent, but this is impossible. If [however] the attribute is nonexistent, then how can that which is in itself nonexistent exist for something? For that which in itself does not exist cannot exist for the thing. [...]

[26.11] We say that we have knowledge of the nonexistent simply because, when the concept (*al-ma’nā*) arises in the soul alone, without any reference (*lam yushar*) to anything external, then what is known is just that very thing in the soul. The assent, which is made between two parts of what has been conceptualized, is to the effect that in the nature of the thing known, it could have an intelligible relation to what is external, even though there is at the moment no such relation. What is known is nothing but this.

According to those who uphold this [other] view, there are items among the set of all objects of information and knowledge that have no thing-ness in non-existence. Whoever wants to be acquainted with their doctrine should go have a look at the raving remarks they have made, which hardly deserve any attention.

[T6] Avicenna, *Dānishnāma, Mantiq*, 15.1–16.5

[*essential independence*]

The third [condition for essentiality] is as follows. You know that there is nothing that would bestow a given notion (*ma’nā*) upon a given particular,

rather this belongs to it by virtue of itself. For instance you know for sure that nothing makes human to be animal, or four to be number. Otherwise, in the absence of that thing, human would not be animal and four would not be number, which is absurd. The meaning of our saying that one thing makes another thing to be “such-and-such” is that the latter thing is not “such-and-such” in itself, but rather something outside it makes it “such-and-such.” If something in itself cannot help being “such-and-such,” then nothing makes it “such-and-such.” Of course whatever makes a human also makes an animal, but it does not make human [16] *to be* animal, since human is animal in itself, and four is number in itself, and black is color in itself. This is not like white for human, since there is something which makes human white, which is either within the nature of [human] or outside it. Nor does being (*hastī*) belong to human in this way, for there has to be something which bestows being upon human.

[T7] Avicenna, *Dānishnāma, Ilāhiyyāt*, 38.10–39.3

[*essential independence*]

This notion of being (*hastī*) is neither essential (*dhātī*) nor is it the quiddity (*māhiyyat*) for those ten categories. We have shown this above. So one cannot say something made human a substance, or made blackness a color, but one can say that something made [them] existent (*mawjūd*). Thus each of the ten [categories] has a quiddity that is not due to anything [else], such as the fact that four is four, or that it is a number with some given description. [39] In Arabic its being is called “that-ness” (*anniyya*). Quiddity is one thing, that-ness another. The that-ness of [the ten categories] is distinct from quiddity, since [that-ness] is not an essential notion; so it is an accidental notion.

[T8] Bahmanyār, *Tahṣīl*, 283.17–284.2

[*bestowal of existence*]

When the agent (*al-fā'il*) [284] gives (*afāda*) existence [to something], he just gives [it] its true reality (*ḥaqīqa*), and its true reality just is its “being existent (*mawjūdiyya*).” From all this it is clear that the existence of something is its being among concrete individuals, not something through which it is (*mā yak-ūnu bihi*) among concrete individuals.

[T9] Al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī al-wujūd*, 105.10–106.2; 110.8–13

[*argument for essential independence, with response*]

*They said:* for humanity, existence is a notion acquired (*ma'nā muktasaba*) from something else. Yet animality and rationality belong to it by itself. Nothing made (*yaj'ulu*) [human to be animal], nor did anything cause [it]. For the Creator, who is great, did not make human to be a body, for instance. Rather He made [human] to be existent. Furthermore, when the human exists, he cannot but be a body. *So they said:* things being so, [106] existence must necessarily be a notion additional to the human among concrete individuals. How could it be otherwise given that [existence] is nothing other than something acquired (*ma'nā mustafād*) from something else. [...]

[110.8] As for the solution to the doubt raised by the People of Truth—namely that existence is something acquired and not anything else, so how can it fail to be additional<sup>12</sup> among concrete individuals, on this account—it is that it is the object itself (*dhāt*) which is acquired, nothing anything else, since the object is non-existent and then exists, so that the object itself is acquired.

[T10] Al-Khayyām, *Jawāb 'an thalāth masā'il*, 167.8–9

[*essential independence*]

From this it is clear that if one says, “oddness necessarily exists for three-ness,” one means that it belongs to three-ness without any cause (*musabbib*) or maker (*ajā'il*), and the same holds of all essential and necessarily concomitant [attributes].<sup>13</sup>

[T11] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 363.14–15 and 23–24; 364.21–24; 371.1–2

[*Mu'tazilite arguments from connection, specification, and intention*]

The one with the power (*al-qādir*) to create substance has it before [the substance] exists, and inevitably has a connection with that over which he has power (*ta'alluq bi-al-maqdūr*). Therefore the substance is already an object (*dhāt*) before it exists, so that the one who has the power [to create it] may

<sup>12</sup> Adding *lā* before *yakūna*.

<sup>13</sup> For the continuation of this passage see [13T11].

be connected to it. [...] [363.23] There must inevitably be some relation (*idāfa mā*) between the one who has power and that over which he has power (*al-qādir wa-al-maqdūr*), in order that it may be open to him to bestow existence. And a relation can only be affirmed of two objects (*dhātayn*). This relation is the connection (*ta'alluq*) we are referring to. [...]

[364.21] Each of us knows what he does before he does it, and knows the acts of others before they bring them into existence. He can distinguish between what he has the power to do and what he cannot, and between the types (*al-ajnās*) of things over which he has power. Knowledge and the making of distinctions (*al-'ilm wa-al-tamyīz*) inevitably have a connection to the non-existent (*ta'alluq bi-al-ma'dūm*), and there can be a connection only between two things (*shay'ayn*). So it is established that the non-existent is something (*al-ma'dūm shay'*), and is an object, while in the state of non-existence, in order that knowledge and distinguishing can be connected to it. [...]

[371.1] The one with power wills (*yrīdu*) to bestow existence upon substance, or upon blackness, so inevitably there must be both objects, so that there may be an intention (*qaṣd*) to bring either of them into existence.

[T12] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 353.23–354.6; 354.15–16

[*agrees with Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī that non-existent things are conceptualized in the mind*]

The correct view on this issue is what our master Abū al-Ḥusayn [al-Baṣrī]—may God have mercy upon him—put forward. Namely that the non-existent is known, but is neither an “object” (*dhāt*) nor “thing” (*shay'*), as [those notions are understood] among the theologians (*al-mutakallimīn*). The fact that it is known means that it is conceptualized (*mutaṣawwar*), [354] but not that it is in itself a concrete item. If it is not in itself a concrete item, then neither does it become concrete through knowledge, in order that knowledge could be connected to it as to a concrete item. Rather it has the same status as what the thinking person conceptualizes in the cases of “secondary eternal feature,” “power,” “knowledge,” or “life” alongside [God], may He be exalted; or as what one conceptualizes in the cases of circles, shapes, or forms, before they arise [extramentally]. All this is conceptualized and real in the imagination (*thābit fī wahm*) of the thinking person according to our masters, the followers of Abū Hāshim [al-Jubbā'ī]. They are not “objects” or “things,” even though the thinking person does know them. Don't you realize that we deny a second eternal



[God], may He be exalted, and deny power and life of [the second God]? And one can't make denials about that which one is neither thinking nor conceptualizing. [...]

[354.15] It's claimed that what is meant [in the Qur'anic references to "thing" (*shay'*)] is that which is real in the soul, in terms of what is imagined and conceptualized (*mā yuthbitu fī al-naḥs mimmā yatawawhamu wa-yataṣawwaru*). This is what the grammarians call "thing".

[T13] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 365.1–10

[*knowledge as a relation to a concept, not to an object*]

We generally concede your point that knowledge inevitably has a connection to what is known (*ta'alluq bi-al-ma'lūm*). But what do you mean by "connection of knowledge to the non-existent?" *If they say*: we mean by this that there has to be an "object" in non-existence and a "thing" that is itself concrete (*shay' muta'ayyin fī naḥsihi*), so that a relation may be established between it and the knowledge of it, since relation can be established only between two "things." *One may reply to them*: prove first that the non-existent is something concrete in itself, so that you may establish that the knowledge of it has the aforementioned connection! For our part, we do not admit that the knowledge of the non-existent has such a connection [to what is known]. Rather, we say that knowledge is connected to what is known with respect to what that known is in itself. If [what is known] is concrete in itself, like existing things that are distinct from one another, either through themselves or through the attributes that are established in them, then knowledge is indeed connected to them as concrete items. But if [what known] is not concrete in itself, like that which is conceptualized and imagined, the knowledge does not have the sort of connection to it that it has to existent things. Rather, its connecting to it means its having a relation to what is conceptualized, not to that which is in itself concrete. And likewise for distinguishing [between objects of knowledge].

[T14] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 369.21–370.3

[*knowledge is by means of conceptualization*]

Knowledge is of two kinds. First, knowing the true reality of something and its quiddity, like knowing the true reality of volume (*al-ḥajm*). This know-

ledge concerns neither (a) the existent nor (b) the non-existent, as you [sc. opponents who think the non-existent is extramental] would say. For (a) if we supposed that all substances are non-existent, the knowledge [of volume] would not be banished from the world. Whereas if it were knowledge of some [particular] existing volume, then with the elimination of what is known, the knowledge would also have to be eliminated. Nor is it (b) knowledge of the non-existent. For as we have seen, there is no volume in non-existence. So the right view is that knowledge concerns neither the existent nor the non-existent, rather it is the conceptualization (*taṣawwur*) of the true reality and quiddity of volume. The proof that knowledge of the true reality of something is not connected to a concrete item of knowledge (*ma'lūm mu'ayyin*), but is rather conceptualization (*taṣawwur*), is that [370] every thinking person necessarily knows the true reality of the eternal and the true reality of the originated. If this had to be knowledge of some concrete known item, then since nothing is eternal but God, may He be exalted, this would have to be knowledge of Him, may He be exalted. But then it would follow that [all] responsible people (*al-mukallaḫūn*) must necessarily know God, may He be exalted, but this is false.

[T15] Ibn al-Malāḫimī, *Mu'tamad*, 356.9–17

[*knowledge must have a relation to some object of knowledge*]

Some followers of Qāḍī al-Quḍāt [‘Abd al-Jabbār] defined the non-existent as what is known without being existent. *They said*: our saying “what is known” excludes an analogue (*mithl*) of God, the exalted. For that would not be “known,” since knowing that there is no analogue of God is a knowledge without anything that is known (*‘ilm lā ma'lūm lahu*). [...]

[356.15] But their statement that knowing that there is no analogue to God is a knowledge without anything known, is not true either. For one cannot conceive of knowledge without any relation to what is known (*iḍāfa ilā al-ma'lūm*). This will be either a concrete item or a product of conceptualization (*immā muta'ayyin aw mutaṣawwir*). How can one speak about knowledge when there is nothing that is known?

[T16] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 367.6–24

[*rebuttal of alternative solutions for impossible objects of knowledge*]

*It is reported that some of them claimed:* the knowledge that there is no second [God] alongside God the exalted is a knowledge which is connected to what is known (*mutaʿalliq bi-maʿlūm*). Further, some of them said that this knowledge concerns God the exalted Himself (*bi-dhāt*), to the effect that there is no second for Him. And some of them said it is rather the knowledge that substances and accidents do not resemble Him. But these two solutions are wrong. [...]

[367.10] For the knowledge that is connected to something is either the knowledge of it in itself (*bi-dhāthi*), or is knowledge of it as having some attribute or state (*ḥāla*). But knowing that there is no second alongside God, the exalted, is not knowledge of Him in Himself, the exalted. For this is knowledge that there is no powerful, eternal object (*dhāt*) apart from God Himself, may He be exalted. So how can it be knowledge of Him in Himself, the exalted? Nor is it knowledge of Him as having some attribute or state. For according to them, His being one (*kawn wāḥidan*) is not among His states. Besides, in order to know this [i.e. that there is no second God] one has to know Him in Himself, the exalted. For this is knowledge that there is nothing analogous or similar to Him. And inevitably there must arise knowledge of Him, the exalted, in order that knowledge may arise that He has no analogue. Just as knowledge of the substance is inevitably involved in knowing that blackness does not resemble substances, even though the knowledge that blackness does not resemble substances is not just the same as knowledge of substances. So our own approach is proven: even if we assumed that God Himself were denied—and He is exalted above this!—still we could know that there is no second, eternal being in existence.

The second solution is also wrong. [...] [367.20] If knowing that there is no second alongside God, the exalted, amounted to knowledge that substances and accidents do not resemble Him, then once one knows they do not resemble Him, one could no longer entertain the possibility that there exists some eternal being who is neither a body nor an accident and resembles [God]. But obviously one can entertain this possibility.

[T17] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 376.7–21

[*Can God make a thing to be something else?*]

Then there is their argument that if the existence of a space-occupying item were identical to the [space-occupying] object itself (*dhāt*) and were due to the Agent, then he could make it be a space-occupying blackness, or bitterness. [...]

[376.9] *We say to them*: even if we accepted that, for instance, space-occupation is an attribute and likewise for other attributes of “objects,” it would still be open to us to say that the Powerful [initially] makes the object, and only then does it have to be space-occupying, or motion, or blackness, once it has come to be an object (*ʿinda kawnihi dhātan*). [...] [376.16] *Further, we say to them*: if we admitted that the Powerful makes the object according to the attribute of space-occupation, or the attribute of blackness, it would still be open to us to reply to you that the Powerful cannot make one and the same object be space-occupying, blackness, and motion in combination. *If they ask*: why not? For these attributes do not rule each other out, rather they can co-occur. *Then we say to them*: this is impossible given what we already mentioned, about the impossibility that would follow if an object were a body, blackness, and motion in combination. For the absurd (*muḥāl*) cannot follow from the possible (*al-ṣaḥīḥ*).

[T18] Al-Sāwī, *Baṣāʾir*, *Manṭiq* 37.22–38.2

[*essential independence*]

The third [feature of the essential] is that it is not acquired (*mustafādan*) from another thing. So, the human is not animal due to some cause that would make him animal. Rather he is animal in virtue of himself. For, if it were due to a cause, then it would be possible to suppose that the human is not an animal, by supposing the absence of the cause. Now, this does not mean that animal exists through itself, without any cause that would make it existent. Not at all! Rather, we have in mind that there is nothing that makes the human an animal. Admittedly, whatever makes a human also makes an animal, in making a human, since the human is an animal, and his origination is the origination of an animal. But if one were to say that [this cause] made a human, [38] and only then bestowed animality upon him, this is not so. For [in that case] humanity would be made subsistent without animality, and only then would animality be imposed upon it from the outside, which is absurd.

[T19] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 152.15–153.5

[*Muʿtazilite argument from distinctions in the non-existent*]

*The first [approach]* is for you to affirm specificity and universality also in the non-existent, so that you will say that it includes what is necessary, like the impossible, and includes what is possible, like the contingent, and includes that which is impossible in itself, like the agreement of contradictories, and includes that which is impossible through another, like what differs from what is known to be the case. So these classifications are imposed on the non-existent. Thus you take non-existence in general, and specify it in these ways. Now, if the non-existent were not [153] something real (*shāyʾ thābit*), then universality and specificity could not be realized in it, nor could the distinction between one class and another.

[*Muʿtazilite argument from connection*]

*The second approach* is for you to concede that what is denied (*manfī*), and the non-existent, are known. You can impart information about it, and think about it. What is knowledge connected to [here], and what does connection even mean, if there is not at all something metaphysically real?

[T20] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 153.6–14

[*Ashʿarite response to the argument from distinctions: such distinctions are made within the non-existent only by supposing it to exist*]

*Those who deny [that the non-existent is something] say:* we affirm in non-existence neither specificity nor commonality. Rather, its specificity and commonality comes down to mere verbal expression (*al-lafẓ al-mujarrad*) and intellectual supposition (*al-taqdīr fī al-ʿaql*). In fact knowledge is not connected to the non-existent as such, but only on the supposition of existence (*ʿalā taqdīr al-wujūd*). Unqualified non-existence is known and grasped intellectually by supposing unqualified existence, as opposed to specific non-existence, that is, the non-existence of something concrete. One may indicate a realized existent, speaking of “the non-existence of *this thing*,” or one may entertain it as a supposition in the intellect, and speak of “the non-existence of *this supposed item*.” For instance, “resurrection” is entertained by supposition in the intellect, and then one may deny it in the present, or affirm it in the future. Thus non-existence can be rendered specific, common, or known, only with respect to existence or the supposition of existence. Therefore, knowledge is connected to the existent.

[T21] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 155.4–156.13

[*things have intrinsic features without yet existing*]

The secret of our doctrine is that substances and accidents have essential attributes which belong to them in themselves, rather than being dependent on an act of the Agent and the power of the Powerful. For we can conceive of substance as substance or as concrete (*'ayn*) or as an object (*dhāt*), and also conceive of accident as accident, as object, and as concrete, without our considering it as something existent created by the power of the Powerful. That which is created and temporally originated requires the Agent in respect of its existence if and only if it is in itself contingent of existence and non-existence; it is when preponderance is placed on the side of existence that it requires the Preponderator. So the Agent has an effect (*athar*) through His capacity and power only on existence.

*We say then:* what belongs to [the originated] in itself was prior to existence. This is its substantiality or accidentality, which is something (*shay'*). What belongs to it due to the power of the Powerful is its existence and its occurrence (*huṣūl*). What follows upon its existence is its space-occupation and its receptivity to accidents. This is a necessary intellectual judgment which no intellect can reject. On this basis one may answer the question about the effect of the bestowal of existence (*al-ijād*). For what is effected by [God's] power is nothing but existence, and the Powerful bestows nothing except only existence. The contingent in itself requires the Powerful only in respect of existence. Don't we say that the contingency of the contingent, insofar as it is contingency, is something it has through itself, and that in this respect it has no need for the Agent, as it is not up to the Agent to make it contingent? Rather it is for the preponderating (*tarjih*) of one side of [156] the contingency [over the other] that it requires the Agent. So it is known with certainty that the essential features are not to be related to the Agent, but only whatever befalls them in terms of existence and occurrence. We say that if the Agent wants to bestow existence upon substance, He must inevitably distinguish (*yatamayyaza*) substance from accident in its true reality, in order that His intention (*al-qaṣd*) of the bestowal of existence towards [the substance] may be realized. Otherwise, if substance and accident are not distinguished in non-existence by some feature (*amr*) and some true reality, and this feature and true reality are not something real (*shay'an thābitan*), then He will not be able to form an exclusive intention for substance instead of accident, or motion instead of rest, or whiteness instead of blackness, and so on. Specification with existence (*takhṣiṣ bi-al-wujūd*) can be conceptualized only when what is specified

(*al-mukhaṣṣaṣ*) is concrete and distinguished for the one who specifies (*al-mukhaṣṣiṣ*), so that you don't wind up with substance instead of accident, motion instead of rest, or whiteness instead of blackness. Know then that the true realities of the genera and species are independent of the act of the Agent. For if things are not distinct in themselves, then bestowal of existence and creation (*ikhṭirā'*) are inconceivable; instead the occurrence of things coming to be in various ways would be a matter of coincidence and luck (*ittifāqan wa-bakhtan*).

[T22] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 159.15–160.5

[*individuation argument*]

We say: suppose somebody indicates a concrete substance (*jawhar bi-'aynihi*) and asks you whether this substance was, already before it existed, something real and a corporeal substance insofar as it is this one (*hādhā*), or instead absolute substance and something universal, not specified as this one. If you answer that it was the same concrete substance (*bi-'aynihi jawharan*), then its being indicated (*ishāra ilayhi*) as this one must already have been realized, [160] and that one, which was indicated (*mushār ilayhi*) [prior to existence], must have been *this* one, since nothing else shares in being “this one” which is not this one. If on the other hand it had been absolute substance before existence, and not this one, then that one [prior to existence] would not be *this* one [now being indicated], and this one [now being indicated] would not be something [real]. The absolute, as such, would not be this one and this one would not be that one, nor would that one be this one. So that which is real in non-existence would not have existence realized for it, and that for which existence is realized would not be real.

[T23] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 160.6–161.15

[*God gives things their essential properties in creating them*]

*They mentioned* that the essential attributes [of created things] are not related to the Agent, rather it is existence that is related to Him. *To this it is said:* there are attributes affirmed of a non-concrete thing through which it becomes concrete; and then there are attributes affirmed of a concrete thing through which it belongs to a kind or species. The former are called “essential (*dhātī*) attributes” only in the sense than that they are expressions of it as a concrete object (*'ibārāt 'an dhātihi al-mu'ayyina*). So its existence, substantiality, con-

creteness, and objecthood (*dhātuhu*) all express one and the same thing (*‘ibārāt ‘an mu‘abbar wāḥid*). Just as it stands in need of the Bestower of existence for existence, so it needs [Him] for its objecthood, concreteness, and substantiality. Possibility of existence is the same (*huwa bi-‘aynihi*) as the possibility of reality (*thubūt*). It is dependent on the Bestower of existence both for its concreteness, in order to be a concrete being, and for substantiality, in order to be substance. Otherwise it would follow that nothing depends on the Bestower of existence in any respect or with regard to any attribute, apart from existence. In fact, insofar as existence is a state (*ḥāl*) that does not have [a further] existence as an attribute, even existence would not require the Bestower of existence. So this would imply the existence of something eternal [other than God]. But instead, specified existence does require the Bestower of existence, due to the attribute of contingency. Furthermore, existence is not realized for the contingent existent in general (*‘āmm*). Rather, [161] contingent existence is qualified with this or that attribute, and existence is realized for it.

Hence, it is established that a concrete particular requires the Bestower of existence. Yet existence is realized for it only when [the Bestower] wills it, and He wills it only when He knows it before bestowing existence upon it. So its existence is rendered specific (*yatakhāṣṣaṣu*) as an accident or a substance in the knowledge of the Bestower. Thus what is known is rendered specific as what is willed, and what is willed is specified as existence, which is the same as the substance. Not that it is in itself (*fī dhātihi*) a “thing” in such a way that it would be specified with existence only after it is “something.” Then extramental “thingness” would be specified as substance, and general extramental substantiality would be specified as *this* substance.

Again, existence is the most general of the attributes of existents. The bestowal of existence upon something more general does not entail the existence of something more specific. So if the white were related to the Bestower of existence only in respect of its existence, then it would only become existent [when God creates it], not white. Instead, if one puts it the other way around, saying that He bestows existence on it as black or white, and only whiteness [or blackness] is related to the Bestower of existence, but from the existence of the more specific the existence of the more general necessarily follows, then this would be more like it from a reasonable point of view. We say therefore that the white is opposed to the black in virtue of its whiteness; if one denies blackness, one denies existence. For it is unreasonable to deny blackness and leave existence standing.



[T24] Ibn Ghaylān, *Ḥudūth al-ʿālam*, 74.12–18

[*the absurdity of real essences prior to existence*]

Existence is among the universal features that exist in the mind. For it is among the features that all existents share, and the existents are distinguished by these features from the non-existents, which are conceptualized in the mind. The existence [of existence] is only in the mind, like “being color (*al-lawnīyya*)” and the like. This is proven by the fact that, if the existence of objects were related to the Bestower of existence, and given by Him to them—or as they put it, “true realities are not acquired (*mustafāda*) from the Bestower of existence, rather it is existence that is acquired from Him”—then the objects would be in themselves things that [already] occur (*ashyāʾ ḥāṣila*), upon which existence would be emanated. In fact [existence] would be added to all its attributes, which would already be something (*shayʾ*) prior to existence, and only then would existence be emanated upon them. This is one of the false judgments of the estimative faculty.

[T25] Al-Suhrawardī, *Talwīḥāt*, 176.13–23

[*arguments against taking the non-existent to be a thing*]

It is also claimed that the contingent non-existent is a thing, while the negated is the impossible, and the contingent is real before existence.

[*existence argument*]

*It may said to him:* the non-existent quiddity is not existent, and its existence is negated and denied: yet it is contingent. This invalidates your claim. Furthermore, if “non-existent existence” is affirmed for a quiddity, as in his doctrine about the contingent, given that any attribute affirmed of something is attributed to it, it results that non-existence is attributed to existence, but this is absurd.

[*individuation argument*]

Furthermore, if that which is indicated by “this” is real prior to existence, then it is already “this,” so it would be existent prior to [its] existence. If on the other hand it is not [yet] “this,” then “this” would not be contingent [i.e. possible] prior to existence.

[*mental existence solution*]

Rather, what is existent in the mind may be non-existent in concrete individuals, and vice-versa.

[T26] Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 55.5–7; 59.2–14

[*Avicenna as agreeing with the mainstream Muʿtazilite view*]

The non-existent is either impossible of reality (*mumtaniʿ al-thubūt*), so that it is uncontested that it is pure negation (*naḫī maḥḍ*), or it is possible of reality. According to us, and to Abū al-Hudhayl and Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī from among the Muʿtazilites, it is pure negation; as opposed to what the rest of the Muʿtazilites think. The crux of the disagreement is that they claim that black's existence is additional to its being black, and furthermore that this quiddity can be independent of the attribute of existence. [...]

[59.2] Abū Yaʿqūb al-Shaḥḥām, Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī and his son Abū Hāshim, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Khayyāt, Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Baṣrī, Abū Ishāq ibn ʿAyyāsh, al-Qādī ʿAbd al-Jabbār ibn Aḥmad and his students claimed that possible non-existents are already objects (*dhawāt*), concrete beings, and true realities, before entering into existence. And they claim that the effect of the Agent (*taʿthīr al-fāʿil*) does not consist in making them to be objects, but in making those objects to be existent. They agreed that these objects are distinct as individuals, and that the reality of every kind of these non-existents is infinite in number. As for the philosophers (*al-falāsifa*), they agreed that the contingent items are their quiddities, not their existences, and that it is possible to strip those quiddities of extramental existence. For we can intellectually grasp “triangle” even if it has no extramental existence. As for the question whether one can strip [the quiddity] of both extramental and mental existence, Ibn Sīnā wrote in the first *Maqāla* of the *Ilāhiyyāt* of the *Shifāʾ* that this is indeed possible, though some [philosophers] do not allow this. [...]

[59.11] They also agreed that quiddities are not made (*ghayr majʿūla*). *They said:* whatever is necessitated through another is eliminated along with that other thing. If blackness belonged to black through something else, then when that other thing was eliminated, black would stop being black. But saying that black is no longer black is absurd.<sup>14</sup>

14 In *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 94.18–95.7, al-Rāzī ascribes a similar argument involving the issue of essential independence to the Muʿtazilites, as a support for their *maʿdūm-ṣayʾ* theory. Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 87.1–4 and 90.5–8 offers the same kind of parallel.

[T27] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 91.5–92.23

[“*distinction argument*” that the non-existent is a thing]

Non-existent objects are in themselves distinguished, and inevitably, all [things] that are distinguished from one another are in themselves concrete true realities. This is what we mean when we say that the non-existent is “something.” There are several ways to show that non-existents are indeed distinguished one from another while not existing:

*First*: we know that tomorrow the sun will rise from the East, not from the West. Both of these sunrises are presently non-existent, yet we already know the distinction between them. This shows that distinction applies to the non-existent. *Second*: we are able to move to the right or to the left, but not to fly to the sky. So one of the non-existents is distinguished from another, given that we can do one and not the other. This distinction applies while they are not existing, so the application of distinction to the non-existent is established. *Third*: we find ourselves wishing for fortune, children, well-being and happiness to come to us, and that no sort of illness or misfortune befalls us, even as both types are non-existent. If one non-existent were not distinct from another through its concrete quiddity and specified true reality while failing to exist, it would be impossible to wish for one and worry about the other. *Fourth*: the non-existent is divided into two types, the impossible and the possible. Doubtless each [92] of these types is distinct from the other in itself and in its true reality. That is why the willing, capable [agent] cannot bestow existence on the impossible, but can do so for the possible. If there were no distinction between the possible and the impossible in themselves, this would not be true.

[*rejection of the mental existence solution*]

*Let it not be said*: these items, while not existing in extramental reality, do exist in the mind, which is why distinction may rightly be applied to them. *For we say*: you must say either (a) that these non-existents exist in the mind, or (b) that the *knowledge* of them exists in the mind. (a) But the first is wrong. For we know the sun and the moon. If these objects of knowledge existed in the mind, then when someone imagined many suns, or many moons, or a sea of mercury, or a mountain of jewels, these things would exist in his mind. This is necessarily known to be false. (b) As for the second option, namely that what is present (*al-ḥāḍir*) in the mind is the knowledge of these things, we concede this. But our investigation concerns the object of knowledge, not knowledge [itself]. For even without these objects of knowledge existing in

the mind, we know that they are distinct in themselves, and that their true realities are distinct. It is irrelevant whether they exist in the mind or not. This is what was to be shown.

On the basis of these four demonstrations, it is established that one non-existent is distinguishable from another while it is non-existent. This being established, *we say*: the distinction (*imtiyāz*) of one thing from another depends upon each of them being in itself a concrete true reality and concrete quiddity. For their mutual distinction is one of the features (*aḥkām*) of those true realities, and one of their attributes. Yet it is absurd that an attribute or a feature can be affirmed (*thubūt*) without the bearer of the attribute being realized (*taqrīr*). So it is established that non-existents are distinct, and realized, and that distinction can only be accomplished once true realities and quiddities are realized. This means it surely must be the case that non-existents are objects (*dhawāt*), quiddities, and true realities. This is what was to be shown.

[T28] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 95.11–25

[*against the distinction argument in T27*]

*The answer is*: we say that we find in our souls awareness (*shuʿūr*) and perception (*idrāk*) of many forms, and there is agreement between us and you that they are neither quiddities nor true realities. Rather, they are pure negation and outright non-existence. The first form [of pure negation] is knowledge about impossibilities. For we judge it impossible for there to be a companion (*sharīk*) of God, and provide proofs for this. If we couldn't conceive the companion of God, we could not have predicated impossibility of it. For assent (*taṣdīq*) is impossible without conception. We say that the companion of God is impossible, that the conjunction of existence and non-existence is impossible, and that the presence of a single body in two places at the same time is impossible. And we distinguish between all these cases of assent. Mental awareness and intellectual distinction are present in these forms [of negation], even as all scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) are in agreement that these impossibilities are neither objects, nor true realities, nor quiddities.

[T29] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 136.18–24

[*mental existence solution, argument from impossibles*]

As for the first argument they gave, it is based on the their ignorance about the fact that quiddity has existence in the mind, as we have already shown. This gains support from the fact that we can conceptualize the impossible, and imaginary forms like the form of Zayd and the form of ‘Amr or of a concrete horse, while [the Mu‘tazilites] agree with us that these are not extramentally real. Likewise, if we intellectually grasp existence and non-existence, neither of them are real objects while they are non-existent. And there is no getting out of these convincing arguments that force absurd consequences on the opponent (*al-ilzāmāt*) with a merely verbal defense. So we know that these conceptualized quiddities are existent in the mind.

[T30] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 80r14–16

[*why objects of knowledge need not be real*]

Their rationale is that the non-existent is an object of knowledge, and everything known is real. The major premise [sc. that everything known is real] is rejected with [the examples] of impossibles, imagined objects, and also existence itself, since it is an object of knowledge, but is not described as [itself] existent and real.<sup>15</sup>

[T31] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 1, 48.12–49.6

[*essential independence*]

I do not sufficiently understand this talk [about essential independence]. For the essential is a part of the essence, and an essence's part is distinct from the essence [as a whole]. It is acknowledged that a relation to one thing is distinct from a relation to something else, especially for those who say that only one effect can proceed from one simple thing. From the fact that it is impossible to make the essence without also making the essential, it just follows that the act of making the essence is the same as the act of making essential. So it remains possible that the act of making the essence, while being distinct from the act

15 This argument is accepted in al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*, 253.8–11; al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 17.13–16; and Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 84.10–15.

of making the essential, depends on it and is posterior [49] to it. It is for this reason that the act of making an essence is impossible without the act of making the essential. Instead, the truth is that the act of making the essential is prior to the act of making an essence, and the act of making an essence is prior to the act of making a necessary concomitant, because quiddity is the cause of the concomitant. This is the truth.

The ancients might have meant by [essential independence] that the cause of the essential is a cause for the essence by means of those essential features: when the essential features are realized, there can be no delay before the realization of the essence, since the essence is an effect of the conjunction of the essential features; and when the essence is realized there can be no delay before the realization of the necessary concomitant of a quiddity, since the concomitant of a quiddity is an effect of the quiddity. This is my view on this issue.

[T32] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 218.1–4

[*distinction argument*]

*On might say:* such conceptions are not distinguished one from another prior to their existence. Rather, before they exist, we know that they will be distinguished from one another, but only once they exist. But this is unconvincing. For if there is nothing to which the intellect can refer, or to which it can ascribe distinction, then it is absurd to judge that one of them will be distinct from the others once they exist.

[T33] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 79r9–21

[*Platonic Forms as an alternative to mental existence*]

Those who believe in the reality of [mental existence] argue that we conceptualize things that have no extramental existence, and predicate of them distinction from everything else. So the conceptualized is existent, because positive predicates (*al-aḥkām al-thubūtīyya*) are predicated of it. It is not among concrete individuals, so it is in the mind.

*Answer:* we do not concede that we conceive of objects without extramental reality. Admittedly, they may not be present to us (*ḥāḍira ʿindanā*), but why can't one say that everything that can be conceived of and imagined has an

existent form that subsists by itself (*ṣūra mawjūda qā'ima bi-naḥsihā*), or in some hidden body (*fī shay' min al-ajrām al-ghā'iba*)? When the soul turns towards them, it perceives them. These are the exemplars (*al-muthul*) of which the great Plato speaks. We will mention Aristotle's argument against them, with a response.<sup>16</sup>

Know that there are only three options concerning knowledge of non-existents: (a) if the non-existent knowable objects are not real at all, but one [non-existent] is distinguishable from another, then pure non-existence should be distinguishable in a way that if it were existent, then no [distinction] would be added to it. But this is wrong. So if [the non-existent] is real, then it is either (b) in the mind, and this is wrong, in light of the arguments already mentioned; or (c) in extramental reality. [In this case] it is either present (*ḥāḍir*), which is obviously wrong, or hidden (*ghā'ib*), which is what we have mentioned.

[T34] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 500.7–19

[*non-existents are known by knowing their parts*]

Every object of knowledge has to be distinguishable from other things. And everything that is distinguishable from another is existent. Therefore, every object of knowledge is existent. Or to turn this around: that which is not existent is not an object of knowledge. Yet we know many things that are non-existent, for instance we know the non-existence of a companion of God, and the non-existence of an agreement between opposites. So how are these two points compatible?

*We say:* The non-existent has to be either (a) simple (*basīṭ*) or (b) composite (*murakkab*). (a) If it is simple, like the non-existence of an opposite to God, this can be intellectually grasped only thanks to its resemblance to something that does exist. For instance one might say: for God the exalted there is nothing whose relation to Him would be like the relation of blackness to whiteness. If we didn't know the opposition which occurs between existent things, it would be impossible to know the non-existence of an opposite to God, the exalted.

(b) If [the non-existent] is composite, like knowing the non-existence of an agreement between blackness and whiteness, then knowledge of this is accomplished only due to the knowledge of its existing parts (*bi-ajzā'ihī al-*

16 See further our chapter on Platonic Forms [T8].

*wujūdiyya*). For instance, we may intellectually grasp “blackness,” “whiteness,” and “agreement” on a given occasion. Then one may say that “agreement,” which is grasped as something existing, does not arise out of “blackness” and “whiteness.”

The upshot then is that the non-existence of the simple is known only through an analogy (*bi-al-muqāyasa*) drawn to something existing, while the non-existence of the composite is known only by knowledge of its simple [parts].<sup>17</sup>

[T35] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 130.16–21; 131.2–10

[*truths about negation as counterexamples to the affirmation principle*]

[The rule is wrong] because negation (*salb*) is said to be opposed to affirmation, but negation has no reality in itself, despite opposition to affirmation being attributed to it.

*If you say:* negation has an intellectual form, and has reality in the intellect, *then we [the opponents] say:* to the contrary, its being real in the intellect does not make it opposed to reality. Rather, it is a type of [reality]. Indeed it must be real, insofar as it is opposed to reality. [...]

[131.2] *Response to the second [argument]:* the mind makes a form present to itself, and predicates of it that this form is not grounded in the extramental, and that there is nothing extramental that corresponds to it. This then is what one means by “conceiving of negation.” Then, [the mind] makes another form present to itself, and predicates of it that there is something extramental that does correspond to it. Then [the mind] predicates of one of the two forms that it is opposed to the other: not insofar as both of them are present in the intellect, but insofar as one of them is grounded in the extramental, the other not. The subject of the predication of this opposition is an intellectual form that exists in the described way [i.e. only in the mind]. This is what the philosophers (*al-ḥukamāʿ*) mean when they say that the opposition between negation and affirmation is realized only in utterance and thought, but not extramentally.

17 Cf. *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 126v16–22 and *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 49–50. This solution is accepted in al-Kashshī, *Ḥadāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq*, fol. 128v8–15.



[T36] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 80v21–81r11

[*is absolute non-existence an object of knowledge?*]

It is well known that absolute non-existence cannot be known, nor can any informative statement be made about it (*yukhbaru ‘anhu*). Rather it is the non-existence that is related to existents that is known, and about which an informative statement is given. But this calls for a twofold investigation. (a) When we say “no informative statement about absolute non-existence may be given,” this is already an informative statement about it, so this is a contradiction. (b) Non-existence is a part of the notion (*mafhūm*) of relative non-existence. And you have to understand something before you can understand it as being related to something else. So *relative* non-existence may be understood only after non-existence *as such* is understood; thus absolute non-existence is inevitably an object of knowledge.

Yet there are also problems with saying that absolute non-existence is an object of knowledge. For absolute non-existence is neither concrete, nor does it have reality or distinction. How then can the intellect refer to what cannot at all be distinguished or be concrete? As for talk of “mental form,” you already heard which [problems] arise here. But even if one concedes [that there is a mental form], problems remain. For mental form can be grasped by the intellect correctly only if it corresponds to the extramental. But this can be accomplished only if something is in fact realized extramentally. This is the crux of the problem, and we ask God the exalted to help us to deal with it.

[T37] Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 56.5–10

[*individuation argument*]

The non-existent black is either one or many. If it is one, then if unity is a necessary concomitant of [its] quiddity, it cannot perish, so that [blackness] could not be multiplied numerically in existence. If however [unity] is not a necessary concomitant, then one can suppose it to be removed, since if something is contingent, no absurdity follows from its removal. And if unity is removed, multiplicity is the result. But [multiplicity] can be realized only if there are two things that are distinct in concrete being (*bi-al-huwiyya*). Next, if the reason for the distinction [between the two non-existent blacks] is a necessary concomitant of the quiddity [of blackness], then the two would differ in quiddity, which is a contradiction. If on the other hand [the reason for the distinction] is not a necessary concomitant [of the quiddity of blackness], then something would

be subject to temporary attributes while not existing. If one allows this, one should also allow it to be a subject of inherence for motion and rest, succeeding one another, all in pure non-existence. This is nothing but sophistry.<sup>18</sup>

[T38] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 80r11–14

[*specificity and generality argument*]

If the non-existent is equal in scope to the negated (*al-manfī*), or more specific than it, and whatever is negated is not real, then nothing non-existent is real. If however it is more general than [the negated], it cannot be pure negation, for otherwise there would no longer be any difference between the general and the specific. Thus [the non-existent] would be real and would be said of what is negated, so the negated would be real, which is a contradiction.

[T39] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 90.20–91.3

[*God's power over non-existents*]

The statement of [God] the exalted, “God has power over every thing” (Qurʾān 2:284), yields an argument from the verse (*al-āya*), namely that the word “thing” ranges over quiddities. So it follows that God the exalted has power over these quiddities. But for His power over them to be genuine, it must be able to have an effect (*tuʾaththira*) on these quiddities in respect of their occurrence and failure to occur (*taqrīran wa-ibtālan*). Given [91] this, God the exalted is prior to the occurrence of these quiddities, because that which has an effect is prior to the effect. Given this, it is established that quiddities are, one and all, pure negation and absolute non-existence in eternity.

[T40] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 99.17–22

[*God's power over quiddities*]

The Powerful makes quiddity to be quiddity just as much as He makes quiddity to be existent. The argument you use to reject the dependence of quiddity upon the Agent would also imply the rejection of the dependence of existence

18 cf. al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 136.6–14.

upon the Agent. For if existence depended on the Agent, then existence would cease to be existence as soon as one assumed the non-existence of the Agent, but this is absurd.

[T41] Bābā Afḍal, *Taqrīrāt*, 648.8–650.8

[*endorses non-existent things*]

As for the first option, which is that [“thing” (*chīz*) and “existent” (*mawjūd*)] are equivalent in respect of generality and specificity, this is false. For the condition for equivalence in generality and specificity is that truth is preserved through conversion. For instance, you might say “every body possesses dimensions,” and when you convert it to “whatever possesses dimensions is a body” it remains true. But this not so in the case of the expressions “thing” and “existent.” For when you say “whatever is existent is a thing,” this is true. But when you say “whatever is a thing is existent,” this is untrue. For if we take something that does not exist outside the soul, and whose becoming existent is contingent, insofar as it is contingent, and the contingency is its attribute, then it is a thing. Although it is a thing from the point of view that it is contingent, it is not existent. So, from the point of view that it is contingent, it is a thing and the expression “thing” truly applies to it, while from this same point of view, that it is contingent, the expression “existent” does not truly apply to it. So it was right to deny that “every thing is existent,” even though it is true to say that “every existent [649] is a thing,” given that as we have said, whenever something contingent does not exist, it is a thing without being existent. [...]

[649.8] *Another argument* that “thing” is more general than “existent.” If you say that one of the following three conditions must apply to “thing”: either (a) its existence is necessary, or (b) its existence is contingent, or (c) its existence is impossible, then this division is correct, without repetition, nor is any of the options false. Yet if you say that “existent” is one of the three, either its existence is necessary, or contingent, or impossible, the third option is false, since the existent cannot fall under to the option of the impossible. [...]

[650.1] Having shown that “thing” is more general than “existent,” we need to realize that existence is an attribute of a “thing,” which is related to it in such a way that one can say “the being of the thing (*ḥastī-yi chīz*)” but not “the thing of the being.” This relation indicates beforeness and priority. So thing comes first and being comes after. But one of these two must be the case: either [“thing”] is prior in respect of being, or in respect of something else. Yet it cannot be

prior in being, because being is precisely what comes after the “thing”; so there is nothing else apart from the thing-ness (*shay’iyyat*), which is the thing itself (*dhāt-i chīz*). So it is in itself (*bi-dhāt*) that “thing” can have priority over the attribute of existence.

[T42] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 107.3–17

[*conception of the impossible*]

The intelligent scholars agreed that there cannot be any knowledge without objects of knowledge (*lā ma’lūm la-hu*). However Abū Hāshim disagreed with them about the case of knowledge that is connected to the impossible, refusing to define “thing” as the object of knowledge. *He said*: knowing that co-occurrence of the opposites is impossible, and the denial of a second God (may He be exalted), or that part cannot be equal to the whole, and so on, constitutes knowledge without any object of knowledge. At the same time, he agreed that knowledge is connected with the impossible, and that were are its knowers. So he agreed in the meaning but disagreed in expression. For that [the impossible] is known means simply that knowledge is connected to it. Otherwise, how can the existence of knowledge without the object of knowledge be conceptualized, since the knowledge and the object of knowledge belong to the class of correlative terms, where neither of them can be grasped intellectually without the other? [...]

[*reductionist solution*]

[107.14] Knowing that two opposites cannot co-occur is [just] the knowledge of the opposites, and they both are objects of knowledge. Knowing that there cannot exist any second God (may He be exalted) is the knowledge of the existence of God, and it is the object of knowledge. Similarly, the knowledge of every instance of the impossible has to be knowledge that is connected to an object of knowledge. It is absurd to say that there is knowledge without any object of knowledge.

[T43] Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, 244.14–245.24

[*two arguments against the reality of the non-existent*]

The true opinion and the correct approach is to say: if objects (*al-dhawāt*) were real in non-existence, then once they do exist, either something new would occur (*yatajaddada*) to them which they lacked while they were non-existent, or not.

(a) If one says that the first is the case, then [what is newly added] would also have to be either a substance or an accident, or a state (*ḥāl*) additional to these two. But it can be neither substance nor accident, because they have been already supposed as real from the very beginning. After all there is no distinction in this respect between one substance and another, nor between one accident and another. If however [what is newly added] were an additional state, this would be based on the theory of states, which has been already refuted.

(b) If one says that the second is the case, then there would be no difference between existence and non-existence, which is absurd. And thus any talk about origination and existence would be absurd. This absurdity is forced only on those who posit entities as real in non-existence and realized in eternity. So they are not real, and realization is through origination, and reality only applies to the substantial and accidental objects themselves, nothing else.

Furthermore, let's take blackness and whiteness and say: if they were [245] real objects in non-existence, then either they would require a subject of inherence, in which they would subsist, or not.

(a) But it is impossible that they do not require [it]. For otherwise, once they exist, either they [still] require it, or not. (a<sub>1</sub>) But it is absurd to say that they don't require it. Otherwise, there would be no difference between substances and accidents. (a<sub>2</sub>) But if they do require it, then they must do this either in light of their essences (*bi-ʿtibār dhawātihā*), or in light of something having to do with their existence (*bi-ʿtibār amr wujūdhā*). (a<sub>2a</sub>) But they cannot require it with respect to their existence, since existence as such is, according to the opponent [i.e. the Muʿtazilites], a single judgment that is common to both substance and accident. So if an accident requires the subject of inherence with respect to its existence, then substance would too, but this is impossible. So it remains only (a<sub>2b</sub>) that [blackness and whiteness] require a subject of inherence [when being existent] due to their essences. But then there would be no difference between their existing and their not existing. For what would require [a subject of inherence] while existing would be exactly the same as what is real while it is non-existent.

(b) If on the other hand they do require a substrate of inherence in which they subsist, and if we posit blackness and whiteness as succeeding one another in a single substrate of inherence, on the side of existence, then either they would already subsist in this subject of inherence before existing, or one of

them would subsist in this subject, and the other in another subject. (b<sub>1</sub>) It cannot be that one of them subsisted in this subject of inherence and the other in another. Otherwise, when [the second one] came to exist in this subject, it would have to undergo transmission (*al-intiqāl*), but the transmission of accidents is absurd. (b<sub>2</sub>) So it remains that both [blackness and whiteness] really co-occur in [the same substrate of inherence] in the state of non-existence. But if this were the case, one could not say that their co-occurrence is impossible when they exist. For this impossibility would be either due to their essence, or due to their existence. (b<sub>2a</sub>) But their mutual exclusion and contrariety cannot be due to their existence, since existence applies to them both with the same undifferentiated meaning. (b<sub>2b</sub>) So it remains that their mutual exclusion is due to their essence, so that if there were no contrariety while they do not exist, there would be no contrariety once they do exist, either. But their mutual exclusion and contrariety is real when they do exist, so it is real when they do not exist, too. So it follows from the fact that they are real in non-existence that they cannot be in the same subject of inherence, given the necessity of contrariety. (b<sub>1</sub> conclusion repeated) Nor can they be in two different substrates, given that an impossible transmission [of accidents] would be necessary once one supposes that they succeed one another. But it follows from the impossibility of their subsistence in a subject of inherence that they cannot be real in themselves, given that they can have neither subsistence nor reality apart from non-existence. This was the desired conclusion.

[T44] Al-Āmidī, *Daqā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq, Manṭiq*, 56.14–24

[*essential independence: reaction to T31*]

*If someone says:* the essential is a part of the essence, but a part of an essence is distinct from [that] essence, and a relation to one of two distinct things is distinct from a relation to the other. Hence, even if one rules out that an essence be made without making the essential,<sup>19</sup> it does not follow that making the essence is just the same as making the essential.

*We say:* if, by saying “the essential is a part of an essence, but a part of an essence is distinct from [that] essence,” he intends that the concept (*al-mafhūm*) of the essence can be detached from the concept of the essential, he is mistaken.

<sup>19</sup> Reading *al-dhātī* for *al-dhāt*.

Otherwise the essence could be realized without the essential [being realized], which is absurd. But if he intends that the concept of the essence is *additional* to the concept of the essential, even though the latter enters into the concept of the former, then this is true. This being so, we know that an essence comes down to the conjunction of the essential features, and it is not distinct from them. This being so, the maker of an essence through an act of making<sup>20</sup> is either making its essential features through that act of making, or is not the one who does this through that act of making. But if it is not their maker through that act of making, then neither is it the one who makes the essence, since the essential enters into the concept of the essence. But this conflicts with what was assumed. So it remains only that it is their maker through that act of making.

[T45] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*, 252.2–9

[*individuation argument*]

Contingent quiddity is not realized among concrete individuals without existence. For whatever is realized among concrete individuals possesses some concrete being (*huwiyya*) in the concrete individuals. And whatever has concrete being in concrete individuals is individuated (*mushakhkhaṣ*) or is disposed to individuation. Whatever is like this is existent. But no quiddity that lacks existence is existent, so no quiddity that lacks existence is realized among concrete individuals.

[T46] Al-Abharī, *Muntahā al-afkār*, 283.19–23

[*the impossible and mental existence*]

The impossible has a form in the intellect. Otherwise one could not predicate impossibility of it. The same goes for the non-existent. In refutation of mental existence, it was said that if the hot and cold existed in the mind, then opposites would co-occur (*ijtimāʿ al-ḍiddayn*) in a single locus of inherence (*maḥall*).<sup>21</sup>

*But in response we say:* we do not concede that there is an opposition between the universal hot and the universal cold. Rather one affirms opposition only between extramental hot and cold.

20 Reading *bi-jaʿl* for *yajʿalu*.

21 See al-Rāzī's arguments against inherence of forms in the mind in the chapter on Knowledge and Cognition from the "Logic and Epistemology" volume.

[T47] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*, 251.6–9

[*against al-Rāzī's appeal to Platonic Forms*]

*Regarding his statement:* why do you say that we can conceive of things that have no extramental existence?<sup>22</sup> *We say:* because we can conceive the aforementioned notions (*al-maʿfūmāt*), some of which cannot exist extramentally. But these impossible things subsist neither in themselves nor in hidden bodies.

[T48] Al-Kātibī, *Ḥikmat al-ʿayn*, 5.14–16.9

[*mental existence as an account of non-existents*]

You should know that we conceptualize things that lack existence in extramental reality, and we predicate positive predicates of them. But the subject of an existential attribute (*ṣifa wujūdiyya*) must itself be existent, because to affirm an attribute of something presupposes affirming [6] that thing. Since it is not in concrete individuals, it has to be in the mind. Thus is established the theory of mental existence; and also because the universal true realities have existence only in the mind, given that everything that exists among concrete individuals is individual. [...]

[*response, echoing al-Rāzī's appeal to hidden objects*]

[6.7] *What one ought to say:* we do not concede that we conceptualize things that lack existence in the extramental reality. Rather, whatever we conceptualize has an existent form, either self-subsisting or in some existent thing that is hidden from us. This is what the philosophers (*al-ḥukamāʾ*) thought, for they agreed that all things are contained in the Active Intellect.<sup>23</sup>

[T49] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 84.8–13

[*the sense in which God makes things to be what they are; reaction to T26*]

Those who say that quiddities are not made, do not say that they are not *originated* (*mubdaʿa*). Rather they say: when a quiddity is posited (*furiḍat*) [as

22 Deleting *aw fi al-dhihn* following the MS Majlis Shurā-yi Millī 2752, 110.16.

23 By contrast, in *Munaṣṣaṣ fi sharḥ al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 96v39, al-Kātibī accepts al-Abharī's counterargument from [T47] against this position.



existing], then its being that quiddity is not due to the Maker's act of making, but this necessarily attaches to it once we have posited that quiddity [as existing]. But the Mu'tazilites' claim that "the effect of the Agent does not consist in making objects to be objects" is not like this. For they make the objects non-existent, yet real in eternity, without the Agent having any effect (*ta'thīr*) [on them]. Having made objects equal in respect of being objects, they were obliged to affirm the attributes of the genera; otherwise everything would be of the same kind.

[T50] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 77.13–18

[*defense of the Mu'tazilite view against al-Rāzī*]

[*Al-Rāzī*] said:<sup>24</sup> [the Mu'tazilites are wrong to claim that non-existents are real] also because then objects would be eternal, and not subject to [God's] power (*maqḍūra*). And on their view, existence is a state (*ḥāl*), so for them it would not be subject to [His] power either. But if neither the object nor existence depend on the Agent, then existent objects will be independent of the Agent.

*I say:* they could respond that making an object to be qualified by existence is something over and above either of the two [sc. the object, and existence], like the composition that is additional to the parts. This [joining of existence to the object] is due to the Agent, and it does not follow from the independence of the parts that the composite is independent of Him.

[T51] Al-Ṭūsī, *Fī al-naḥī wa-al-ithbāt*, 22.8–16

[*does God add existence to already real objects?*]

*Those who affirm the reality [of the non-existent] say:* it is existence's being attributed to the object (*mawṣūf-i budan-i dhāt bi-wujūd*) that is through the Agent. *Those who reject it ask:* is existence's being attributed to an object something that is known, or not? (a) If it is something known, then this is either (a<sub>1</sub>) the object itself or (a<sub>2</sub>) something else. (a<sub>1</sub>) If it is the object, then since the object is real while not existing, existence must be attributed to it. (a<sub>2</sub>) If it is something other than the object, then existence's being attributed to the object

<sup>24</sup> The text is a commentary on al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 56.3–4.

is some further object of knowledge over and above the object. Whatever is an object of knowledge is something, and is real. However, there was [at first] no “being attributed,” and then it came to be (*padīd āmad*). So it follows that it was not something, and then it came to be. But this is not their doctrine! (b) Still, if its being<sup>25</sup> attributed is not known, then neither is the act of the Agent. So the act<sup>26</sup> would not be known, and from this it would follow that the Agent does not know what He does. This is not [their] doctrine either.

[T52] Al-Ṭūsī, *Fī al-naḥī wa-al-ithbāt*, 21.10–14

[*change in God's knowledge*]

*Those who affirm the reality [of the non-existent] say:* if substance was not real in eternity, God the exalted did not know it as real; so when it came to be known as real, His knowledge has changed. *Those who deny it say:* a similar consequence follows for you. For God the exalted did not know substance as existent in eternity. Then, He knew it as existent. But in any case, this alteration is in what is known, and not in God Himself, may He be exalted!

[T53] Al-Ṭūsī, *Ajwibat al-masā'il al-rūmiyya*, 1.6–8; 6.10–15

[*essential independence*]

Does a cause produce the existence of an effect, or its quiddity?

*Response:* the cause produces the effect itself. Then, the intellect distinguishes between the existence and the quiddity of [the effect]. There are no existence and quiddity here such that the cause would produce either of them, or both. [...]

[6.10] Is the Necessary Existent the cause of the existence of existing things, or of both their existence and their quiddity? [...]

[6.12] The response to this has been already provided in the first question: namely that He is the cause of existents<sup>27</sup> other than Him, and the intellect distinguishes, in its conceptual consideration of every existing thing, between its

25 Correcting *nabūdan-i* to *būdan-i*.

26 Correcting *fā'il* into *fī'l*.

27 Reading *al-mawjūdāt* for *al-wujūdāt*.

existence and its quiddity. Some of them said that existence is through a maker, whereas quiddity is not made. But those who make this and similar claims are those who have not achieved verification in matters of intellectual reflection (*taḥqīq fī al-maʿqūlāt*).

[T54] Al-Ṭūsī, *Murāsala bayna al-Ṭūsī wa-al-Qūnawī*, 104.1–9

[*essences are made*]

*I say:* when they say “quiddities are not made” they mean that, for instance, blackness is not blackness by someone’s making it so. For if we first suppose blackness, and then introduce a maker’s act of making for it, the maker cannot make it different from what supposed in the first place. Likewise with existence: no maker has made existence to be existence, since it is impossible to make something occur that has already occurred (*taḥṣīl al-ḥāṣil*). But if we were to ask whether any maker can make blackness to be blackness, in the sense of asking whether [the maker] can produce something, namely blackness, so as to ask whether [the maker] can make blackness to be *existent*, then one would rightly respond: indeed, [the maker] can produce blackness, and make blackness to be existent. In fact, the truth is that all quiddities and existent things are made, and their maker is God the praised and exalted.

[T55] Al-Ṭūsī, *Murāsala bayna al-Ṭūsī wa-al-Qūnawī*, 57.3–6; 107.2–4

[*the Sufi position, with reply*]

What has been yielded by verified witnessing and veritable “taste” is that quiddities are not made, and have existence of a kind. It belongs to them insofar as they are concrete (*taʿayyuniḥā*) in the knowledge of the True, eternally and forever, in one and the same way. This however is due to the connection (*taʿalluq*) of knowledge to them and the intellection of the numbering of connections in accordance with the objects of knowledge, with both the connection and the numbering being eternal. [...]

[107.2] *I say:* claiming that quiddities are not made, and that they have existence of a kind, is close to what the Muʿtazilites affirm. For they say that [quiddity] is real while it is non-existent, and they distinguish between reality and existence.

[T56] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Taḥwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 17.10–19.11

[*Is the existence of what will come to exist itself previously existent?*]

*The first way* [to argue that non-existents are not real]: is the existence of the non-existent quiddity, which you claim to be real in non-existence, itself real in non-existence, or not?

(a) If it is not real, then the [quiddity] is not existent in non-existence, since its existence is obviously denied and ruled out, given that we are talking now on the supposition that it is not real.<sup>28</sup> Now, if this existence [of the quiddity] is denied, it's obvious that it cannot be necessary. Nor can it be impossible, because otherwise the quiddity would never come to exist at all, so that what exists contingently would be impossible of existence, which is a contradiction. So the [existence of the quiddity] is contingent, and is negated, so that something negated is contingent, and vice-versa. This falsifies their claim that the negated is equivalent to the impossible and that everything contingent is real.

(b) If however the existence of that quiddity *is* real in non-existence, then, given that according to their teaching, every contingent non-existent is real, and furthermore the existence that is still non-existent belongs to the class of the contingent, it follows that the non-existent is existent, which is absurd. The reason this follows is that, so long as the quiddity is real in non-existence, and the existence that is specific to it is real in non-existence too, then if [the quiddity's] being attributed with that existence was not real, then, given that this [18] attribution is contingent, the same absurdity results. For we know for sure that if an attribute is affirmed as real for something, then this thing cannot help but have it as an attribute, since its having it as an attribute means precisely that it is affirmed as real (*thubūt*) for it. If, however, it is affirmed as real, then quiddity, existence, and the attribution of existence to quiddity are all real. Then, the quiddity would be attributed with existence even while it is in non-existence, and it would be existent while it is non-existent, the impossibility of which is obvious.

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28 For this and what follows it is helpful to bear in mind that “negated” is taken by the opponents as mutually exclusive with “real.”

[*individuation argument*]

*The second way:* the concrete individual, which is indicated as being “this,” must prior to its existence either be real—and then it would already be this particular individual, since it is real, without yet being existent—or it would not be like this before its existence.

(a) If it is [already this individual before existing], and (a<sub>1</sub>) if its existence, or the existence of its attributes, was not at that point required in order for it to be indicated as a particular, then it must have been particular while it was non-existent. Yet every particular is existent—this judgment is simply obvious. So a non-existent individual would be existent, which is a contradiction. (a<sub>2</sub>) If however it does require its existence, or the existence of its attributes, in order to be indicated as particular, then also, according to their doctrine, its indication as a particular has to be possible even while it is non-existent. So it would be existent, despite having been posited as non-existent. For the quiddity, its existence, and the existence of its attributes—all of them are contingent. So on their view, these would be real. Meanwhile these existences could have no further existences, since otherwise [the second-order existences] would be also contingent, and thus real, and one can repeat this argument, yielding an infinite regress, which is absurd. Therefore, the Agent would have no effect (*ta'thūr*), neither on quiddity, nor on its existence, nor on the quiddities of its attributes, nor on the existence of that attributes. This—apart from being a denial of the Creator, the exalted—implies that the features that enable one to indicate this individual as a particular would be all present while it is non-existent, so that it would already be a particular in that state. But conceptualization is possible for this only while it is existent; so that it would be existent before existence.

Even if they renounce their doctrine that existence is additional to quiddity outside the mind, and agree that it is identical to the quiddity, it won't help them. For if the quiddity is real, and it is identical to its existence, then its existence is real. So, [the absurd] conclusion follows once again.

(b) All this applies if [they accept that] it is already this [individual] before existing. If however it is not like this before its existence, then if [19] it is not real at all, then it verifies the falsehood of [the statement] that everything contingent is real. If however [this individual] is real but it is not *this one* while being non-existent, then this one, insofar as it is *this one*, was not contingent before existence. Rather the quiddity of the individual was contingent—not taken as the quiddity of that individual with respect to what that concrete individual

is, but taken as an unqualified quiddity (*al-māhiyya al-muṭlaqa*). However, we are not talking here about the unqualified [quiddity]. We are talking about the [quiddity] which is specified as *this one*. For it were contingent insofar as it is *this one*, then it would be real as this one, although the working assumption has been that it is not real insofar as it is *this one*. Thus, it would not be contingent insofar as it is this one. But if it is not contingent, then it is either necessary or impossible. Both options are wrong: if it were necessary, then it would not be non-existent, and if it were impossible then it would never come to exist.

As both option (a) and option (b) are wrong, if one assumes that everything contingent is real while being non-existent, then [this assumption] must be wrong. This is the conclusion sought.

[T57] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 16.15–17.7

[*distinction argument and reply*]

*The first way* [to argue that the non-existent is real]: the non-existent can be distinguished, and whatever can be distinguished is real. So the non-existent is real. The rationale for saying “the non-existent can be distinguished” is that the non-existent, for instance tomorrow’s sunrise, is an object of knowledge, and whatever is known can be distinguished. For we distinguish between the sunrise in the East and in the West, and also between the motion we can perform and the one we cannot. Also, because we may want something, and want to avoid something else, even while what we want, and want to avoid, are non-existent. The rationale for saying “whatever is distinguished is real” is that, by “real,” we mean simply that quiddities are in themselves concrete and realized, given that one could not distinguish this [quiddity] from that one if they were not yet realized. So quiddities are real while they are non-existent. [...]

[17.6] *Refutation* of their claim that “whatever is known is real”: we can conceptualize what is impossible, like the partner of God the exalted, a sea of mercury, or Yāqūt Mountain, yet [the opponents] agree that these are not real.

[T58] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 85.5–86.2

[*conceptualization of absolute non-existence*]

No informative statement can be made about the absolutely non-existent, which is that which has no form in the mind or extramentally. But absolute

non-existence [as such] does have a form in the intellect. In the intellect, one may predicate of it that it is opposed to both mental and extramental existence. This does not imply that opposites are true of one and the same thing, since there is no contradiction between absolute non-existence and existence in the mind. For what is true is not “something is either absolute non-existence or existent in the mind,” but rather “something is either absolute non-existence or not absolute non-existence,” and “something is either existent in the mind or not existent in the mind.” So the notion of absolute non-existence is represented in the mind, and it becomes an individual form, with individual mental existence occurring to that form. The [mere] mental reality that is related to no extramental reality eliminates extramental reality. The fact that [absolute non-existence] is conceptualized in the mind and distinguished from everything else, and is concrete in itself and real in the mind, does not rule out its being something that is related to nothing extramentally real. For that which is extramentally unreal is not predicated to be entirely unconceptualized. Rather it is predicated to be conceptualized insofar as it is not real in extramental reality and not to be conceptualized except insofar as it has this description. But the elimination of reality, covering both the extramental and the mental, is a conceptualization of that which is unreal and is not [86] conceptualized at all. Thus one can validly make predications of it, insofar as it is this conceptualization, but not insofar as it is unreal. There is no contradiction, due to the different subjects [of predication].

[T59] Bar Hebraeus, *Hēwath hekhmthā, Met.*, 126.12–16

[*mental existence solution*]

The non-existent is not anything (*lā ith law meddem hū*). Yet some people apparently argued against this statement. *They say*: whatever is grasped intellectually, regardless whether it is possible or not, has an intelligible form (*yuqnā*). Otherwise we could not predicate anything of it, or deny anything of it. Yet everything that has an intelligible form is something (*meddem*). Therefore the non-existent is something too. *We respond to them*: as the intellectual form is something in the intellect, so it has thing-ness (*meddemyūthā*) and not non-existence in the intellect. Therefore being grasped intellectually and actual thing-ness are co-extensive with actual existence (*ithūthā*).

[T60] Al-Nasafī, *Sharḥ Asās al-kiyāsa*, 273.17–274.5

[*there is no distinction for the impossible*]

*The second argument* [for the reality of the non-existent] is that the contingent non-existent may be distinguished from the impossible. And impossibility cannot be positive (*thubūtīyyan*), so contingency is positive. [...]

[274.3] *Regarding the second [argument]*: this is quite impossible. For distinguishing between two things requires conceptualizing both of them. Here this is quite impossible, since the impossible is something that cannot be conceptualized at all. This is why one says that it is among the absurdities, as it is neither established nor conceptualized in the mind.

[T61] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 84.1–13

[*the affirmation principle and absolute non-existence*]

*First argument* [against proving mental existence using the affirmation principle]: we predicate of the absolutely non-existent (that is, the unrestricted (*bi-lā sharṭ*) non-existent) that it is opposed to the existent, even though it has no reality at all.

*Response*: regarding “opposed,” “distinct,” and “negated,” the gist of the meaning of all these is “what does not agree.” One can predicate this of the non-existent, because one can predicate the non-existent of the non-existent. But we are speaking only about what is existing. If you have in mind some other meaning [for “opposed,” etc.] then we will not concede the correctness of the predication.

*Second argument*: If what you have mentioned were true, namely that predications can be made only of that which somehow exists, then it would be correct to say that one cannot make any predication of the absolute non-existent. But the consequent is false. For, (a) if the subject of predication in this case is really the absolutely non-existent, a contradiction would follow.<sup>29</sup> (b) If on the other hand it is not [the absolutely non-existent], then predication is possible, so [what you have mentioned] would be wrong.

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29 That is, because you have to predicate of absolute non-existence that one cannot predicate anything of it.



*Response:* as for (a), we say that one cannot predicate anything *existing* of the non-existent, here however this has not been done.<sup>30</sup> As for (b): the meaning of the absolutely non-existent prohibits any predication of it only insofar as it is non-existent (*mā dāma ma'dūman*).<sup>31</sup>

[T62] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥā'if*, 87.5–8

[*three ways of talking about the non-existent*]

We have two ways of arguing that the absolutely non-existent is purely negative while it is non-existent. The first is that, if it were true for non-existent blackness that it is blackness, then this proposition would be true either (a) extramentally (*khārijīyya*), but this is ruled out, because the subject is non-existent; or (b) in virtue of the true reality (*ḥaqīqīyya*), but in that case we would be taking it as existing (*'alā taqdīr al-wujūd*), and not while it is non-existent; (c) or mentally (*dhihniyya*). In that case it would be blackness in the mind, on which there is no disagreement.<sup>32</sup>

[T63] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥā'if*, 90.5–13

[*essential dependence*]

*Third argument* [that the non-existent is real]: if blackness were blackness only when it existed, then its being blackness would be due to another. So if this “other” were eliminated, then the existent blackness would stop being blackness, which is absurd. This is the reason given by the philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) for the claim that quiddities are neither made nor created.

*Response:* we do not concede that in this case [blackness] would remain existent, so that the absurdity would follow.

Some claimed that “thing-ness” applies only to extramental existence. But they apparently based this upon their denial of intellectual existence, which we have already shown to be wrong. Also, their claim undermines the saying of the

30 As the editor indicates, the point is that predicating the impossibility of predicating is not predicating something existing.

31 Cf. al-Urmawī, *Maṭālī'*, fol. 316–22.

32 See further the chapter on Propositions in the Logic and Epistemology volume.

exalted: “His command is that when He wills a thing (*arāda shay’an*) He need only say to it, ‘be!’ and it is,” (Qur’ān 36:82) where the non-existent is called “thing.”

[T64] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥā’if*, 89.1–4

[*doubts raised about al-Rāzī’s specificity and commonness argument at T38*]

[Al-Rāzī’s argument] calls for further inquiry. For if he means by “non-existent” the contingently non-existent, then the division is wrong. For these two, the non-existence and the negation, are in fact mutually exclusive (*mutanāfiyīn*). If however he means the absolutely non-existent [i.e. including both the contingent and the impossible], then we do not concede that if it were common and negative, then there would be no difference between the specific and the common anymore. Rather there would be a difference between what one can truly say of the negated and of the contingently non-existent.<sup>33</sup>

[T65] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 17.12–18

[*response to the distinction argument*]

*Response:* the answer is that distinguishability does not imply concrete reality (*al-thubūt ‘aynan*), otherwise absurdities would follow. *The first of these* is that sometimes, the known object is in itself impossible of existence, like the companion of God the exalted, an agreement between contradictories, etc. One of these may be distinguished from another. If distinguishability implied concrete reality, there would follow the reality of the impossible, even though they agreed with us on negating the reality (*intifā’*) of the impossible. *Second*, the known object is sometimes a composite of something imaginary and something existent, and it is agreed that no such thing is real in concrete being. *Third*, if having power to do things implied that they were real, then they would be negative, because there is no power to do what is [already] real. And likewise for the things that we wish.

33 Al-Rāzī’s specificity and commonness argument is equally dismissed in al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, 252.16–253.5.

[T66] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 63.23–64.14

[*God's proper effect is bestowal of existence, not necessity*]

[*Al-Ṭūsī*] said: it is upon quiddity that [God] has an effect, with necessity as a concomitant (*lāḥiq*).

*I say*: this is a response to their third question, the gist of which is as follows. That which has an effect (*al-mu'aththir*) does so either [64] upon the quiddity, or upon existence, or upon the attribution of existence to the quiddity. But all three options are false, so [His] having an effect is false. The first, because everything which [depends] on something else is eliminated when that other is eliminated. But this is absurd, because necessarily, it is absurd for the quiddity to be other than the quiddity. For the subject of predication has to be realized while its predicate is real; and the quiddity is not realized while non-existence is predicated of it. [...]

[64.9] *The gist of the response*: God does indeed have an effect upon the quiddity. When quiddity is posited (*'inda farḍ*), its realization necessarily follows as a concomitant, on account of its having been posited and as a consequence thereof. Still, the necessity cannot be an effect [of God]. For [the effect] is the bestowing of existence, whenever He posits [the quiddity] as existent. As for the situation before He posits the quiddity [as existent], He is by necessity able to bestow existence upon the effect, and this kind of necessity is prior to the existence [of the effect]. The difference between two kinds of necessity is obvious, and was mentioned in the logic. The mistake here arises due to equivocation on “necessity” which can mean two different things.

[T67] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 415.18–416.11

[*absolute non-existence*]

Thing-ness cannot be without one of the two kinds of existence. Someone who says that things can be absolutely non-existent is saying something true, so long as they mean by this that it is non-existent in concrete individuals, since the thing can be real in the mind and non-existent in extramental reality. But if they mean that it is non-existent both in the mind and in extramental reality, this is impossible, since the absolute non-existent [416] cannot be the subject of an informative affirmation or negation. For “this” involves an indication, but there is no way to indicate absolute non-existence, nor any mental form for it. How can anything be affirmed of the non-existent, given that affirmation

would mean such-and-such a description occurring for the non-existent, and the occurring of one thing for another presupposes that [the latter] thing itself occurs? Our knowing the non-existent means that it has a form in the soul, but one through which [the soul] does not indicate anything in extramental reality. When we make an informative statement about the non-existent, we make the statement about such a form.

Some people affirmed that the non-existent is extramentally real, because they did not understand [the idea] of mental existence. For they made an informative statement [about the non-existent], and did not realize that the informative statements are only about something real in the mind, and then by means of this, about something that is real in concrete individuals—if it has any such reality. They also said that the non-existent is an object of knowledge and intention and can be distinguished, and everything that can be distinguished is real. Their argument is correct, but they did not grasp the difference between the absolutely real and the mentally real.

[T68] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 51.6–52.9

[*conception of contradictories and non-existence*]

[*Al-Ṭūsī*] said: the intellect can consider opposites and predicate opposition between them, which involves no absurdity.

*I say*: the intellect can predicate opposition between negation and affirmation, so it has to consider them at the same time. For opposition belongs to the class of relations and associations, and can be conceptualized only once one has conceptualized that to which it applies. So [the intellect] conceptualizes negation and affirmation at the same time; but there is no absurdity in their simultaneous co-occurrence. For opposition is not in relation to the mind but in relation to things in themselves (*nafs al-amr*). So one may conceptualize a form in the mind, and predicate of it that there is nothing extramental that corresponds to it. Then one may conceptualize another form and predicate of it that there is indeed something extramental that corresponds to it. Then one may predicate of one of them that it is opposite to the other; not insofar as both of them are present in the intellect, but insofar as one of them goes back to the extramental reality, while the other doesn't. Indeed, the mind may conceptualize a form and its negation, because it distinguishes [between them] in the way explained above, and predicates opposition of the two forms [i.e. the form and the form of its negation] not insofar as they are present in the mind, but in the way that has been mentioned.

[*Al-Ṭūsī*] said: the non-existence of everything is conceivable, even its own non-existence and the non-existence of non-existence, by way of imagining it in the mind and eliminating it. It is in a sense real, and in a sense privation (*qasīm*). But predications do not truly apply to it *insofar as* it is unreal, so there is no contradiction.

*I say*: the mind can conceptualize all intelligibles, regardless whether they are existing or non-existing. It can apprehend the non-existence of everything, because it conceptualizes unqualified non-existence and can relate it to all quiddities. [The mind] can even apprehend [non-existence] as applied to itself, [52] so that the mind conceptualizes the non-existence of itself. In the same way, it can apprehend non-existence itself, meaning that the mind represents a form for non-existence, which is intelligible as being distinct from the form of existence, and it conceptualizes the elimination of [that form]. [Non-existence] is real insofar as it is conceptualized. For the elimination of reality, covering both extramental and mental, is conceptualized for that which is neither real nor conceptualized at all. [Non-existence] is real when it is taken as conceptualized and is the privation of the absolutely real, taken as its negation. There is nothing implausible here. For we say that the existent is either real in the mind, or not. So non-existence is the privation of existence, but when taken as a notion (*mafhūm*), it belongs to the real. The predication applies to the elimination of absolute reality [sc. non-existence] insofar as it is conceptualized, not insofar as it is unreal. There is no contradiction, because of the different subjects [of predication].

## Universals

The problem of universals is one that should be familiar to any student of medieval philosophy. It concerns the features that are, or could be, “shared in common”<sup>1</sup> by many things. On the one hand, it is tempting to deny the reality of such common features on the grounds that everything that exists is an individual. The real existence of universals would seem to introduce such absurdities as the same thing being in more than one place at the same time, like the humanity that is in both Plato and Socrates. On the other hand, it may seem that multiple things do have something real in common: Plato and Socrates are both humans, so shouldn’t humanity be in both of them? What else would we be having knowledge about, when we know for instance that “human” is defined as rational animal?

This is one of several topics where we find resonances between Latin scholastic philosophy and post-Avicennan philosophy. Which is no coincidence. For one thing, both the Arabic and Latin traditions responded to the same ancient Greek texts, notably Porphyry’s notoriously unanswered question about the status of universals in his *Isagoge*, used in both the Islamic and Latin Christian worlds as an introductory text for the study of logic. More immediately relevant to our concerns, Avicenna influenced several key figures in the Latin medieval debate on this topic, including Duns Scotus.<sup>2</sup> Scotus took inspiration from Avicenna’s claim that the essences, quiddities, or true realities of things are in themselves neither universal nor particular (for the Arabic terminology used to refer to essences, see [T36]). As Avicenna puts it in [T1], a passage quoted by Scotus, “horseness in itself is nothing at all except horseness.”<sup>3</sup> The essence of horse is “prior” to both particular horses and to universal horseness [T3]. As Scotus explains, Avicenna does not mean that horseness ever exists while being neither universal nor particular. Rather, it means that horseness in itself

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- 1 This is how we translate forms of the frequently used verb *sharika* in the present chapter.
  - 2 See e.g. P. King, “Duns Scotus on the Common Nature and the Individual Differentia,” *Philosophical Topics* 20 (1992), 50–76; M.M. Tweedale, *Scotus vs Ockham: a Medieval Dispute over Universals*, 2 vols (Lewiston: 1999); T.B. Noone, “Universals and Individuation,” in T. Williams (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus* (Cambridge: 2003), 100–128; G. Pini, “Scotus on Universals: a Reconsideration,” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 18 (2007), 395–409; T. Bates, *Duns Scotus and the Problem of Universals* (London: 2010).
  - 3 For Scotus’ use of the text see his *Ordinatio* II, d. 3, p. 1, q. 1, n. 31, cited by King, “Duns Scotus on the Common Nature.”

can be either universal or particular, either many or one [T2].<sup>4</sup> It is particular when it is in a particular horse, in which case it can be thought of as a “part” of the horse [T4].<sup>5</sup> When is horseness universal, then? Only when it is in the mind, since if the horseness that is “shared in common” existed outside the mind, it would fall prey to the abovementioned problem of contradictions, e.g. being in more than one place at a time, being both black and white, and so on [T5, T28].<sup>6</sup> The instances of an essence outside the mind, e.g. humanity in Zayd and ‘Amr, are equivalent, which is why the universal “humanity” can be derived from any given human, and will correspond to any and all individual humans [T7–T8].<sup>7</sup>

On this account universality, that is, suitability for being “shared in common,” is achieved through “abstraction” or “separation” of the essence from one or more particulars. Universality needs to be related to the abstracted essence through a mental operation, when the essence “arrives at the mind” as al-Ḥillī will later put it [T80]. Al-Ghazālī already disagreed with this aspect of Avicenna’s account, holding that the intellect simply considers separately the elements that are combined in sensation [T10]. But most thinkers in our period agree that universality is itself a second intelligible [T9], meaning that it holds true of a mental item, not an extramental item. In other words, it is the mental notion of humanity that is universal, not any externally existing humanity.

4 Al-Ḥillī formulates this idea nicely in [T79]: “animal as such does not need to have either commonality or specificity predicated of it; nonetheless it is not true that animal as such needs to have *neither* of these two predicated of it.”

5 On the mereological terminology in application to essences see F. Benevich, “Die ‘göttliche Existenz’: zum ontologischen Status der *Essenz qua Essenz* bei Avicenna,” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 26 (2015), 103–128.

6 On this argument see further F. Benevich, “The Priority of Natures and The Identity of Indiscernibles: Alexander of Aphrodisias, Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī and Avicenna on Genus as Matter,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 57 (2019), 205–233.

7 On essences and universals in Avicenna see further M. Marmura, “Quiddity and Universality in Avicenna,” in P. Morewedge (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought* (Albany: 1992), 77–87 and M. Marmura, “Avicenna’s Chapter on Universals in the Isagoge of his *Shifā’*,” in A.T. Welch and P. Cachia (eds.), *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge* (Albany: 1979), 34–56; T. Izutsu, “Basic Problems of ‘Abstract Quiddity,’” in M. Mohaghegh and T. Izutsu (eds.), *Collected Texts and Papers on Logic and Language* (Tehran: 1974), 1–25; D. Janos, *Avicenna on the Ontology of Pure Quiddity* (Berlin: 2020); A. de Libera, *La querelle des universaux. De Platon à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris: 1996) and A. de Libera, *L’art des généralités. Théories de l’abstraction* (Paris: 1999); S. Menn, “Avicenna’s Metaphysics,” in P. Adamson (ed.), *Interpreting Avicenna* (Cambridge: 2013), 143–169; M. Rashed, “Ibn ‘Adī et Avicenne: sur les types d’existant,” in V. Celluprica and C. D’Ancona (eds.), *Aristotele e i suoi esegeti neoplatonici* (Naples: 2004), 107–172; P. Porro, “Universaux et esse essentiae: Avicenne, Henri de Gand et le ‘Troisième Reich,’” *Cahiers de philosophie de l’université de Caen* 38/39 (2002): 33–59.

One disanalogy between the debates over universals in Latin Christendom and the Islamic world is that in the Islamic context, there was a parallel debate waged outside of the Aristotelian paradigm. This debate developed within *kalām*. As explained by al-Shahrastānī at [T14], the dispute concerned the reality of so-called “states (*aḥwāl*).”<sup>8</sup> It seems that the theory of states emerged from reflection on the possession of attributes, especially by God. If we say that God has the attribute of knowledge (*‘ilm*), then it seems we should also say that “being knowledgeable (*kawn ‘āliman*)” holds true of Him. But “being knowledgeable” is evidently a universal: though I cannot have God’s knowledge (or anyone else’s), I can have knowledge of my own, and then “being knowledgeable” will be true of me also. Of course the account is generalizable, and need not involve God at all. In fact the most standard example is one that would not arise in God’s case: “being black” and “being color” apply to every instance where “black” is ascribed to a black thing.

The proponents of this view were convinced that the only real things to which the categories of existence and non-existence apply (that is, the only thing God creates or does not create) are atomic substances (*jawāhir*) and their attributes, accidents (*aʿrāḍ*). So they further introduced the rather perplexing claim that states like “being black” are neither existent nor non-existent [T14]. This has possible resonances with Avicenna’s essence-existence distinction, which at least according to al-Rāzī should be understood as meaning that essences are neutral with respect to existence and non-existence.<sup>9</sup> The position of the proponents of “states” was seen by some as a violation of the law of the excluded middle [T11] and as generating an unacceptable proliferation of real, yet non-existing entities [T16, T42]. Al-Rāzī considers and rejects an argument on behalf of that view, namely that “being existent” is a state that surely neither exists nor fails to exist, on pain of regress or absurdity [T32]. More

8 On this topic see R.M. Frank, “Abū Hāshim’s theory of ‘states’: its structure and function,” in *Actas do quarto congresso de estudos árabes e islâmicos* (Leiden: 1971), 90–99; F. Benevich, “The Classical Ash’ari Theory of *Aḥwāl*: Juwaynī and His Opponents,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 27 (2016), 136–175; J. Thiele, “Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʿī’s (d. 321/933) Theory of ‘States’ (*aḥwāl*) and its Adaptation by Ash’arite Theologians,” in S. Schmidtko (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* (Oxford: 2016), 364–383. On the Ash’arite ontology in general see R.M. Frank, “The Ash’arite Ontology: Primary Entities,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 9.2 (1999): 163–231.

9 See our chapter on the Essence-Existence Distinction, [T23–T25]. For the connection between the two theories see R. Wisnovsky, “Essence and Existence in the Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Islamic East (*Maṣriq*): a Sketch,” in D.N. Hasse and A. Bertolacci (eds), *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Receptions of Avicenna’s Metaphysics* (Berlin: 2012), 27–50. See also F. Benevich, “The Essence-Existence Distinction: Four Elements of the Post-Avicennian Metaphysical Dispute (11–13th Centuries),” *Oriens* 45 (2017), 1–52.



generally there was a sustained debate as to whether states trigger an infinite regress [T33, T61]. And, even without the threat of an infinite regress, it was also objected that a state like “being blackness” would be an accident that belongs to another accident, which is supposed to be absurd [T11]. But al-Ṭūsī is unimpressed by this move [T61], and offers a sympathetic explanation of the whole theory that accepts the cogency of a “middle ground” between existence and non-existence [T60]. A less favorable response to the doctrine of states can be found in al-Āmidī, who complains that objects should already have commonality and differentiation relative to other objects intrinsically, rather than through some added or extrinsic factor, namely a “state” [T43–T44].

It did not escape notice that the problem of “states” was closely related to, or even a version of, the problem of universals as discussed in Avicenna [T10, T17]. Rather confusingly, some of the same terminology was used in both contexts but with different meanings. This is especially the case with the slippery term *dhāt*, which may variously be translated as “essence,” “self,” and “object,” and can also mark possession (e.g. *dhāt al-dīnār* means “the one who has the coin”). In the discourse about states, the *dhāt* is the “object” to which a state “belongs,” and through which the state is known [T14]. This is explained by Ibn al-Malāḥimī [T12, cf. T36], who contrasts talk of “states” to talk of “ascriptions (*aḥkām*),” the point here apparently being that “ascriptions” would be merely nominal [T12–T13]. To “ascribe” color to black, for instance, would not commit one to the reality of “being a color” in black, it would just be to say that an instance of black is an instance of color.

The upshot is that, drawing on both Avicenna and the *kalām* dispute over states, thinkers in our period had ample reason to discuss the ontological status of things “shared in common.” They were aware of the sort of nominalist solution just mentioned, but gave it short shrift: even animals are responsive to the common features of things [T15], and such features are independent of language and its conventions [T45]. Neither was full-fledged realism a popular view, because it seems that even common properties are “specified” as instances belonging to each individual—my humanity insofar as it belongs to me is not the same as your humanity insofar as it belongs to you [T19]. Furthermore it was a widely held intuition that universals simply cannot have concrete existence: as it is sometimes put, they lack “concrete being (*huwīyya*)” [T34, T73, cf. T21].

Against this, one might argue that our ideas about things outside the mind must correspond to the way they are: things do have common natures that are further specified by accidents or other qualifications. Al-Rāzī gives the example that all bodies share the essence of body but are distinguished into celestial and sublunary bodies [T31]. This leads us to the dominant view in

our period, namely conceptualism, which al-Shahrastānī presents as a happy medium between nominalism and full-blown realism [T18]. The conceptualist endorses Avicenna's position: essences as such (e.g. "animal insofar as it is animal") are neutral with respect to particularity and universality [T34, T75], and become universal only in the mind [T47]. Extramental essences are not universal properly speaking; rather, they are neutral with respect to universality and particularity. To this al-Rāzī objects that the requirement of correspondence involves that there must be something *universal* outside the mind targeted by the universals inside the mind [T22]. Al-Abharī disagrees, saying that universals inside the mind may correspond to essences in reality, not to universals [T50].

To explain the neutrality of the essence as such, al-Rāzī and other authors use the Avicennan distinction between existing "without the condition of something (*lā bi-sharṭ shay'*)" and existing "with the condition that there is not something (*bi-sharṭ lā shay'*)" [T23, T46, T53, T59, T65].<sup>10</sup> In other words, essence just by itself does exist extramentally, as part of an object out in the world, but it is not specified as universal until it is in the mind. Al-Ḥillī uses Avicenna's terminology of "divine existence" to designate the special status of these essences [T79],<sup>11</sup> while al-Abharī draws on a taxonomy found in Avicenna's *Madkhal* to call the essence as such a "natural *universal*" [T50].<sup>12</sup> He agrees with the consensus that universals are only in the mind, but emphasizes with particular force that essences (which, again, are neither universal nor particular) need to be extramentally real, against arguments that would threaten the reality of essences, such as found in al-Āmidī [T46]. Al-Abharī justifies calling natures "universal" by allowing that not everything really existent is an individual, since one and the same essence can be found in more than one particular [T48–T49]. So in this context he seems to disagree with al-Suhrawardī [T35].

Avicenna provided a further useful tool for staking out the conceptualist position with his contrast between concrete and mental existence.<sup>13</sup> Avicenna's bitter critic al-Mas'ūdī explains the Avicennan view by saying that universals lack "real" existence, meaning extramental or concrete existence [T20]. In fact, he uses this as part of an argument against Avicenna's proof for the extramental existence of natures in [T8]. But it remains the case that universals are in the

10 For these locutions in Avicenna see our chapter on Platonic Forms, [T2].

11 On this terminology in Avicenna see again F. Benevich, "Die Göttliche Existenz."

12 See further Avicenna, *Shifā'*, *Madkhal* 1.12, 65.

13 See the chapters on the Essence-Existence Distinction and Non-Existence in the present volume.

mind, and this too counts as a kind of existence, as al-Āmidī emphasizes [T47]. The resulting picture is a neat one: essences as such are neutral with respect to particularity and universality, just as they are neutral with respect to existence. When they have concrete existence they are particular; when they have mental existence they are universal. Avicenna already noted a potential pitfall here, which is that a universal concept is in a sense particular. My idea of humanity is an idea in *my* mind, or as Avicenna puts it, “an individual case of knowledge or conception” [T6]. This point can be used to mount an argument against the claim that universals are in the mind [T29]. But our authors generally see that one just needs to disambiguate the sense in which a given conception is “universal.” For instance one may say that a particular idea “represents” many things and is universal in this sense [T35, T66], or has universal meaning [T50], or correspondence [T51–T52]. There is a more difficult objection to the conceptualist view, though: if ideas in the mind are universal because they are in “correspondence (*muṭābaqa*)” with many particular extramental objects, then can’t we say the same about essences? Then extramental essences will be universal after all, as pointed out by al-Rāzī in the second argument of [T30]. This problem is also discussed by al-Suhrawardī [T35] and al-Kātibī [T64].

A further difficulty about the correspondence between universal ideas and extramental particulars is that universal ideas are subject to conceptual analysis in a way that particulars are not. Al-Rāzī poses the problem by saying that a universal quiddity is composed of “parts” that are not parts of the particular quiddity [T27]. He uses the traditional example of blackness: it is made up of a genus, namely color, and a specific difference, namely “contracting vision” [T25]. But it would be problematic to suppose that an extramental instance of black is composed of these parts, since black is available to sensation, which perceives no such parts in it [T24]. Al-Rāzī suggests that the distinction between genus and difference is only mental, which would mean that the essence in the mind has constituent parts that are not distinct in the case of the extramental essence [T25]. This threatens the claim that we are in fact talking about one and the same essence. His own response is that the genus and specific difference might be “distinct in quiddity but one in existence.” Since “animal” for instance never exists extramentally without being a particular animal, it is never to be found in separation from a specific difference that contracts the genus into the species to which the particular animal belongs [T26].

Although al-Suhrawardī accepts that natures of things exist outside the mind [T40], he says that genera are purely mental constructions and that what is divided up into parts in the mind may lack these parts outside the mind [T38–T39]. He considers the parallel example of a three-cubit length: outside the

mind it is just one thing, but inside the mind one might distinguish generic length from the specification of three cubits [T37]. The moral of this story is, as he says, that “concrete distinction need not follow from mental distinction.” He is followed by Ibn Kammūna, who agrees that you cannot make blackness exist without making color exist; otherwise, being black would be an accident of being color [T68].<sup>14</sup> Ibn Kammūna furthermore claims that al-Suhrawardī and Aristotle would be in agreement on this point [T71]. We find similar solutions in al-Samarqandī and al-Ḥillī [T77, T81]. Al-Abharī too affirms that the extramental essence has no “aspects” or “parts” [T57–T58], and adds that blackness and color are individuated together in the concrete black object; the mind misrepresents the situation insofar as it distinguishes two individuations, one for color and one for blackness [T54]. This fits with al-Rāzī’s original claim that we do not sense blackness as having parts, a point also discussed by Ibn Kammūna [T72] and al-Urmawī, although the latter denies the formulation that different parts of the same essence share one and the same existence [T76]. Al-Abharī tentatively suggests that the perception of blackness could arise from a conjunction of non-sensible parts [T56].

More generally, conceptualists are happy to say that an essence insofar as it is in the mind may not “match” the same essence insofar as it is outside the mind. The same essence may be a composite universal in the mind, and outside the mind, an individual without parts. The same move can solve other problems, such as regress arguments: at the conceptual level, indefinite regresses are not a problem, whereas they would be fatal to any account of extramental reality [T38, T70]. Likewise, universality itself need have no correspondent outside the mind. Indeed this is the whole point of saying that universality and other such items are secondary intelligibles or purely conceptual (*i’tibārī*) in nature, a signature move of al-Suhrawardī [T41] that is followed by other authors [T55, T57, T67, T69]. In a remarkable passage, al-Shahrazūrī develops this idea within an Illuminationist mythology, ending with a comprehensive list of such items that includes examples of supposed “states,” like “being a color,” as well as “universality,” a range of second intelligibles, and privations [T74].

Since conceptualism was, as we have said, the dominant position in our period, the correspondence problem was usually solved in this fashion, that is, by simply admitting that the conceptual realm need not match up with reality. But we do find attempts to secure correspondence after all, by identifying an ontological status for essences taken as such. Al-Ṭūsī accepts certain “modes” in

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14 For the claim that the maker of blackness is also the maker of color, see our chapter on Non-Existence, [T7].

the simple essences that correspond to the division in the mind [T62]. Al-Kātibī proposes that our conceptualizations may correspond not to particulars, but to forms in the Active Intellect [T63]. And some passages use the notion of *nafs al-amr*, stating that what is true in the mind but not in extramental particulars might be true at the level of the “bare facts” [T22, T78, T82]. What exactly this means, of course, turns on the difficult question of what it means to speak of *nafs al-amr* in the first place.

Texts from: Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, ‘Umar al-Khayyām, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, al-Shahrastānī, al-Mas‘ūdī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Suhrawardī, al-Āmidī, al-Abharī, al-Ṭūsī, al-Kātibī, Bar Hebraeus, Ibn Kammūna, al-Shahrazūrī, al-Urmawī, al-Samarqandī, al-Ḥillī.

## Universals

[T1] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* v.1, 149.7–14 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*essence is neutral with respect to universality*]

So the universal, as a universal, is one thing, but insofar as it is something to which universality attaches, it is something else. The universal as such is that which is indicated by one of these definitions.<sup>15</sup> If that [indicated thing] is “human” or “horse,” then something (*maʿnā*) else is there apart from the meaning of universality, namely [in the latter case] “horseness.” For the definition of “horseness” is not the definition of universality, nor is universality included in the definition of “horseness.” For “horseness” has its own definition, which does not need the definition of universality; rather, universality occurs to it accidentally. For in itself, it is nothing at all except “horseness”; in itself, it is neither one nor many, and exists neither among concrete particulars nor in the soul, existing in none of these things either in potency or in actuality, such that [these] would be included in “horseness.” Rather, just as such, it is only “horseness.”

[T2] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* v.1, 150.9–151.12

[*essence is neutral with respect to one and many*]

If we pose a question whose subject is the being (*huwiyya*) of humanity, taken as such and as one thing, and ask which of two contradictory terms [apply to it]: “is it one or many?” no answer need be given. For the being of humanity taken as such is something that is neither of these two, as nothing exists in the definition of this thing apart from humanity alone.

[T3] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* v.1, 153.7–11 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*more on the neutrality of essence as such*]

It is possible to consider (*iʿtibār*) animal in itself, even though it [exists] together with something else, because [animal] itself [remains] itself even while

<sup>15</sup> The reference is to the preceding discussion of the definition of universality, which culminates in the definition of the universal as “that whose very conception does not preclude it from being predicated of many” (149.3–4).

it is with something else (*li-anna dhātahu ma‘a ghayrihi dhātuhu*). So it itself belongs to [itself] in virtue of itself, whereas its being with something else is either something accidental to it, or a necessary concomitant to its nature, as [is the case with] animality and humanity. Considered in this way, it is prior in existence to the animal that is particular together with its accidents, or it is universal, whether existing or in the mind, by the priority of the simple to the complex and the part to the whole. In this [mode of] existence, it is neither genus nor species, neither individual, one, nor many. Rather, in this [mode of] existence it is only animal and only human.

[T4] Avicenna, *Shifā’, Ilāhiyyāt* v.1, 153.16–18 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*part-whole argument for the extramental existence of essence*]

The fact that animal existing in the individual is a certain animal (*ḥayawānan mā*) does not prevent animal as such (that is, not considered as being animal in a certain state) from existing in it. For, if this individual is a certain animal, and a certain animal exists, then animal [as such], which is part of a certain animal, exists [as well].

[T5] Avicenna, *Shifā’, Ilāhiyyāt* v.2, 158.16–159.6 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*contradiction argument against the extramental existence of universals*]

It is impossible for one and the same entity (*ma‘nā*) to exist in many things. For, if the humanity in ‘Amr—taken as the same object (*bi-dhātihī*), not in the sense of a definition—exists in Zayd, then whatever holds accidentally of this humanity in Zayd would have to hold of it when it is in ‘Amr, apart from the accidents whose quiddity is predicated [only] with respect to Zayd. As for that which is established in the essence of the human, its being so established does not require that it should become [159] relative, for example, to become white, black, or knowing. For [in the latter case] when [the human] knows, [the human] is related only to the object of knowledge. From [the supposition that one and the same entity exists in many], it would thus follow that contraries would be combined in a single object (*dhāt*), especially if genus relates to the species the way species relates to its individuals. Thus one object would be described as being both rational and not rational. No one of sound mind can think that one and the same humanity is enclosed by the accidents of ‘Amr and that this very same [humanity] (*bi-‘aynihā*) is enclosed by the accidents of Zayd. But if you consider humanity with no other con-

dition (*bi-lā shart ākhar*), then pay no mind to these relations, for these are as we have taught you.

[T6] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* v.2, 159.12–16 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*universals as particular thoughts in the soul*]

Insofar as this [universal] form is a disposition in a particular soul, it is an individual case of knowledge or conception. And just as something can be either a genus or a species under different considerations, likewise, under different considerations, it can be universal or particular. So insofar as this form is one of the forms in the soul, it is a particular, but insofar as many share it in common, in one of the three ways explained above,<sup>16</sup> it is a universal.

[T7] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* v.2, 161.6–14 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*essences have existence outside the mind, universals do not*]

If we then say that the universal nature exists in concrete individuals, we do not mean that it does so insofar as it is universal (in this sense of universality). Rather, we mean that the nature to which universality occurs exists in concrete individuals. So insofar as it is a nature it is one thing; insofar as it is such that a universal form can be apprehended from it by the intellect, it is something else. Again, insofar as it is actually intellectually apprehended in this way, it is one thing; but it is something else insofar as it is true to say of it that, were it not connected to this matter and to these accidents, but to that other matter and those other accidents, then it would be this other individual. This nature exists in concrete individuals when considered in the first way, but [when considered like this] universality is not in concrete individuals as well, [unlike when] it is considered in the second, third, or fourth ways. If one takes this way of considering it to be the meaning of “universal,” then this nature is in concrete individuals together with universality. But the universality we have been discussing exists only in the soul.

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<sup>16</sup> See [T1].



[T8] Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 263.2–264.7

[*univocity argument for the extramental existence of essences*]

Some people may be overcome by the supposition that the existent is sensible, that it is impossible for anything to exist whose substance is not available to sensation, and that whatever is not essentially specified with a place or a position, like the body, or by reason of that in which it resides, like the states of the body, can have no existence at all. You may learn that what these people say is wrong by reflecting on sensible objects themselves. For you, and anyone who deserves to be included in this conversation, realize that a single term (*ism*) may apply to these sensible objects, not in a purely equivocal way, but with a single meaning, for instance the term “human.” Neither you nor he doubts that [“human”] applies to both Zayd and ‘Amr with the same existing meaning. Now, this existing meaning is either such that it is available to sensation, or not. If it is remote from being available to sensation, then scrutiny has extracted something non-sensible from sensible things, which is hard to believe. But if it is sensible, then inevitably it has position, a “where,” and a determinate magnitude and determinate quality. It can only [264] be sensed, or even imagined, like this, since every sensible or imagined object is inevitably specified by one of these states. This being so, it will not be such as to lack such a state [sc. a location, etc.], and so it will not be predicable of many things that differ in this respect. Therefore “human” insofar as it is one in true reality, or rather insofar as its true, original (*aṣlīyya*) nature is not differentiated by multiplicity, is not an object of sensation, but solely an object of intellect. And likewise for every universal.

[T9] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Madkhal* 1.4, 23.10–15

[*distinction between primary and secondary intelligibles*]

[Previous scholars] found existents of two kinds: either the existence of things is extramental, or their existence is in the mind. They have put investigation of the existence that is extramental into the art, or arts, of philosophy. But how can the investigation of existence in the mind be conceived as belonging to an art, or part of an art, without having made distinctions so as to understand that the items in the mind are either items conceptualized in the mind, having been acquired from extramental reality, or are [secondary] items that occur to [these primary conceptualized items], in that they are in the mind, but with no correlate to them in extramental reality?

[T10] Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 198.2–11; 199.2–4; 200.4–7 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*the philosophers' account of how universals are perceived*]

The rational faculty perceives general intellectual universals, which the theologians (*al-mutakallimūn*) term “states (*aḥwāl*).” Upon observation of a determinate human individual by sensation, it thus perceives “human” taken absolutely (*al-insān al-muṭlaq*), this being something else than the perceived individual. For the observed [human] is in a specified place, and has a specified color, magnitude, and position, whereas the intellectually apprehended, absolute human is separated from these things. Still, it includes everything to which the name “human” applies, even though it lacks the color, magnitude, position, and place of the observed [individual]. Indeed, [absolute human] even includes that which is only possibly existent in the future; in fact, even if there were no humans, the true reality of human would remain in the mind, separated from these specific properties. The same goes for all that the senses observe as individual. From [the individual], there arises for the mind the true reality of that individual as a universal separated from instances of matter and from positions. [...]

[*response: universals are perceived only in connection with sensibles*]

[199.2] We do not concede the universal meaning that you [philosophers] have posited as inhering in the intellect. Rather, only that which inheres in sensation inheres in the intellect, except that it inheres in sensation as an aggregate which sensation cannot take apart (*tafṣīl*) but which the intellect can. [...] [200.4] This, then, is the meaning of “universal” with respect to both the intellect and the senses. For once the mind has perceived the form of body on the basis of an animal, it does not acquire a new form of corporeality on the basis of a tree the same way the imagination does when it perceives the form of two instances of water at two [different] times, and likewise for any two similar things. This does not allow for the affirmation of a universal that has no position at all.

[T11] Al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī al-wujūd*, 101.8–105.5

[*real and merely conceptual attributes*]

There are two types of attributes (*awṣāf*): one is called “essential (*dhātī*),” the other “accidental (*ʿaraḍī*).” Among accidental attributes, some are necessarily concomitant for the subject of attribution, others not. Instead, the latter can

[102] be separated from [the subject] in imagination (*wahm*) alone, or in both imagination and reality. Furthermore, both types, essential and accidental, can be subdivided into two: one is called conceptual (*i'tibārī*), the other existing (*wujūdī*).

The type “existing” is, for instance, ascribing to a body the attribute of blackness, when it is black. For blackness is an existing attribute; that is, an entity additional to the black [body] itself, and it is existent in concrete individuals. And if blackness is an existing attribute (*ṣifa*), “the black” is an existing attribution (*wasf*). There is no need to establish this division, the “existing,” with a demonstration, since it is obvious to the intellect, indeed even to imagination and sensation.

The type “conceptual accidental” is, for instance, attributing to two that it is “half of four.” For if two’s being half of four were an item additional to [two] itself [in reality, and not just at the conceptual level], then there would belong to two, in addition to itself, entities that are infinite [103] in number, but we have a demonstration that this is impossible.

The type “conceptual essential” is, for instance, attributing to blackness that it is a color, since its being a color is an essential attribution of it. The demonstration that being a color is not an attribute additional to the blackness itself in concrete individuals is that, if it were an additional attribute, it would have to be accidental. But blackness is already an accident. How then can an accident be the subject for another accident? Besides, if the subject of blackness were the same as the subject for being a color, then being a color would be an attribute of the subject of blackness, not of blackness, so that being a color would be existent in concrete individuals, and it would follow as something extrinsic to itself that [color] is blackness, but this is absurd.

When we say “conceptual attribution,” we mean that if the intellect grasps some meaning, it intellectually distinguishes this intelligible, and considers its states (*aḥwāl*). If this meaning happens to be simple, not multiple—like<sup>17</sup> all accidents that exist in concrete individuals—and if it happens that it has some attributes, then one knows that these attributes belong to it only in terms of conceptual consideration, not in terms of existence in concrete individuals. For

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17 Reading *ka-jamī* instead of *li-jamī*, as attested in two manuscripts.

[one] realizes that something simple that exists in concrete individuals [104] cannot have [anything further] that exists in it, since [otherwise the simple] would have multiple parts in concrete individuals; and because one realizes that no accident can be a subject for another accident; and because one realizes that the subject of that accident cannot be the subject of this attribute that was attributed to that accident. [...]

*[against neutrality of states with respect to existence]*

[104.6] Those who investigate this subject without understanding these merely conceptual descriptions fall into ridiculous errors. For instance, some recent, rather arbitrary thinkers made being-a-color, existence, and other such states to be “secondary states, to which one attributes neither existence nor non-existence.” The problem that besets them, having made this crass mistake, has to do with the most important and most obvious primary rule that there is no middle between negation and affirmation. [This] is so obvious that there is no need for us to mention it, nor to refute [their position], nor to analyze it, because it is nonsense.

*[conceptualist solution]*

[105] If they had just thought about conceptual attributes, they would not have fallen into this enormous misconception. Instead, they would have said: being a color does not exist in concrete individuals as something distinct from blackness. It is only an attribution of the mind, which arises in the soul when the intellect realizes blackness itself and inquires into its states, and the fact that it shares some states in common with whiteness. The same goes for existence and unity.

[T12] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 268.11–269.2; 270.18–271.2

*[definition of dhāt]*

As for our term *dhāt*, our companions have already explained that it is used linguistically only in relation to something else, such as when we say “whatever has property (*dhāt māl*)” and “whatever has beauty.” It is not used by itself. The theologians (*al-mutakallimūn*), however, used it by itself. The Master Abū al-Ḥusayn defined it in the *Taṣaffiḥ* as “that to which knowledge can be connected.” By “connection of knowledge” he meant that [knowledge] connects to it concretely (*bi-ʿaynihi*), since according to him, knowledge of conceptions is “unconnected” knowledge, that is, knowledge with no concrete object of knowledge (*maʿlūm muʿayyan*). The theologians widened the application of the term

“connection” in the case of knowledge, and applied it also to that which is not in itself concrete. [...] [268.21] This misleading [terminology] needs to be cleared up.

*So we say:* *dhāt* [“object” or “a thing itself”] is whatever can be known concretely on its own, or just by itself. We say “concretely” so as to distinguish it from what is conceived and supposed, since that would not be concrete. And we say “on its own, or just [269] by itself” in order to distinguish it from “states,” since knowledge does not connect to them on their own, but only connects to them as following on an object (*dhāt*).

**[definition of ḥāl]**

[270.18] *They ought to say:* “state (*ḥāl*)” is every real item that cannot be grasped intellectually without the object (*dhāt*) [i.e. what has the state], where what is so grasped considers nothing but that object. This is what is implied by their arguments for the reality of states.

*But we say:* the state, according to those who affirm them, cannot be intellectually grasped without the object [that has the state], since knowledge cannot be connected to [states] on their own, nor can any ascription (*ḥukm*) be applied to them on their own. This is why they say that [states] are included within the knowledge of the object [that has the state]. Do you not see them saying, “the object is according to a state (*dhāt al-ḥāla*)”? This is built upon their belief that state is included within the knowledge of the object, and the word “according” presupposes this. When we say, “what is so grasped considers nothing but [that object],” this distinguishes [state] from “ascription (*ḥukm*).” For “ascription” is an item that [likewise] cannot be intellectually grasped without the object, and is also included in the knowledge of the object; however, in grasping it intellectually one does consider something other than that object. Take for instance the possibility of acting for someone capable [of acting]. For they say that in the case of [this] ascription [sc. “capable”], when it is intellectually grasped [271] one does consider something other than the very object that is capable (*dhāt al-qādir*), namely the act of which it is capable. This is why ascription is defined as an item that is additional to the object itself, is included in the knowledge of the object, and is in consideration of something other than the object.

[T13] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fā'iḳ*, 80.3–13

[*states (aḥwāl) vs. ascriptions (aḥkām)*]

*First comprehensive approach to establish states:* we know [God] the Exalted Himself. Furthermore we know that He is powerful and knowledgeable. None of these cases of knowledge are tantamount to another; rather they differ. Now, if these items of knowledge were connected only to Himself, then the knowledge of Him would be tantamount to the knowledge of His attributes. But, given that there is a difference between the cases of knowledge for His [various] attributes, there must be something additional that is contained in the knowledge of each one of His attributes. And we have already refuted the doctrine of “meanings (*maʿānī*),”<sup>18</sup> so there remain only “states.”

*Response:* indeed, there must be something additional that is contained in the knowledge of Him Himself. But why have you said that this additional [item] is a state belonging to Him Himself? One what basis do you deny that this item would be [among] the ascriptions (*aḥkām*) that are necessitated by [121] Himself, the exalted? It would be the capacity for acting that is contained in the knowledge that He is powerful. Also, His being clear about an object of knowledge and His connection to it is contained in the knowledge that He is knowledgeable. The same goes for His other attributes, since inevitably something amounting to an affirmation or negation (or the affirmation or negation of an action, in the case of the attributes of action) must be contained in the knowledge of each of His attributes.

[T14] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 132.2–133.10

[*realism and nominalism concerning states (aḥwāl)*]

[States] are divided into the caused and the uncaused. Those that are caused are features (*aḥkām*) that subsist in objects (*dhawāt*) due to [additional] entities (*maʿānī*), whereas those that are uncaused are attributes (*ṣifāt*) that are not features due to [additional] entities. [...]

[132.10] According to the Qāḍī [al-Bāqillānī], may God have mercy upon him, any attribute that belongs to the existent, but does not itself have existence as

18 The doctrine of *maʿānī* is especially associated with the theologian al-Muʿammar. On this see H. Daiber, *Das theologisch-philosophische System des Muʿammar Ibn ʿAbbād As-Sulamī* (gest. 830 n. Chr.) (Beirut: 1975), 78 ff.

an attribute, is a “state.” It makes no difference whether the necessitated entity has life as a condition or not; an example would be a living thing’s being alive, knowing, or powerful, but also a moving thing’s being in motion or the resting thing at rest, as well as [being] black, white, and so on. [...]

[132.18] As for the second category [i.e. the uncaused states], this includes every attribute established for an object with no cause additional to the object, such as space-occupation for an atom, or its being existent, or the accident’s being [133] an accident, color, and blackness. The idea is that every existent has specificity (*khāṣṣiyya*), through which it is distinguished from others. It is distinguished only by specificity, which is a state. And that by virtue of which similar things are similar, and that in respect of which different things are different, is a state. It is these [states] that are called the attributes of genus and species.

According to those that affirm them, states are neither existent nor non-existent. Nor are they things, nor can any attribute be ascribed to them. According to [Abū Hāshim] b. al-Jubbā’ī, they cannot be known in their own right. Rather they are known only together with an object. But for those who deny states, things are different and similar just as concrete objects, while the common application of the names of genera and species goes back to the utterances (*alfāz*) that signify them, nothing more. The same goes for their being specific. Something may be known in one respect (*min wajh*) and unknown in another. The “respects” are mere considerations (*i’tibārāt*), which do not go back to attributes, that is, states that are specific to objects.

[T15] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 144.3–17

[*against nominalism: animal example*]

If words were eliminated from the explanation, intellectual judgments (*al-qaḍāyā al-‘aqliyya*) would not thereby be eliminated. For [even] beasts (*baḥā’im*), which lack speech (*nuṭq*) and intellect, do not lack this [kind of] guidance. After all they know by instinct (*fiṭra*) which kind of grass is healthy for them, and eat it. Then if they see some other grass similar to the first, they do not hesitate over whether it is edible, like the first. So if they could not form in their imagination (*takhayyalat*) the same judgment (*‘ayn ḥukm*) about the second as they did about the first, namely its being edible (*kawn ma’kūlan*), then they would not eat. But in fact they do know the genus of [healthy grass] and prefer it, and they know its opposite and are repelled by it. [...]

[*the universal is in the mind, not a verbal expression*]

[144.11] *I say*: you cannot help but ascribe the function (*bāb*) of cognition (*idrāk*) to intellects, and the function of speech (*kalām*) to the languages. For the intellect cognizes humanity as a universal, which is common to the whole species of human and is something different from a concrete particular individual (*al-shakhṣ al-muʿayyan al-mushār ilayhi*). In the same way [the intellect conceives of] accidentality (*al-ʿaraḍiyya*) as a universal that is common to the whole species of accidents, paying no mind to “being color,” or “blackness,” or “this concrete black.” Necessarily, this subject of cognition is intellect. It is the sense of the expression (*mafhūm al-ʿibāra*) which is conceived in the intellect, not the expression itself. For the expression designates the meaning (*maʿnā*) that is realized in the mind (*dhihn*), and it [sc. this meaning] is what is designated (*madlūl*) by the expression. As concerns what is [verbally] expressed, if the expression changed—it might be in Arabic, Persian, Indian, or Roman [i.e. Byzantine Greek]—the meaning of the designated would not change.

[T16] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 147.6–13

[*against states*]

We say: everything you proponents [of states] affirm as real in existence is a “state,” according to you. Show us any existent, whether observed or hidden, that would not be a state, to which neither existence nor non-existence is ascribed as an attribute. For existence [itself], which is maximally general and is common to both the eternal and originated, is a state according to you. “Being an atom,” “space-occupation,” and [the atom’s] “receiving an accident”: all of them are states. So your teaching implies that there is nothing in existence which would not be a state. Even if you affirm anything as real and say it is not a state, this thing would [still] involve both commonality and specificity, and according to you, the specific and common are states. So it will turn out that everything is nothing (*lā shayʿa illā lā shayʿ*) and every existence is non-existence (*lā wujūda illā lā wujūd*), which is about the most absurd idea anyone could think up.



[T17] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 161.18–163.3

[*the philosophers’ “essences” as an alternative to “states”*]

Everyone [should] wonder at the proponents of real states for making species—like [162] substantiality, corporeality, accidentality, and “being color”—something real even while these are non-existent (*ashyā’ thābita fī al-‘adam*). For, [these proponents reasoned,] knowledge is connected to them and whatever is known has to be a thing, in order that knowledge can depend upon (*yatawakkā’u*) it. Furthermore, the same objects, that is, substantiality, accidentality, “being color,” and “blackness” are states in existence that cannot be known in their own right, and are never existent by themselves. What could this be, which is known while non-existent such that knowledge depends on it, but is not known when it is in existence?<sup>19</sup>

If they had traveled the well-trodden path of intellects in their conception of things along with their genera and species, they [sc. the proponents of states] would know that the conceptions of intellects are the quiddities of things along with their genera and species, which do not call for realized existence (*mawjūda muḥaqqiqā*) or being postulated as real, extramental things (*ashyā’ thābita khārija ‘an al-‘uqūl*). And<sup>20</sup> what belongs to them in themselves and in respect of their genera and species in the mind (*fī al-dhihn*), in terms of essential constituents (*al-muqawwimāt al-dhātīyya*), by which their selves are realized, does not depend on the act of any agent. So it is possible for them to be known while disregarding the question whether they exist. For the grounds (*asbāb*) of existence are different from those of quiddity.<sup>21</sup> And [the proponents of states] would know that sensory perceptions are the concrete things themselves. The way we become acquainted with them calls for their realized existence, and their being acknowledged as real things outside of sensation (*ashyā’ thābita khārija ‘an al-khawāṣṣ*). And what belongs to them in themselves as concrete beings and the way we become acquainted with them through sensation, in terms of accidental specifiers (*al-mukhaṣṣiṣāt al-‘araḍīyya*), by which their concrete selves are realized, does depend on the act of an agent. So they cannot exist deprived of these specifiers. [Again,] the grounds of existence are different from those of quiddity.

19 This discussion is part of the argumentation for the reality of the non-existent. See further the chapter in the present volume on “Non-Existence.”

20 Reading *wa-* instead of *aw* with manuscript B.

21 See [1T1].

When the Muʿtazilites heard the philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) drawing a distinction between the two cases, they thought [163] that conceptions in minds are real things among concrete beings (*al-mutaṣawwarāt fi al-adhhān hiya ashyaʾ thābita fi al-aʿyān*), and concluded that the non-existent is a thing (*shayʾ*). And they thought that the genera and species existing in the mind are states that are real among concrete beings.

[T18] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 147.14–149.2

[*conceptualism as a middle path*]

The truth on this question, then, is that the human finds in his soul the conception of universal, common, absolute things paying no mind to verbal utterances or concrete individuals. He finds in his soul mental concepts (*iʿtibārāt aqliyya*) that pertain to a single thing. They can go back either to verbal utterances—but we have already shown this is wrong—or to concrete, individual existents—and this too we have declared false. All that remains is to say that they are only meanings (*maʿān*) [148] that are existent (*mawjūda*) as realized in the human mind (*dhihn*) and intellect (*ʿaql*), which is what cognizes them. Insofar as they are universal and common, they have no existence among concrete individuals (*lā wujūd lahā fi al-aʿyān*). So there is no absolute “existent” among concrete individuals, nor absolute “accident” or “color.” Rather, these are concrete individuals insofar as the intellect conceptualizes a universal, common meaning on the basis of them. Then an expression (*ʿibāra*) is formed for it, which corresponds to it and refers to it, and from them [sc. the concrete individuals] the intellect derives a meaning (*maʿnā*) and aspect (*wajh*). The expression is formed for it in such a way that, if the expressions were to perish or change, the meaning established in the mind would not be nullified, being [still] conceptualized in the intellect.

The opponents of “states” were wrong when they equated [universals] with mere expressions (*al-ʿibārāt al-mujarrada*). But they were right to say that whatever is really a concrete existent cannot have commonality or [any generic] consideration. The proponents of “states,” meanwhile, were wrong when they equated them with attributes (*ṣifāt*) in concrete beings. But they were right to say that [states] are intelligible meanings, above and beyond [mere] expressions. What they ought to say is that [states] exist as conceptualized in intellects, instead of saying that they are neither existent, nor non-existent. These meanings are something that no reasonable person would deny [as being] in his soul. Some, though, spoke of them in terms of “conceptualiza-

tion in the mind,” others spoke of “supposition in the intellect” (*bi-l-taqdīr fī al-‘aql*), while others called them “true realities” (*al-ḥaqā’iq*) and “meanings” (*al-ma‘ānī*), which are designated (*madlūlāt*) by expressions and words. Still others called them “attributes of genera and species.” So long as it is comprehensible and clear to the intellect, let them use whatever language is easiest.

[T19] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 146.3–9

[*specification and metaphysical identity*]

*The [first] way to show the error of those who affirm the reality of states:* they affirmed for the concrete, particular existent, attributes that are specific to it, as well as attributes that are shared in common with other existents. This is a great absurdity. For what is specific to a concrete thing, and what is shared in common with others is *one* in relation to this concrete particular. So the existence of a concrete accident, its accidentality, its being color, and its blackness are expressions (*‘ibārāt*) of that [same] concrete particular. For when existence is specified (*takhaṣṣaṣa*) with accidentality, it is identical (*bi-‘aynihi*) to the accident, and when the accidentality is specified with being color, it is identical to color; likewise, being color [is specified] with blackness, and blackness with “this particular black.”<sup>22</sup>

[T20] Al-Mas‘ūdī, *Shukūk*, 246.10–247.4

[*universals exist in the mind alone*]

*I say:* [Avicenna] wanted to show that there are, among existents, those that are not apprehended by sensation. Instead it is intellect that apprehends and cognizes them. He infers this on the basis of universals, such as universal man. But this does not prove his point. For universals do not exist among concrete individuals. Rather, according to him, they are known to the soul when grasped intellectually. Saying that [universals] “exist in the mind” is a commonly accepted and widely held claim. But upon investigation, we discover that it does not mean the same as real (*ḥaqīqa*) existence. When something is existent in the mind, this means only that it is known, grasped intellectually,

22 Ibn Ghaylān, *Hudūth*, 74.4–12 generally follows al-Shahrastānī; see further “The Essence-Existence Distinction” [T18].

perceived by the intellect. Whereas real existence it is that through which the true realities of quiddities occur among concrete individuals. This is the only way to understand existence. But to be existent in the mind means something other [247] than this, namely its being known by the intellect. The purpose of this section [in Avicenna's *Pointers*] was to establish that there are, among concrete existents, some that are not perceived by senses. But what he mentioned, namely universals, are not existent in concrete individuals. So, the purpose of this section has not been achieved by what he said. But God knows best.

[T21] Al-Rāzī, *Manṭiq al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, 28.3–8

[*against the extramental existence of universals: they would lack "identity"*]

It is commonly accepted that the intelligible universal is a mental form. *They say*: this is because whatever is described as universal is existent, since sheer non-existence cannot be shared in common by many things. Now, whatever exists does so either in extramental reality, or in the mind. The first is absurd [in the case of universals], since whatever exists extramentally is a concrete individual that is distinct from everything else. Something of this kind cannot be shared by many things, so it will not be universal. And once it is established that the universal does not exist in extramental reality, it remains only that it does so in the mind.

[T22] Al-Rāzī, *Manṭiq al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, 29.6–11

[*against merely mental existence of universals: correspondence problem*]

When we say, "the effect upon the soul made by each of those individuals is the same," we mean: we conceptualize a "range (*qadr*)" that is commonly shared by those individuals. But if conceptualizing the range that is shared in common is independent of the realization of this shared range, then its mental conceptualization lacks correspondence to what is the case (*amr*) extramentally, and is therefore ignorance. If, on the other hand, it does correspond, the shared range must occur factually (*fi nafs al-amr*). In this case, that shared item is the real universal, while the mental form would be called "universal" only in a metaphorical sense, thanks to its being knowledge that is connected to the [real] universal item.

[T23] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 81r12–81v7

[*essences are neutral with regard to one and many*]

Everything has a true reality (*ḥaqīqa*) through which it is what it is. [This true reality] is distinct from everything else, regardless whether the latter be a necessary concomitant for [the true reality], or separable. Horseness, as such, is neither one nor not one, in such a way that either of these two [sc. unity or the lack thereof] would enter into its meaning (*mafhūm*). Instead, unity is an attribute that is added to [the true reality] and horseness becomes one together with it. Lack of unity is also something additional to it and horseness together with it, becomes not-one. Horseness as such, though, is nothing but horseness. If someone asks, “is horse one thousand, or not?” we will say, “it is not the case that horse as such is one thousand,” but we will not say: “horse as such is *not* one thousand.” And if someone says the humanity in Zayd is no different from the humanity that is in ‘Amr, just insofar as it is humanity, this does not force us to say that this [humanity] and that [humanity] are therefore one and the same (*wāḥida bi-al-‘adad*). For we said that, insofar as it is humanity, all other considerations (*i’tibārāt*) are omitted from it. Unity is one such additional consideration, so it must be left out.

[*application of the bi-sharṭ lā formula*]

*You should know:* it is true that animal without the condition that there is something else [attached to it] (*lā bi-sharṭ shay’*) [81v] does exist, since it is a part of that which exists extramentally, so it exists extramentally too. On the other hand, it is *not* true that animal on the condition that there is nothing else [attached to it] (*bi-sharṭ lā shay’*) exists. As for the fact that [it does not exist] among concrete individuals, this is obvious. As for the fact that [it does not exist] in the mind, this is because we do not accept [mental existence]. Even if we did, [animal] would not be separate [from all attachments in the mind], since its being in the mind is itself an attachment. In fact, its being separate from all attachments is [an attachment too], since, when what is separate is taken together with the qualification of being separate, it is no longer separate from all attachments [that is, because this qualification is itself an attachment]. So no quiddity ever exists as entirely separate. Thus, given that the consideration of a quiddity as such differs from a consideration of its qualifications, it emerges that the commonly accepted assumption that quiddity becomes separate in the intellect is in fact false.

[T24] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 82v3–16

[*the parts of a quiddity may be distinct only in the mind*]

The parts of quiddities may sometimes be distinct in extramental reality, like soul and body, which are parts of human; or they may be distinct only in the mind, like [the parts of] blackness. For its genus is not distinct from its specific difference in extramental reality at all. Otherwise, (a) if [neither the genus nor specific difference of blackness, which are its “parts”] are not perceptible to sensation on their own, then—(a1) assuming no [new] sensible form originates when they are joined—blackness will not be perceptible to sensation at all, which is a contradiction. Or (a2) a [sensible form] does originate [from genus and specific difference being conjoined]. That form will be an effect of their conjunction, and will be extrinsic to them. But by blackness we mean nothing but that form itself. So in this case, the extramental composition [of genus and specific difference] will be in whatever receives or produces blackness, and not in [blackness] itself. (b) But if either or both of [the parts] *are* perceived by sensation, then, (b1) assuming it is similar to blackness, [blackness] will not be constituted by it. (b2) Or [a sensible part] may be different from [blackness]. In that case, once the specific difference of blackness is added to it, then (b2a) it may be the case that no [new] form originates. But in this case, what is perceptible to sense would be “being a color” taken absolutely, and sensible blackness would be the same as “being a color” absolutely, and then the nature of a genus would be the same as the nature of its species, which is a contradiction. Or (b2b) a new form does originate. In this case, however, the sensation of blackness would amount to perceiving not one and the same sensible, but two sensibles, which is a contradiction.

So it has been established that the genus of blackness is not distinct from its specific difference in extramental reality at all. Rather, it can be distinguished from it only in the mind. This calls for a distinction between their quiddities. Otherwise, the mind’s judging that there is a distinction where in fact there is none, would be ignorance. Thus they are distinct in quiddity and in *mental* existence, but not in *extramental* existence.

[T25] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 148.19–27

[*the parts of a quiddity may be distinct only in the mind and “as such”*]

It has been thus established that, as we said, one part of blackness cannot be distinguished from the other in extramental existence. Rather this distinction holds only in the mind.

*Clarification:* “being a color,” as such (*min ḥaythu hiya hiya*), is different from “contracting [vision]” [i.e. the specific difference added to “color” to get blackness] as such. They are different quiddities. Were this not the case, then neither could be distinguished from the other in the mind. For, if the mind judged that there is composition where there is none, this would be ignorance. Thus they are distinct in [their] true reality (*fī al-ḥaqīqa*). As for extramental existence, they cannot be distinct in [this sort of] existence (*fī al-wujūd*). But in mental existence, it is not impossible for the distinction to arise.

[T26] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, 70.15–25<sup>23</sup>

[*genus and species are distinct in quiddity but one in existence*]

*Let it not be said:* if we say of human that he is animal, intending by this that the meaning of human is the same as the meaning of animal, we are wrong; but if we intend that animal is attributed to the quiddity of human, we are wrong again, since, as long as animal is a constitutive part of the quiddity of human it cannot be his attribute, given that a part is prior, whereas an attribute is posterior. But if we intend some third meaning, this should be stated.

*For we say:* we do explain the identity (*al-huwa huwa*) in a third way. Namely that, even though human and animal are distinct in quiddity, they are one in existence. The former is obvious. As for the latter, the reason [they are one in existence] is that animal taken absolutely, and as such, enters into existence only once it has become qualified, either by negation or by something existing. For example, until animal becomes either rational or irrational, it cannot enter into existence. This being so, existence can only occur to the composite animal, given that animal becomes existent only once it becomes rational or irrational.

23 We here quote from MS Tehran Majlis 827t because the passage is lacking from the MS Berlin or. oct. 623.

So, rational animal is composite in quiddity, but its existence is identical to the existence of the animal. So what we said concerning distinction in quiddity and unity in existence has been established.

*Still one can say:* if [a single] existence can occur to two different quiddities, why can't one and the same accident subsist in two subjects of inherence? In fact, why couldn't a single body occur in two different places? Even if we granted this, [one might still object] that a privative qualification cannot be a part of a quiddity that can receive an existing attribute. So irrationality cannot be a part of whatever receives existence in the irrational animal. Furthermore, even if we granted this, [one might still object] that animal, insofar as it takes on a part [namely a specific difference, already] has existence; so if another existence were to occur to it when it is taken together with rationality, two existences would co-occur in it, which is absurd.

Rather the correct [view] is that the meaning of "predication of a thing" is that it has an attribute;<sup>24</sup> but this does not apply to the parts of quiddity.

[T27] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ Uyūn al-ḥikma*, vol. 1, 82.22–83.18

[two types of compounds: extramentally distinct and not, with criticism]

The logicians agreed that this composition [of genus and specific difference] may exist extramentally, and may not. (a) The former would be for instance humanity, which is composed from animal and rational. Each of these two parts does have extramental existence. [83] (b) The latter would be, for instance, blackness. For it falls under the genus of color, and has a specific difference; but its genus is not distinct from its specific difference in extramental existence.

*It might be said:* each of the two options is problematic.

(a) The former because, if the generic part has extramental existence of its own, and the differentiating part has a further existence of its own, (a<sub>1</sub>) has yet another existence occurred for their conjunction when they were brought together, (a<sub>2</sub>) or not? (a<sub>1a</sub>) If so, then each of the two has an existence specific to it, and each of them [also] has an existence shared in common between it

24 See further our chapter "Predication" in the volume on Logic and Epistemology.



and the other. So each of them would have two existences. This implies the conjoining of two indistinguishable things,<sup>25</sup> which is absurd. (a1b) Also, if the second [shared] existence inheres in both of them at the same time, then one and the same item would inhere in two subjects of inherence, which is absurd. (a2) Or, no unified existence occurs to the conjunction [of genus and specific difference]. But in this case, no unified existent would result from them, but instead they would remain two different existents. This would imply that no composite quiddity turns out to be in existence.

(b) As for the latter option, namely that the quiddity is composed out of a genus and a specific difference which are not distinct from each other in extramental reality, *we say*: on this assumption, no extramental existence occurs to either of the two parts on its own. (b1) Now if no extramental existence occurs to their conjunction either, then it must not be existent extramentally at all. (b2) On the other hand, if extramental existence does occur to their conjunction, then that existence would be a single accident subsisting in two subjects of inherence, which is absurd.

[T28] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ Uyūn al-ḥikma*, vol. 3, 98.1–16

[*Avicenna's argument from contradiction from T5, with objection and reply*]

*It might be said*: if human that is shared in common is one and the same individual among concrete entities, then one and the same individual would have to be both knowing and ignorant. But this would be a co-occurrence of contradictions.

*It is objected*: it is indeed one and the same item, but when that individual [sc. universal human] is taken together with specific accidents and attachments, the expression “Amr” will be one conjunction which is distinct from others. So there will be no co-occurrence of opposites from the fact that knowledge subsists in one of the conjunctions, and ignorance in another.

*Response*: it is not disputed that, if a single object (*dhāt*) is taken first with one attribute, and then taken with another attribute, then one of these compositions will be distinct from the other. But we would still say that this sort of distinction does not exclude that the opposites are incompatible and dis-

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25 Reading *mithlayn*.

tinct. Don't you see that if whiteness and blackness subsist in one and the same object, then that object taken together with blackness is distinct from that object taken together with whiteness?<sup>26</sup> If this kind of distinction excluded the incompatibility of opposites, then no incompatibility could ever occur between opposites. In fact, though, we know that this kind of distinction does not exclude the incompatibility of opposites, and that if there is a single subject of inherence then the incompatibility of opposites holds. So on this assumption, the objection is rebutted.

[T29] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ Uyūn al-ḥikma*, vol. 3, 100.3–23

[*against the existence of universals even in the mind*]

*First argument:* This universal is either (a) existent or (b) non-existent, but both options are false, so it is false to speak of the universal [at all].

*We say:* (a) [the universal] cannot be existent, because everything that is existent has concretization (*ta'ayyun*) and individuation (*tashakhkhuṣ*). Nothing like this can be universal. *Let it not be asked:* why do you say that the existent in the mind would have concretization and individuation? *For we say:* we have already mentioned that the existent in the mind is existent among concrete individuals, since the existent in the mind is some particular form inhering in a particular, individual soul. So it counts as one of the existents among concrete individuals. For the argument just given, it makes no difference whether you call it “existent in the mind” or “existent in concrete individuals.” (b) And we said [the universal] cannot be non-existent, because the non-existent is pure negation and sheer non-existence, so it cannot be a part of an existent quiddity, or be one of its attributes.

*Second argument:* the universal would be existent either (a) among concrete individuals, or (b) in the mind. But both options are false. (a) The first, because of what has been established in the previous section [namely the argument from non-contradiction: see T28]. (b) The second, because whatever is existent in the mind is an individual form that subsists in an individual soul. Existents among concrete individuals may be existent before the origination of this form<sup>27</sup> in this soul, and they remain existent even after this form perishes from

26 Deleting *li-kawn al-dhāt ma'khūdhā ma'a al-sawād mughāyira* as dittography.

27 Deleting *fī hādhihi al-ṣurā* as dittography.

this soul. Whatever is like this cannot be a constituent for a quiddity of such individuals that exist in extramental reality, as is known necessarily.

*Third argument:* if humanity were universal then concretization would be additional to the quiddity. But that would be absurd, since concretization as such is also an attribute with a universal quiddity, and it would therefore require another concretization, yielding an infinite regress.

[T30] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, vol. 3, 101.1–102.4

[*against Avicenna's claim that universals correspond to individuals*]

Firstly, by saying that this form is universal, [Avicenna] meant that it corresponds (*muṭābiqa*) to all [its] individuals. Here “correspondence” means that, if this very same form were in any matter whatever, it would be that part [of the individual].

To which one may say that there several ways to raise problems for this [account].

*First:* this form which inheres in the particular soul is a concrete accident, inhering in a concrete soul. It is however absurd that this very same accident should occur in extramental reality, as connected to particular instances of matter. For no accident can possibly be transferred [from one subject to another]. Thus it is established that the spiritual form clearly cannot exist in extramental reality. Nor can this concrete form be a universal that is shared in common by individuals. This being established, we come back to the aforementioned objection, namely that if what you have described as “universal” is existent among concrete individuals, then it will be a concrete individual, not a universal. But if it is existent in the mind, then again it is a concrete, individual accident, and hence not universal. Where then is the universal?

*Second:* these individuals were existent among concrete individuals before the origination of this form [in the mind] and will still remain existent among concrete individuals after its perishing. If something is like this, how can you say that it is a part of the quiddity of these concrete existents? *Let it not be said:* we do not claim that this very same form exists in concrete individuals, but rather that if we eliminate from this individual form its accidents and individuating [features] so that only a quiddity, as such, remains, then this quiddity will be the universal. *For we will respond:* if you're happy with this move, why not just say that the individual existing among concrete individual is universal? In the

sense that, if one eliminates from it its accidents and individuating [features], then what remains would be universal.

A second way [for an Avicennan] to explain how this form is universal is to say that, if any individual whatever, which exists among concrete individuals, were to present itself to the intellect, so that the mind would thereby receive the meaning of humanity, the result would be this effect which is present in the soul. *To which it may be said:* this account would be right only if the resulting [effect] in the soul were the quiddity of human alone. But that would be absurd, because whatever arises in the soul is some individual accident and state in the individual soul. This accident has multiple attachments. [102] If one takes this accident as such, it is not shared in common by extramentally real individuals. But if one takes this accident on the condition that its accidents and individuating [features] are eliminated from it, then why not think the same about the extramentally real individual, and say that the universal is [after all] extramentally existent?

So it has been established that what [Avicenna] said [on this issue] is problematic.

[T31] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 122.3–9

[*division argument for the existence of essences*]

The best one can offer on this issue is the following: body can be divided into celestial and elemental, and into gross and subtle. Whatever is subject to division must be something the divisions share in common. So “being a body” is a “range (*qadr*)” shared in common by the gross and the subtle, the celestial and the elemental, the hot and the cold. What produces distinction in it is the attributes of body. So it is established that bodies are equivalent in their essences and true realities, and the differences between them consist in their attributes and accidents alone.

[T32] Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 61.4–10; 62.9–17

[*argument that states (aḥwāl) are neither existent nor non-existing, using the example of existence itself*]

We have already shown that existence is a description that is shared in common by existents. There is no doubt that existents are distinct in respect of

their quiddities, and what is shared in common is different from that through which there is distinction. Therefore the existence of things is different from their quiddities. Furthermore, this existence is either (a) non-existent, (b) existent, or (c) neither existent nor non-existent. (a) The first option is absurd, since “being existent” is the opposite of “being non-existent,” and nothing can be the same as its opposite. (b) The second option is absurd [too], since if existence were existent, it would be equivalent to existent quiddities in terms of “being existent,”<sup>28</sup> but doubtless also differ from them in some respect. Now, that which is shared in common is different from that through which there is distinction. So “being existent,” which is shared in common by existence and by the existent quiddities, is distinct from whatever is specific to the quiddity of existence, through which the distinction arises. So there will be another existence for existence, yielding an infinite regress, which is absurd. So it has been established that (c) existence is neither existent nor non-existent. [...]

[*response: existence is the same as “being existent”*]

[62.g] *Response to the first argument:* we have already discussed whether existence is a univocal concept or not.<sup>29</sup> Let us now grant that it is, and say: why can't existence be existent? Their argument is that, if it were existent, then it would be equivalent to existent quiddities in terms of “being existent,” but different from them in respect of what is specific to them. To this we respond: an infinite regress would only follow if it shared in some positive respect and differed in some other positive respect. But if the difference lies in something privative, an infinite regress will not follow. To explain: existence shares “being existent” with the existent quiddities, and differs from them [only] through a privative qualification. So even though existence taken alone is existent, there is nothing else alongside it. By contrast, when an existent quiddity is existent, it has something else alongside the fact that it is said to “be existent,” namely the quiddity. This being so, it does not follow that existence is existent through another existence. Rather, its being existent is identical to its quiddity. On this assumption the infinite regress is blocked.<sup>30</sup>

28 Correcting *al-wujūdiyya* to *al-mawjūdiyya*.

29 See [T15] from our chapter Univocity and Equivocity of Existence, in which al-Rāzī, unusually for him, argues for equivocity of existence.

30 See [T14] from our chapter on the Essence-Existence Distinction.

[T33] Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 61.11–63.11

[*arguments for the doctrine of states*]

Species quiddities share genera in common, which entails the doctrine of states.

*The first approach for proving this can be put in several ways, of which the first is as follows.* Blackness and whiteness share “being a color” in common. This sharing is not only of the name, since if we called blackness and motion by the same name, and did not use the same name for blackness and whiteness, we would still know by necessity that blackness and whiteness have a genus in common whereas blackness and motion do not. That is why verbal expressions are not shared in common consistently in all languages. This kind of sharing is known to all reasonable people. [62] *And the second way is as follows:* items of knowledge that are connected to different objects of knowledge are themselves different. Now, we give one and the same definition for knowledge, and subdivide it into knowledge of that which is eternal, knowledge of that which is originated, knowledge of substances, and knowledge of accidents. What is being defined [here] is not the verbal expression, but the meaning. So, we know that “being knowledge” is shared in common by these different quiddities. [...]

[62.6] *Second approach to prove this:* once it has been established that these quiddities share one aspect in common, but differ in another, the two aspects will be either (a) existent, (b) non-existent, or (c) neither existent nor non-existent. (a) The first is false. Otherwise an accident would have to subsist in an accident. (b) The second is false too, since one knows necessarily that these items are not sheer non-existence. (c) So only the third remains, which was the conclusion sought. [...]

[*debate over whether states involve an infinite regress*]

[62.18] *But the opponents [of states] said:* we notice that the gist of the various arguments offered to establish states comes down to a single point (*ḥarf*), namely that true realities differ in terms of their specific features, and share their common features; and that through which there is sharing is not the same as that through which there is difference. Then they argued that this is neither existent nor non-existent, so as to establish the reality of something in the middle. [*The opponents*] *went on:* but this implies that a state would have another state, and so on to infinity. For doubtless these states for which you offered proof are [likewise] different in their specific features, but equivalent

in that they all have in common that they are each a state. And that through which there is sharing is different from that through which there is distinction; so it follows that each state has another state, and so on to infinity.

*The proponents of states responded in two ways. (a) First*—and this is the one that most of them (*al-jumhūr*) rely on—by saying that neither similarity nor difference may be attributed to a state. *Second*, by just accepting the infinite regress.

But the opponents said: (a) the *first response* is very unconvincing, since whenever the intellect indicates two different things, whatever is conceptualized from one of them is either the same as whatever is conceptualized from the other, or not. In the first case it is similar, in the latter case different. So, we know it is ignorant to argue for the reality of something to which neither similarity nor difference is attributed. (b) *As for the second response*, which is just to accept the infinite regress, this is false. For, if we granted this, we could not deem it false that the chain of originated things has no beginning, or establish the eternal Creator. All of this is sheer ignorance.

This is the gist of what both parties said. [63] But I say that these implications cannot be forced upon the proponents of states. For we have shown that blackness and whiteness, for instance, share “being existent” in common, but differ in respect of “being blackness” and “being whiteness.” And we know that that through which there is sharing and that through which there is distinction cannot be negative. So we cannot avoid affirming two items: one of them is [blackness’s] being blackness, the other is its existence. As for “being existent” and “being blackness,” they differ in their true realities, but share “being a state” in common. However, “being a state” is not an affirmative attribute, since by “state” we mean simply something that is neither existent nor non-existent. So, if sharing occurs thanks to negative attributes, the state need not be an attribute that subsists in existence; thus, no further state need belong to the state. [...]

[63,8] *Response to the second argument*: why could that through which there is sharing, and that through which there is distinction, not be existent? Their argument was that, in that case, an accident would subsist in another accident. *But we say*: this would be more plausible to the intellect than affirming a middle between existent and non-existent.

[T34] Al-Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, 160.3–12

[*quiddities are neutral with respect to one and many*]

It is known that a quiddity, such as humanity in itself, is neither one nor many, and neither common nor specific, in order that all of [these] considerations (*i'tibārāt*) may be predicated of it.

There is a proof ascribed to certain ancients: if humanity does not entail unity, then it entails non-unity, which is multiplicity; so the existence of human could never be one. On the other hand, if it is not right that [humanity] entails non-unity, then it is right that it entails unity.

But [this proof] is wrong. For the contradictory of “entailment of X” is not “entailment of non-X,” but rather “no entailment of X.” If animality entailed rationality, nothing irrational could ever be animal. But the fact that rationality is not an entailment of [animality] does not imply that it entails irrationality, but just that it does not entail rationality. You should know that, whenever they say “when a universal occurs in concrete individuals, etc.,” they mean by this the nature (*ṭabīʿa*) to which universality can accidentally occur. [Strictly speaking] the universal does not occur in concrete individuals, since otherwise it would have a concrete being (*huwiyya*) that cannot be shared in common.

[T35] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārīʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 330.12–332.4

[*natures in concrete reality and universals in the mind*]

The relation between a universal meaning (*maʿnā*) and its particulars is not like that of a father and several children, all of whom are related to him. Rather, the [same] entity (*al-maʿnā*) which comes to be universal in the mind exists in each of [the particulars]. It is not the case that each of [the particular humans] is a human just by its relation to a humanity that has been postulated as being independent and isolated from all [of them]. Rather, each of them has a humanity numerically different from that of any other. As for the meaning that is shared in common, it is only in the mind, nowhere else. The universal taken in the sense that it allows things to share it in common, or does not rule out such sharing, cannot occur among concrete individuals. If it [331] were to occur among concrete individuals, it would have an individuated concrete being (*huwiyya mutashakhkhiṣa*) that is not some representation. [That kind of concrete being] is specified in itself and cannot be shared.



[*objection that the nature in the mind is also a particular, with response*]

*You may ask:* the nature that exists in the mind has a concrete being too, since it is one of the things that exist. And it also has specification due to several factors; for instance, it is impressed in the mind, cannot be indicated, cannot be divided, and does not exist by itself in many. So it is not shared in common by many things, by considering its existence to be in them. Sharing simply means correspondence (*al-muṭābaqa*). But if the universality of what is in the mind is only in consideration of correspondence, and if particulars correspond to each other, then particulars must be universals as well. Now, you may say that particulars' being individuated prevents them from corresponding to many things. But the quiddity in the mind is impressed [in the mind], and is specified by being impressed in the mind and by being separate from specific quantity and position, since, just as humanity does not entail specific quantity or specific position, so it does not entail being separate from them. Otherwise humanity could never exist as connected to these extraneous accidents.

*To which we say:* the concrete being of an extramental item is not the same as the concrete being that occurs in someone's perception. Admittedly, the form in the mind does have concrete being insofar as it is concretized in the mind, and insofar as it is an individuated accident that is distinct from other forms of the same species, whether in this mind or in other minds, so it is indeed among particulars. Nevertheless, it is a representational object (*dhāt mithāliyya*), not foundational in existence (*muta'aṣṣila fi al-wujūd*) in such a way that it would be foundational in itself; instead it is representational. [332] And not just any kind of representation, but a cognitive representation of that which has occurred, or will occur. Insofar as it is a perceptual representation of something extramental, or of something that is about to occur, whether in all respects or only one, it can correspond to many things, and so is called "universal." It occurs as an object (*dhātuḥā ḥaṣalat*) only because of its correspondence to many things, and because it is representational. By contrast, the extramental is not an object by being a representation of anything else.

[T36] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārī', Ilāhiyyāt*, 361.14–362.13

[*terminology of essences*]

You should know that, when you say "essence (*dhāt*) of a thing," or "its true reality (*ḥaqīqa*)," or "its quiddity (*māhiyya*)," what is to be understood by "quiddity,"

or “true reality,” or “essence,” taken as such and not insofar as they are human or horse, are, again, merely mental considerations and secondary intelligibles.

As stated above, “true reality (*ḥaqīqa*)” is said of something on the condition that it exists. “True reality” has been defined as “the specificity of existence established for a thing,” albeit that “*ḥaqīqa*” can [also] be used for a verbal expression’s being used in its [proper] meaning [362] for that to which it is applied; the opposite of “*ḥaqīqa*” in this sense is “figurative.” Also “*ḥaqīqa*” can be used in place of “correctness of a statement,” that is, correspondence to the fact of the matter (*amr fī nafsihī*).

“Quiddity (*māhiyya*)” is defined as “that through which something is what it is.” It can be used as a synonym of the term “true reality.” Sometimes it is used in a more specific sense, for what is other than the existence of things that have existence accidentally. It is in this sense that one says “the First Principle has no quiddity.” But in the first sense, He does have a quiddity. In fact, the very existence that is ascribed to quiddities itself has a quiddity too.

As for *dhāt* [essence, self, object], sometimes it is used to mean a quiddity that occurs among concrete individuals; so that with this usage, whatever is in the mind is not called “*dhāt*,” even though it is called “quiddity.” And given its occurrence in concrete individuals, that which is in the mind is also called “true reality.” Whereas “*dhāt*” is said only of that which is among concrete individuals. Sometimes, one means by “*dhāt*” something that does not subsist in a subject of inherence. So one might say, “*dhāt* and its attributes.” With this usage, attributes are not a “*dhāt*.” But with the previous usage, one may say that attributes too have a “*dhāt*.” Sometimes “*dhāt*” is used as a synonym of “quiddity,” and it is in this sense that things intrinsic to the quiddity are called “essential (*dhātī*).”

[T37] Al-Suhrawardī, *Talwihāt*, 192.6–193.8

[*mental distinction vs extramental unity*]

Let us take for instance a concretely existing extension of length, determined at three cubits. We shall call it, and whatever is equal to it, “C”: so this will be the name for everything of similar length. [And take] another extension, and call it and whatever is equal to it “B”. We have taken the form of C as a universal in the mind, which univocally applies to its particular [instances], and the same goes for B. Furthermore, we have taken in the mind “extension” in the abso-

lute sense, which is predicated of C, of B, and of other [extensions]. Absolute extension corresponds to the concrete particular instances of C and of B, while C corresponds [only] to its particular instances, and B to its instances. *I say then*: the particular instances of C among concrete individuals do not have two aspects, so that they would correspond to [absolute] extension with one aspect, and to “being C” with another aspect. Rather it is one and the same extension in concrete individuals, for instance of three cubits. It corresponds to “being an extension” through itself, and also to “being C.” In the concrete individuals, it has nothing that [both] corresponds to “being an extension” and is distinct from that which corresponds to “being C.”

*Problem*: [Why not say that] there is in it “being an extension” plus something additional?

*Response*: If [being an extension] were in concrete individuals, and the additional thing were an extension too, then I should like to know how much [of it] is the basic (*aṣl*) [extension] and how much the addition! And the argument can be posed again for each of them.

But in the mind, the sense (*mafhūm*) of “being C” is not one and the same as that of “being an extension.” Otherwise, since “being an extension” is predicated of B, C would need to be [predicable of B] as well, but this is not the case. Rather, every particular instance of C [193] is a single extension, a single C, and a single individual; and the same goes for B.

Thus are two points settled. First, concrete distinction need not follow from mental distinction. Second, the distinction between B and C is not through anything other than extension. Rather, it is through a perfection and deficiency they have in themselves. If a universal applies analogically (*bi-al-tashkīk*), the distinction between its individual existing instances need not be through something other than the quiddity, as with a long and a short interval. We have mentioned them since they are of this kind: the length is nothing apart from “being an interval,” which distinguishes it from other [intervals]. The same goes for the case where one thing is more white, another less: certainly, there may be further distinguishing factors, but my point is that they are not necessarily present alongside the disparity [in length].<sup>31</sup>

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31 Compare our chapter on Individuation, [T15].

[T38] Al-Suhrawardī, *Talwihāt*, 194.19–195.17

[*generic notions are merely conceptual*]

The essential [attributes] in simple species, like “being a color” in blackness, where one cannot say “color was made, then blackness was made,” or “blackness was made, then color was made,” are different from those essential [attributes] where one can indeed say, for instance, “body was made, [195] then animal was made.” The former [type of attribute] has no existence distinct from the existence of another essential [attribute]. If “being a color” had an existence distinct from the existence of whatever specifies [color as] blackness, and did not demand it due to its quiddity (for otherwise [blackness] would be a necessary concomitant [of color]), then blackness’ “being a color” could remain even while its specificity perished, and it could be connected to the specificity of whiteness, in the same way as prime matter remains even as its form perishes, being changed by us. But as there are not two acts of making, or two existences, it is one and the same thing.

If genus had an existence in concrete individuals other than that of [its] specific difference, then the substantiality that is predicated of prime matter, and of the form that exists in prime matter, would have another existing specific difference [i.e. to differentiate the substance that is matter from the substance that is form]. But its specific difference is in turn a substance too, since substance can only be constituted by substances. Furthermore, whatever is added to substantiality to produce the specific difference must have a further existence in concrete individuals, and it must have substantiality too. So an ordered infinite regress will follow, insofar as there occurs in prime matter a composition of something receptive and something formal.

*Problem:* but don’t you also have to admit such an infinite regress in the mind?

*Response:* thoughts in the mind do not necessarily have any limit.

*Problem:* then do you not [thereby] disagree with the First Teacher [Aristotle]?

*Response:* this in itself is something he could agree with, since it was in this way that he distinguished genus from matter, that is, on the basis of two acts of making.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See further the discussion of the analogy between genus and matter in Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt* v.3.

Blackness is perceived by the senses as a whole (*bi-kullīyyatihi*), as is whiteness. There is nothing at all in either of them themselves that would correspond to something in the other in sensation, but only in the intellect—unlike the relation between one body and another, for example animal and plant.<sup>33</sup>

[T39] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārīʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 368.3–12

*[genus and specific difference are not two “things,” nor are they essential constituents outside the mind]*

If the blackness in concrete individuals had two “things” in it, a portion (*hiṣṣa*) of “being a color” and a portion of “being a specific difference,” then these would be two existents. So they would need to be two features (*hayʿatayn*), given that each of them would need to have a subject of inherence, leading to the aforementioned absurdities. As for what was mentioned in your objection, as concerns the issue of correspondence [that is, how two ideas can correspond to one and the same concrete form], this too was right. Still, not everything that is predicted of a thing is predicated of it in virtue of correspondence to a concrete form (*ṣura ʿaynīyya*). Particularity for instance is predicated of Zayd, as is the meaning (*mafhūm*) of the true reality as such, yet neither is a form of [Zayd] himself nor of any of his attributes. Rather these are attributes that occur only in the mind. The correspondence happens only in cases when attributes have existence both in the mind and also in concrete reality, such as in the case of blackness and whiteness. In fact, “being a color” is a merely conceptual consideration, and the same goes for genera and specific differences. Blackness is thus a single true reality (*ḥaqīqa*) whose existence in the soul is the same as its existence in concrete individuals. It has no essential [constituent] in any way, that is, it has no parts.

[T40] Al-Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, 172.3–15

*[genus, species, and specific difference are conceptual; natures are real]*

Genus is a broad consideration that can be predicated of things in such a way that it is a quiddity that they share in common. Species is a resulting quiddity that (with the exception of relations) is specified only by items that, even if they are imagined as changing, will let the natural concrete beings (*al-huwiyyāt*

33 For the last argument cf. [T24].

*al-ṭabīʿiyya*) remain without them. The specific difference is a consideration that is specific to the substance of a thing, and distinguishes it in intellection. It is not attached to [the substance of the thing] due to any extrinsic attribute, as when the ability to laugh or write are attached in consideration of external motions. Nor is [the specific difference] itself a concrete extrinsic attribute. Instead, it is a consideration that the mind considers as if it belonged to the substance of the thing. In general, genus is the closest to the substance of the thing among the common considerations, while specific difference is the closest to the substance of the thing among the distinguishing considerations.

By contrast, the nature to which “being a species” applies is not merely conceptual; that is, it is something that belongs among the extramental individuals. If we put extrinsic relations aside, the [mere] considerations are species corresponding to [the natures], but they are [merely] intelligible, and have no individual in concrete reality. You should understand [this], because many mistakes have arisen from the failure to understand [mere] considerations, taking them instead to be concrete. (We have added the caveat “with the exception of relations” regarding species, since one cannot imagine that the simple accidents change while the relations retain the same concrete being.)

[T41] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 50.5–51.5, [trans. Walbridge and Ziai, mod.]

[*conceptual and non-conceptual attributes*]

Therefore, all attributes may be divided into two classes. First, the concrete attribute, which also has a form in the intellect. For example blackness, whiteness, and motion. Second, the attribute whose only concrete existence is its existence in the mind and which has no existence at all except in the mind. For example contingency, substantiality, being a color, existence, and other such things we have mentioned. Thus, the being that it has in the mind is of the same rank as the being that other things have in concrete reality. If a thing has existence outside the mind, then what is in the mind ought to correspond to it. However, that which is solely in the mind has no existence outside the mind to which the mental should correspond. Predicates, as such, are mental; but blackness is concrete. Since “being black (*al-aswadīyya*)” expresses something by which blackness (*al-sawād*) subsists, corporeality and substantiality do not enter into it. Rather, if blackness were to subsist in something other than a

body, one would say that this [other thing] was black. So if there is something that somehow enters into “being black,” it could only be something intellectual, nothing more, even though blackness does have existence in concrete individuals. However, when the intellectual attributes are derived and come to be predicated,<sup>34</sup> as when we say “every C is contingent,” then both “being contingent” and contingency are just intellectual, nothing more, in contrast to “being black.” For, while [“being black”] is an intellectual predicate, blackness is concrete, [although] blackness by itself is not predicated of a substance. If we say “C is impossible in concrete reality,” this does not mean that impossibility occurs in concrete reality. Rather, [impossibility] is an intellectual item that we attach sometimes to what is in the mind, and sometimes to what is in concrete reality. The same goes for other things of this sort. In such cases, error arises from taking mental things as occurring independently in concrete reality. Once you know that things like those [51] just mentioned, such as contingency, being a color, and substantiality, are intellectual predicates, [you will understand why] they are not parts of the concrete quiddities. This does not mean that we can take a mental predicate (like a genus predicated of a thing, for example), attach it in the mind to any arbitrary quiddity, and still speak truly. Rather, the predicate must be applied to that to which it specifically belongs. The same goes for existence and all the other [merely] conceptual [attributes].

[T42] Al-Suhrawardī, *Talwihāt*, 175.17–176.11

[*rejection of states as neither existent nor non-existent*]

There is no middle ground between existence and non-existence. Some people took the predicates of true realities, such as “being a color” for its species [e.g. black, white, etc.], [176] to be neither existent nor non-existent. They called them “states.” They were misled by universals that are neither non-existent in the mind, nor existent among concrete individuals.

*It may be said to them:* if blackness is non-existent, then its “being a color” is non-existent too, since if blackness is not existent, its “being a color” is not realized. If blackness is brought into existence, while “being a color” remains in

34 Al-Suhrawardī means that adjectives describing mental attributes need to be derived from nouns, for instance “contingent” from “contingency,” just as being black is derived from blackness. On derivative predication see our chapter on Predication in the *Logic and Epistemology* volume.

non-existence, then something existent has a non-existent attribute ascribed to it, which is absurd. If [blackness] is brought into existence, then [being a color] occurs.

*But they say* that existence is of this kind, and that things are distinguished through states. It's amazing how [on their view] there is nothing in existence apart from that which is shared in common, or that which gives rise to distinction, so that for them everything is neither existent nor non-existent, and there is nothing existent in existence. But so long as you understand that an attribute of something is either occurring (*hāšila*) to it, in which case it is existent (since occurrence just is existence), or not occurring, in which case it is non-existent, then let there be no quarreling over words. What they call "real" is what we call "existent," while what they call "unreal," we call "non-existent."

[T43] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 3, 416.12–417.15

[*against aḥwāl as the features of commonality and difference*]

*They say:* obviously blackness and whiteness agree in being a color but differ in being blackness and whiteness. That through which there is agreement is other than that through which there is difference. Otherwise both would be one and the same thing. Hence [being blackness and being a color] are different, which was the conclusion sought.

*But this too is wrong.* By their statement that blackness and whiteness share in being a color, they either mean (a) that they are both named (*tasmiya*) "color"—that is, one applies "color" to each of them as a verbal expression—or (b) that both [share in] what is named.

(a) The former would be in contradiction to the doctrine of the proponents of states. Besides, namings are not the attributes of objects: states are. (b) But if the second is the case, whatever is designated by "being a color" must be divided into the universal—that is, that whose meaning can be shared by many—and the individuated, which cannot be shared by many. The former is like "being a color" taken in the mind. This cannot be realized in concrete individuals. The second is like this or that color. [417] In light of which, if they mean "being a color" as individuated, they should either say that whatever is affirmed for blackness in terms of being a color is affirmed for whiteness as well, or that whatever is specific for each of them is other than [that which is specified for the other]. But the first option can be ruled out. Otherwise, it would follow



that what is numerically multiplied is one, and vice-versa, which is absurd. If, however, one adopts the second option, then [being a color] would be a state for blackness and whiteness only if it were additional to the meaning of blackness and whiteness. But this is not admissible. Rather, [being a color] is intrinsic to the meaning of each of them, and constituent of their true realities. That is why whoever wants to grasp intellectually the meaning of blackness and whiteness cannot do it without having first understood the meaning of being a color. How can that which constitutes an existent and is intrinsic to its true reality be a state, [that is,] something additional to it? How can it be neither existent nor non-existent, given that it is a constituent of an existent?

If, however, they mean by [being a color] “being a color” without qualification, then this cannot be conceived as an attribute for the individualization of objects. To say that it is “shared” just means that the meaning of “being a color” that arises in the mind corresponds in definition and true reality to whatever occurs that has this meaning, whichever individual this may be. Conversely, a state must be an attribute of an existent object. Besides, how can the universal meaning of color be said to be neither existent nor non-existent? Rather, it is existent in the mind and non-existent in concrete individuals.

[T44] Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, 35.16–26

[*difference is through things themselves, not through “states”*]

If the difference is due to that very thing that is designated by the expressions “being blackness” and “being whiteness” [and the difference is not merely nominal], then this is either (a) identical to the object distinguished, or (b) occurs in it, or (c) occurs to it extrinsically. (a) Regarding the first option, the distinction between objects is due only to themselves, not to items that are additional to them. (b) The same goes for the second option, too. (c) As for the third option, how can one say that whatever accounts for the distinction between two objects is additional to them, and extrinsic to them? Sound<sup>35</sup> reasoning judges that the difference between objects may be due to items such that the objects can be grasped intellectually only once these items have been grasped; [items, for example,] through which there is difference between human and

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35 Reading *al-ṣaḥīḥ* for *ṣaḥīḥ*.

horse, or between substance and accident, or other cases of different species and genera. In these cases, what accounts for the difference is neither extrinsic nor an additional state.

[T45] Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, 34.16–23

[*against nominalism*]

*Do not let the opponents of states say:* blackness and whiteness share nothing in common apart from mere naming (*tasmīyya*). For we perceive that there is common sharing in a class, even without considering namings and expressions. And we are aware that things share something in common, even if [naming] conventions and appellations perish. [Our awareness of shared features] arises only by looking at intellectual judgment and meaningful form. How could this not be so, given that we can intellectually grasp the true reality of human [both] absolutely and as individual? Grasping it intellectually as a universal is not the same as grasping it as an individual. This is why, even if all individual instances of human existing among concrete individuals should perish, the absolute true reality existing in the minds would not vanish.

[T46] Al-Āmidī, *Kashf al-tamwīhāt*, 212.18–24

[*al-Rāzī's position: essences as such are extramentally real*]

We have shown previously that the “range (*qadr*)” of human, which is shared in common by extramental individuals, exists extramentally. For “this human” is an expression for the human that is qualified by being this. And whenever a composite is existent, so are the simple [parts]. So human as such, [213] taken without the condition of anything (*lā bi-sharṭ shay*), is existent. However, human taken without the condition of anything is not perceptible to the senses, since so long as it is not qualified as a particular and individual, it does not become sensible. Thus it has been established that something non-sensible exists. [...]

[*al-Āmidī's response: only individuals exist extramentally*]

[213.9] *Our master* [al-Āmidī] *said:* his first response is not correct. The “range” of human that is shared in common by individuals cannot exist among concrete individuals. When we consider the humanity that is specific to Zayd, it cannot exist in ‘Amr, and vice-versa. The humanity that is specific to each individual is not shared in common by them. By contrast, when we consider

humanity as such, separate from attachments and accidents that are specific to each individual, it cannot exist in concrete individuals. Upon excluding accidents and attachments from consideration, [humanity] is just one.

Moreover, if [humanity as such] did exist in concrete individuals, then either (a) what exists in Zayd would be the same as that which exists in ‘Amr, or (b) not. (a) The former is absurd, since from this would follow either that what is one is numerically multiple, or that the numerically multiplied is one. (b) But the second is absurd too, since we have assumed that we are leaving out of consideration the accidents that necessitate numerical multiplicity, since that would be absurd.

When he says, “for ‘this man’ is an expression for the human that is qualified by being this. And whenever a composite is existent, so are the simple [parts],” this would follow only if the simple [part] of our expression “this human” were human taken absolutely. But this is not the case, since the absolute cannot be indicated; rather [what is indicated] is only the qualified and individuated human, who is qualified as “this.”

[T47] Al-Āmidī, *Daqā’iq al-ḥaqā’iq, Mantīq*, 49.2–14

[*universals do exist, but only in the mind*]

On the basis of what we have verified concerning the meaning of the universal, [it is clear] that it cannot exist in individuals. Otherwise that which may be shared in common would be limited by something<sup>36</sup> that does not allow being shared in common, which is absurd. Still, it is not as the Cynics (*al-kalbīyyīn*)<sup>37</sup> thought: that the universal is imaginary or fabricated, and not subsistent or existent. For, even though [the universal] does not possess existence among concrete entities or individuals, still it is existent in the intellect. For any reasonable person finds from himself and within [18r] himself the existence of meanings that, if he were to relate them to individual entities, would correspond to them, in the way one forms representations of the meanings of man, horse, and so on. How could it be otherwise? For we know that the individuals belonging to the species of human, for instance, either agree in all respects, or differ in all respects, or agree in certain respects and differ in others. If they

36 Correcting *fihā* to *fī-mā*.

37 MS Princeton, Garret Collection 42B, fol. 17v21 reads *za’īm al-kalbīyyīn*, that is, “the leader of Cynics.”

agreed in all respects, then they would not be numerically multiple; but in fact they are. If they differed in all respects, and if one of them is human, then no other individual could be human, which is a contradiction. So it remains only that they agree in certain respects and differ in others. In light of this, it is obviously possible to leave aside whatever is different, and conceptualize that in which they agree. And what is thus conceptualized just is the universal meaning.

[T48] Al-Abharī, *Khulāṣat al-afkār*, 123.14–20

[*not all existents are individuals*]

We say: when you claim that everything extramentally existent is individuated, if you mean by this that every single individual that may truly be called “existent” is individuated, then from this one may conclude that none of these single [beings] is universal. But why draw from this the inference that no existent is a universal? If, on the other hand, you mean that every existent entity is individuated, then this is false, since animal as such (*min ḥaythu huwa huwa*) is an existent entity, but cannot truly be said to be individuated, since it does not exclude being said truly of many things.

[T49] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*, 28.20–29.6

[*quiddity is not itself individual*]

When you claim that everything extramentally existent is individuated, if you mean by this that nothing existent among concrete individuals can be [29] shared in common, then this cannot be right. For animal as such does exist extramentally, but does not exclude being shared in common. But if you mean that everything that exists in concrete individuals either excludes being shared in common, or has individuation occur to it accidentally, then we do not concede that, when individuation occurs to a thing accidentally, it is no longer universal. This is because individuation requires that a composite, made up out of quiddity and individuation, excludes sharing in common. But why do you say that this requires that the quiddity [on its own] excludes being shared in common? This would need to be shown.

[T50] Al-Abhari, *Daqā'iq al-afkār*, 525.17–527.3

[*the three kinds of universality, and their ontological status*]

When we say that something is universal, we may [mean] three different things: a quiddity as such; the consideration of its being universal; or the composition of these two. The first is called “natural universal (*kullī ṭabīʿī*),” the second “logical universal (*kullī mantiqī*),” the third “intelligible universal (*kullī ʿaqlī*).”

The natural universal is extramentally existent, since animal as such is a part of *this* animal; the latter exists; a part of the existent is itself existent; so therefore animal as such exists.

The intelligible universal exists only in the mind, not extramentally. For it is either absolutely non-existent, or exists in one of the two modes of existence. The first option is false, since one cannot truly say of something absolutely non-existent that it is universal. So it exists in one of the two modes of existence. It does not have extramental existence, since everything that exists extramentally is individuated, and no individuated thing is such that [526] “universal” enters into its meaning (*mafhūm*). So nothing extramentally existent is such that “universal” may enter into its meaning; nor is anything that has “universal” enter into its meaning extramentally existent. Therefore, the intelligible universal does not exist extramentally.

[*first objection: are there not real entities that lack individuation?*]

*Let it not be said:* we do not concede that everything extramentally existent is individuated. For animal as such exists extramentally, but is not individuated.

*For we say:* when we claim that everything extramentally existent is individuated, we mean that everything extramentally existent may truly be said to have a concrete being (*huwiyya muʿayyina*) in extramental reality. And one can truly say of animal as such that it has a concrete being in extramental reality, so it is true to say that of it that it is individuated, as an accidental predication.

The logical universal does not exist extramentally either, since otherwise the composite [universal] would exist extramentally, and we have already refuted this.

*[second objection: the universal in the mind is particular]*

*Let it not be said:* the universal exists neither in the mind nor extramentally. Not extramentally, for the reason already given. And not in the mind, because everything that exists in the mind has an individual form in an individual soul. Nothing of this kind is such as to be universal. Therefore, nothing universal exists in the mind.

*For we say:* we do not concede that nothing of this kind is such as to be universal. For whatever is composed from a quiddity and a qualification of being universal does have an individual form in an individual soul, but still one can truly say about it that it is universal, given that “universal” necessarily enters into its meaning.

*[three arguments for the extramental being of universals]*

*Let it not be said:* the intelligible universal is extramentally existent, by the following arguments.

*First,* the universal exists either in the mind or in extramental reality. The first option is false, since the form of man in the intellect originates only after the origination of the individual, so it is posterior to him. And everything posterior is accidental. So the mental form is accidental. And nothing accidental can be divided into essential and accidental, so the mental form cannot be divided into these two. Yet the universal is thus divided. So the universal is not a mental form, nor is it existent in the mind. Therefore it exists extramentally.

*Second,* whenever the form occurs in the intellect, a conceptualization arises for us that may be shared in common among individuals. From [the form’s] occurrence in [the intellect] follows an intellectual judgment that there is a “range” which those individuals share. This judgment either corresponds [to reality] or does not. The latter option is false, since otherwise [this judgment] would be ignorance. So the first option is right: the shared range does exist in extramental reality. Hence, the universal is extramentally existent.

*Third,* we know necessarily that the individual instances of one and the same species share the nature of that species in common, but differ from one another in virtue of their specifying features. That through which there is sharing is not that through which there is distinction. This being so, the participated range exists extramentally. So the intelligible universal exists extramentally.

[*responses: the essence is neutral*]

*For we say:* as for the *first*, we do not concede that the intelligible universal is divided into essential and accidental. Rather it is the quiddity as such that is thus divided; and it is the natural universal. As for the *second* and the *third* [arguments], they refer to the realization of the shared range in extramental reality. But why should it [527] follow from this that the intelligible universal exists extramentally? For the shared range is the quiddity as such. It differs from the intelligible universal as part differs from whole.

So it has been explained that the intelligible universal does not exist extramentally.

[T51] Al-Abharī, *Maṭālīʿ*, fol. 114r20–114v10

[*a universal in the mind is itself an individual form, but corresponds to many things*]

The universal is a meaning that does not exclude being predicated of many things. It does not exist in concrete individuals, because everything that exists in concrete individuals has a concrete being (*huwīyya*) [114v] which nothing else can share in common. Nothing of this kind is universal, so the universal does not exist extramentally. Rather [the universal] exists in the mind. It is an intelligible form which corresponds to that which has occurred, or will occur, as concrete particular instantiations. When we say this form is universal (*kullī*), we do not mean that this form itself exists in the whole (*al-kull*) [set of particulars]. For it is an individual form in an individual soul, so it cannot itself be existent in something else. Rather, by its being “universal” we mean that it corresponds to the whole, in the sense that, whichever of the individuals presents itself to the soul first, when the soul takes that quiddity as separate from all extrinsic attachments, there will be one and the same result for the intellect. This is the meaning of its being “shared in common.”

[T52] Al-Abharī, *Bayān al-asrār*, fol. 42r12–42v8

[*contradiction argument*]

The universal human is not one and the same entity (*maʿnā*) as that which itself exists in particulars. For one and the same thing cannot be conceived as existing in multiple subjects of inherence. Also, if humanity were one and the same

in all people, then the humanity that exists in Zayd would be the same as the humanity that exists in ‘Amr. But one of these two is white and knowing, while the other is black and ignorant. So one and the same thing would be Zayd and ‘Amr, knowing and ignorant, white and black, which is absurd.

*[the universal is not divided among individuals; it is in the mind]*

Nor can it be the case that there is in each of them some [part] of humanity. Otherwise, whenever an individual perishes, it would follow that one of the parts that make up humanity would need to perish. Rather, in each human there is a complete humanity that is distinct from what is in someone else. The universal humanity is a form that is taken from Zayd, and which corresponds to Zayd and to other individual humans. Its existence is in the mind; it does not occur in concrete individuals. Otherwise it would [42v] have an individuated concrete being that would exclude [its] being shared in common.

*[objection that the universal in the mind is an individual, with correspondence solution]*

*You may say:* the nature in the mind is an individual form in an individual soul, so it is not universal. *We say:* even though the mental form has concrete being and is distinct from other forms that belong to the same species in virtue of becoming concrete in the mind, nonetheless it is a perceptual representation (*mithāl idrākī*) of that which has occurred or will occur. So, insofar as it is a perceptual representation of that which has occurred or will occur, and truly corresponds to many things, it is universal. The correspondence can be explained as follows: when we see Zayd and the form of humanity arises in our mind as a result, and when we see ‘Amr and conceptualize a form [on that basis], the result in both cases will be one and the same thing.

[T53] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, 260.11–14

*[quiddity “on the condition of nothing else” has no existence]*

Humanity “on the condition that nothing else [is added]” exists neither extramentally nor in the mind. For mental existence is also an attachment, so [quiddity in the mind] is not separate from all attachments either. As for the humanity that is separate from all *extramental* attachments, this does exist in the mind.



[T54] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, 262.19–263.16

[*the parts of the quiddity are extramentally distinct, but individuated only in the mind*]

*The philosophers (al-ḥukamā')* said: the parts of the quiddity may be distinct in extramental reality, like body and soul, which are two parts of the human, or they may be distinct in the mind only, like blackness. For its genus is not distinct from its specific difference in extramental reality. So what is meant by this is not that [263] the extramental blackness is something simple in itself, and that from this simple thing two forms arise in the intellect, one of the two being the form of the genus, the other the form of the specific difference, with both corresponding to that simple thing, but blackness not including both concepts in extramental reality. For two distinct forms cannot correspond to a simple quiddity. Instead, what is meant is that blackness in concrete individuals does not have one individuation for its genus, and another for its specific difference. Rather, one and the same individuation occurs to blackness insofar as it is blackness. For we know necessarily that the object (*al-dhāt*) which is blackness is identical to color. Yet when each of the two parts are represented in the mind, a [distinct] individuation in the mind does occur to each of them.

*Let it not be said:* the existence of the part is distinct from the existence of the whole, because it is prior to it. This being so, the existence of the part and its individuation comes before the existence of the whole and its individuation, and the individuation of the whole is not the same as the individuation of the part.

*For we say:* we do not concede that the individuation of the part is not<sup>38</sup> the individuation of the whole. Why can't one say that the existence of the specific difference is individuated through its being added to the quiddity of the specific difference, and the existence of genus is individuated through its being added to the quiddity of the genus, as connected to the quiddity of the specific difference? Then the individuation of the composite quiddity would be the same as the individuation the two meanings that are intrinsic to it. Nothing rules this out.

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38 Retaining the negation *lā yakūnu* from MS Majlis-i Shurā-yi Millī 2752, 116.18.

[T55] Al-Abharī, *Tanzīl al-afkār*, 37r6–11

[*merely conceptual and real quiddities*]

If quiddity is an occurring species, it is called “true quiddity (*al-māhiyya al-ḥaqīqīyya*)”; but if it occurs only in intellectual consideration (*bi-i’tibār ‘aqlī*), it is called “merely conceptual quiddity (*al-māhiyya al-i’tibārīyya*),” for instance, “white animal.” The part of a true quiddity must be existent, since no part of an existent thing can be non-existent. As for the merely conceptual quiddity, it can be composed from the existent and the non-existent, for instance the ignorant, the non-existent, and the blind.

[T56] Al-Abharī, *Tanzīl al-afkār*, 37r27–37v6

[*al-Rāzī’s argument from sensation, with refutation*]

*It has been said:* a composite quiddity may sometimes be composite extramentally, as human is composed from body and rational soul, or it may be composite [only] in the mind, like blackness: its genus is not distinct from its specific difference in extramental reality. For if [the genus] were distinct from [the specific difference], then each of them would be perceived by the senses individually, and then the sense perception of blackness would be the sense perception of two things, which is a contradiction; or only one of the two [genus or specific difference] would be individually perceived by the senses. If this were genus, then the sense perception of blackness would be the sense perception of “being a color” without qualification, which is absurd. But if [what was sensed] were the specific difference, then sensible blackness would be just the specific difference. Color, though, is a constituent of the quiddity of sensible blackness. So then genus would enter into the nature [37v] of the specific difference, which is a contradiction. On the other hand, if neither of them were perceived by the senses, then if no sensible form occurs in virtue of their conjunction, then blackness would not be sensible [at all]. If however [such a sensible form] does occur, then it would be extrinsic to them, so neither of them would be a part of blackness.

*We say:* We do not concede that [the sensible form] would not be a part of blackness. This would follow only if whatever occurs [in virtue of the conjunction of the genus and the specific difference] were something beyond the conjunction. Why can’t that which arises be the conjunction [itself], so that it would be perceived by the senses, whereas neither [genus nor specific difference] are perceived by the senses when taken individually?

[T57] Al-Abharī, *Bayān al-asrār*, fol. 43r8–15

[*distinctions in the mind may have no extramental correspondence; cf. T37*]

Some things have an existence distinct from the existence of the quiddity, both in the mind and in concrete reality; others are distinct in the mind, but not in concrete reality. For instance, we might take an isosceles triangle that exists concretely; call it “triangle C.” And take [also] the form of the universal in the mind, which corresponds to the particular instantiations [of triangles C]. Finally, take the absolute triangle in the mind, which corresponds to the particular instantiations of the form which corresponds to triangle C and other [particular triangles]. Now, triangle C does not have aspects that are distinct among the concrete individuals, such that it could correspond to the universal form of the triangle C under one aspect, and to the universal form of the absolute triangle in another aspect. Rather, among the concrete individuals, there is just one and the same triangle. So it is clear that distinction in mental existence does not imply distinction in concrete existence.

[T58] Al-Abharī, *Bayān al-asrār*, fol. 43r17–43v8

[*the unity of extramental quiddity*]

The essential [constituent] of a simple species, like “being a color” for blackness, has no existence distinct from the existence of another essential [constituent of this species]. For, if “being a color” had an existence distinct from the existence of whatever specifies blackness, then we could retain blackness’s “being a color” even as whatever specifies [blackness] vanishes, and attach to it whatever specifies [43v] whiteness. Thus the simple species in concrete individuals is one single thing (*shay’wāḥid*). Furthermore, if genus had an existence within the simple species other than the existence of the specific difference, then the substantiality that is predicated of prime matter (*hayūlā*) would have existence in prime matter, and it would have a further specific difference; then there would be another prime matter for the prime matter, and so on to infinity. Also, if substantiality had existence in the form, then it would have a specific difference, and that would be a substance [as well]. So it would have another specific difference, and so on to infinity. Thus, the essential [constituents] of simple species have no existence other than the existence of other essential [constituents of that species]. So it is clear that composite quiddities may in some cases be composed only in the mind, but may in other cases be composed both in the mind and in concrete reality.

[T59] Al-Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd al-‘aqa’id*, 73.3–74.6

[*terminology of essence and the universal as essence “without condition of anything”*]

[The term for quiddity, *māhiyya*] is derived from “what it is (*mā huwa*),” and is what must be [stated in response] to the question “what is it?” It is predominantly applied to intelligible items, whereas “essence (*dhāt*)” and “true reality (*ḥaqīqa*)” are used when existence is also taken into consideration (*ma’a i’tibār al-wujūd*). All of them are secondary intelligibles.

The true reality of each thing is distinct from whatever occurs to it regarding aspects of consideration (*min al-i’tibārāt*). Otherwise, one could never truly predicate it of whatever is opposed to [these aspects]. It is the quiddity together with each accident that may be opposed to [the same quiddity] together with the contrary of [that accident]; but [the quiddity] as such is nothing but what it is. If someone asks which side of the opposition applies to it [that is, as having a given accident or as having the contrary of that accident], the answer will be to deny everything of it before it is taken as such [i.e. as having the accident, or its contrary], but not thereafter. And quiddity may be also taken in isolation from whatever is other than it, so that if anything were joined to it, this would be something additional to it, and [the quiddity] would not be predicated of the combination. It is this that is quiddity “on the condition [74] that nothing else” [is attached to it]. It exists only in the mind. And it may also be taken “without the condition of anything,” which is the natural universal (*kullī ṭabī‘ī*) that exists extramentally. It is a part of the individuals, and can be truly applied to the combination that arises from it and whatever is joined to it. The universality that is accidental to quiddity is called the “logical universal (*kullī mantiqī*),” while the composite is the “intelligible [universal].” Both are [only] in the mind. These three ways of considering a quiddity are inevitably realized for every intelligible quiddity.

[T60] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-muḥaṣṣal*, 85.10–86.2

[*clarification of the doctrine of states*]

*I say:* everything the intellect can indicate is divided into that which has realization (*taḥaqquq*), and that which does not: this is the same as the division between the affirmed and the denied. [The proponents of states] do not disagree with this, nor do they affirm a middle ground between affirmation and negation. What they claim is rather that existence is more specific than real-

ity (*thubūt*). The existent is any object that has the attribute of existence, and “non-existent” is said of any object that lacks this attribute. But an attribute is itself not an object, so it must be neither existent nor non-existent. This is what led them to claim that there is a middle ground [between existence and non-existence]. For by “object (*dhāt*)” and “thing,” they meant whatever is known, and whatever one can speak about informatively, independent [from anything else]. By “attribute (*ṣifa*)” they meant whatever is known only because it follows something else. [On their view] every object is either existent or non-existent: “non-existent” is said of any object that lacks the attribute of existence, but it can have other attributes, like the attributes of genera, according to those who affirm these of non-existent things. [86] According to them, this is compatible with the definition that has been given. Really, the disagreement over this issue comes down to clarifying what the terminology means.

[T61] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 89.13–90.8

[*response to T33: refutation of argument concerning accidents of accidents*]

*I say:* the attributes that are shared in common must either be positive (*thubūtiyya*) or not. Those that are positive must either be included within the meanings (*mafhūmāt*) of those things that share them in common, or not. Those that are included are, for instance, color, which is shared by blackness and whiteness. [Attributes like color] are a part of the meaning of “being blackness” and “being whiteness.” Now, a part is not an accident subsisting in the composite. So the fact that different things are described by [these attributes] does not imply the subsistence of one accident in another. The [attributes] that are not included, meanwhile, are for instance the accident attributed to blackness, or motion. The accident occurs to them accidentally, and is not included within their meanings. But even the accidental occurrence of one thing for another does not involve the subsistence of one accident in another. So, from the fact that an attribute is shared accidentally by different things, it does not follow that it *subsists* in them, unless some separate proof is given for this. As for negative attributes, since they are not positive, the fact that they are attributed to [different things] does not imply that an accident subsists in an accident [either].

[*on the infinite regress of states*]

As for [al-Rāzī’s] spurious discussion of the claim made by the proponents [of states] that the state is described neither as similar nor different, this has no

force against them. *For they would say*: two similar things are two objects from which one may understand one and the same meaning, while two different things [90] are those from which one cannot do this. But a state is not an “object (*dhāt*),” nor is it the object of an object. So it is described as neither similar nor different. This is shown by the fact that an object is whatever is perceived in isolation, and a state cannot be perceived in isolation. How can what is perceived concerning one state be the same as what is perceived concerning another state, given that every state is [only ever] perceived together with something else? Whatever is shared in common [by different states] cannot be perceived in isolation, such that one could judge that what is perceived concerning one of them is the same as what is perceived concerning another. On the other hand, don’t you say that whenever the intellect indicates two different things, whatever is perceived concerning them is either one and the same, or not? But a state is not something the intellect can indicate without simultaneously indicating something else.

[T62] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 90.20–91.4

[*need for something extramental to correspond to universals*]

*I say*: genera and specific differences are not assents, but rather single conceptualizations. And whatever is formulated while making no judgment as to correspondence with extramental reality need not correspond [to it]. Otherwise it would be composite ignorance. For composite ignorance is a judgment that something occurs, without its in fact occurring. In a single conceptualization, though, one considers neither correspondence nor deviation from [correspondence]. Of course, one may consider that which has genera and specific differences to have certain modes (*ḥaythiyyāt*) in respect of them, such that intellects may grasp the genera and specific differences from [those modes]. This is why both are rejected in the case of the Necessary Existent, since in Him there are no modes. “Sharing in common,” though, means precisely that whatever is intellectually grasped from one thing that shares is the same as whatever is grasped from another, in regard to that which both share. [Its meaning] is not that one and the same thing would exist in two extramentally existing things simultaneously; nor that a half of it would be in each of the two; or be outside both of them while being attributed to them.

[T63] Al-Kātibī, *Munaṣṣaṣ*, fol. 13v24–27

[*what corresponds to a mental concept is not something concrete, but a form in the Active Intellect*]

We say: there is no dependence [of the conceptualized universal on what is in concrete particulars]. He [sc. al-Rāzī] argues that in that case, the mental conceptualization would not correspond to any extramental item. *But we say*: we do not concede this. That would follow only if the correspondence of the mental conceptualization to an extramental item came down to the correspondence of that which is in the mind to concrete, self-subsisting things. But this is not the case. Rather, we mean correspondence to whatever is inscribed in the Active Intellect. Why don't you just say that this shared "range" is inscribed in the Active Intellect?

[T64] Al-Kātibī, *Munaṣṣaṣ*, fol. 14r9–11; 14r15–17

[*isn't the extramental quiddity also universal?*]

If the universality of the single true realities that arises in the soul were due not to its being in the soul, but to its being related to individuals in one and the same way, then the quiddity of every individual in extramental reality would be universal, on the condition of eliminating individualizing features from it. [The quiddity would be universal] not because it exists in extramental reality, but because it is related to its individuals in one and the same way. In general, what is the difference between two cases? [...]

[*response*]

[14r15] The first approach is obviously false, since the conditional mentioned in it must be rejected. For it is absurd to relate the quiddity to its instances when it is just extramentally real. This relation is possible only when [the quiddity] occurs in the mind. Thus universality occurs to what is in the mind and not to what is in extramental reality.

[T65] Bar Hebraeus, *Hēwath ḥekhmthā*, *Met.*, 130.13–131.3

[*essence is universal only in the mind: bi-sharṭ lā formula in Syriac*]

The true reality (*ḥathūthawt*) of a thing insofar as it is what it is, is its quiddity. The intellect separates it from everything changeable that belongs to it. [...] [131.2] The quiddity that is not qualified (*lā methḥamṭā 'amm meddem*) by

anything else exists in actuality, since it is a part of an individual, and [the individual] exists in actuality. Still, the quiddity that is qualified in such a way that there is nothing else (*methḥamtā ‘amm lā meddem*) with it does not exist extramentally.

[T66] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 90.20–91.6

[*Suhrawardian representationalist solution to the problem that the mental universal is a particular*]

*It should be known that:* the nature that is in the mind has a concrete being as well, since it is among [91] the existents, and is specified by certain features, such as “occurring in the mind,” “lacking indication,” and being indivisible and without position. Its being universal does not just come down to its corresponding to many things, since otherwise particulars would be like this too, given that they correspond to one another. Nor is [its being universal] due to this plus its being unspecified, since as we have just explained, it is specified by a number of features. Rather [its being universal consists in] its being a representational object (*dhāt mithālīyya*) which is not something fundamental in respect of existence (*muta’aṣṣila fī al-wujūd*). A quiddity in itself is fundamental, whereas [a universal in the mind] is a representation: not just any representation, but a perceptual representation of whatever has occurred or will occur.

[T67] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 93.7–16

[*secondary intelligibles*]

When you say “the essence (*dhāt*) of something,” or “its true reality,” or “its quiddity,” the senses of these [expressions]—not insofar as they are human, horse, or whatever—are merely mental considerations, and among the secondary intelligibles. The same is not said of the common nature (which has no existence among concrete individuals) as it is said of the [nature] which does have existence among concrete individuals, insofar as, if its specification to one particular has become necessary, then it does not exist for any other [particular]. If [its specification] is merely contingent, though, its attachment [to this particular] is due to some cause. This is like number, which is specified in its species: one cannot say that it must be specified as one of [the numbers], like four, and does not exist for three. And if [being a number] does not require this, then its attachment to three is through some cause. The reason is that number,



as you will learn, is among the things that do not exist in concrete individuals, just insofar as it is “being number.” So its attachment [to any specific number] is neither necessary nor contingent, insofar as it is in concrete existence.

[T68] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 95.16–18

[*genus is not distinct from species in extramental reality*]

Also, if “being a color” had independent existence, then it would either be a feature (*hay’a*) in blackness, and then blackness [could] exist without it; or it would be in the subject of inherence [of blackness]. But then blackness would be two accidents, not one: color and its specific difference. So whoever makes color is the same as the one who creates blackness.

[T69] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 96.14–16

[*not everything in the mind has extramental correspondence*]

The fact that genus and specific difference are predicated of species, and are among its constituents in the mind, does not show that [this species] is composite in *extramental* reality. For what is in the mind need not correspond to that which is in concrete reality, unless extramental things are predicated of extramental items. Not everything that is predicated of something is predicated of it in virtue of its correspondence to the concrete form. For instance, particularity is predicated of Zayd, and so is the true reality as such. Yet neither are forms of him in himself, nor are they among his attributes. Rather they are attributes of him that exist only in the mind. The same goes for genus and specific difference.

[T70] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 113.16–114.5

[*why division can be infinite in the mind*]

There need be no limit to thoughts in the mind. *Verification*: we do not understand this in the sense that the infinite occurs in the mind all together, but in the sense that the mind does not stop at any limit. For instance, one is half of two, third of three, and so on. For whatever continuously occurs in our minds from among them is finite, unlike how they would be in extramental existence. In the latter case, their existence is not dependent on thoughts about them, so that if they were without limit they would all be together [at once]. This is clear

from the issue we [previously discussed], namely the species in which there are substances in an infinite ordered series: when each of them has an existence in extramental reality that is distinct from the existence of another, then it is known [114] as a matter of certainty that on this assumption, they must exist all together in extramental reality. But if their existences are not distinct in extramental reality, but instead they are distinct from one another only in terms of mental consideration (*al-ʿtibār al-dihnī*), then none of them need be distinguished in the mind apart from the one that is just being thought about, without the ones that are not being thought about. Their being infinite in the mind means that thinking about them does not arrive at any end, so that [the mind] would be unable to think about anything else. If something is infinite in this sense, it is not rendered impossible by the aforementioned rule as to when there must be a limit, and when not.

[T71] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 114.12–19

*[did Aristotle and al-Suhrawardī disagree about unity of genus and specific difference outside the mind?]*

*Second question:* the First Teacher Aristotle, from whom the recent thinkers took this science [sc. metaphysics], held that the existence of genus is distinct from the existence of specific difference. So to hold that they are one in existence is to disagree with him.

*Response:* even if we admitted that the Teacher disagreed with this, that would not undermine its correctness. For in the true sciences, one should only rely on demonstration, not uncritical acceptance of authority (*al-taqlīd*). But since the author of this book [al-Suhrawardī] did not in fact disagree with the First Teacher on this topic of inquiry, he had no need to mention this point in response. Instead, he showed that Aristotle too held [the unity of genus and specific difference], when he drew a contrast between genus and matter, on the grounds that there is no act of making for a genus distinct from the act of making a specific difference, whereas there is an act of making matter distinct from that of making form. The unity of the acts of making is the unity of the existences. He held that the existence of genus is distinct from the existence of specific difference, but only in terms of mental consideration.

[T72] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Taḥwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 114.23–115.17

[*sensation argument*]

*Detailed clarification of this demonstration:* if there were a genus whose [115] existence was distinct from that of the specific difference,<sup>39</sup> then in concrete individuals blackness would be composed from color, which is its genus, and something else, which is its specific difference. The same goes for whiteness and other colors.

(a) If neither of the two [parts of blackness] taken by itself—supposing that it could be by itself—is perceptible to the senses, and (a<sub>1</sub>) if no [new] sensible form occurs when they are conjoined, then blackness would not be perceptible to the senses [at all]. But (a<sub>2</sub>) if [a new form] does occur, then it will be additional to the genus and the specific difference, so they will not be its constituents.

(b) If, on the other hand, this were not so, and just one of the two were perceptible to the senses, but (b<sub>1</sub>) another sensible form arose whenever something else were joined to it, then perception [of blackness] would be a perception of two sensible objects, which is a contradiction. But (b<sub>2</sub>) if [no new form were to occur] then only the genus or the specific difference would be perceptible to the senses, so a part would be [equal] to the whole, which is absurd.

(c) And if, finally, each of them by itself were perceptible to the senses, and (c<sub>1</sub>) they remained like this after being conjoined, then we should perceive two objects of sensation. (c<sub>2</sub>) If however they did not remain like this, so that only one of them were perceived and not the other, then the absurdity [of option (b)] would arise again. Otherwise, (c<sub>3</sub>) if no [new] sensible form were to occur, blackness would not be perceptible to the senses [at all]. But (c<sub>4</sub>) if [a new form] did occur, this would not be identical to the conjunction itself, since the conjunction would be [just] the genus and the specific difference. So if neither of them were perceptible to the senses, the conjunction would not be perceptible to the senses either, and [blackness] would be something beyond the composite of the two parts; so they would not be its constituents, which is a contradiction.

39 Lit. “If there were no genus that did not have an existence not identical to that of the specific difference.”

[T73] Al-Shahrazūri, *Shajara*, vol. 1, 92.10–15

[*only particulars exist extramentally*]

*This calls for further inquiry* [sc. whether the natural universal exists extramentally]. For animal as such is universal animal, and nothing universal is individuated; but everything that is existent is individuated. Therefore nothing universal is existent. The minor [premise] is obvious. As for the major [premise], the reason is that, so long as the object (*dhāt*) and concrete being (*huwiyya*) of any existent is not concretized, it will not become existent. But as soon as the object is concretized, one can indicate it. Now, if animal as such were part of this [concrete animal], it would have to be concretized and individuated, in which case it would not be universal. For the very conceptualization of its meaning excludes that [multiple things] share in it. This and other such cases are mental considerations, and no concrete being ever occurs for them.

[T74] Al-Shahrazūri, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 210.6–212.8

[*Illuminationist account of mere concepts*]

Given that human perfections arise only from the intellectual knowledge, which takes its origin from sensible things; and that it is a habit of divine mercy and of lordly providence not to withhold anything that is necessarily required by individuals, nor does He refrain from bestowing whatever enters into the well-being of species, rather He is “the One who gives each thing its form and then guides it” [Qurʾān 20:50]; therefore, out of elemental roots and using intellectual mediators as means, God the exalted surely erects for human souls temples built perfectly upon strong foundations, in the most complete way required and the most excellent way possible, that [these temples] might serve as places of respite and relief for souls. And He opens diverse doors into these temples. Some of them lead up to the world of sense, such as the external senses, while some lead up to the world of suspended images, these being the internal senses. The rational soul too has a door and a wellspring in itself, which leads up to the angelic world (*ʿālam al-malakūt*). [211] For every door, [God] made a power, through whose use and employment the soul may perceive a certain species of wonders that exist in this world that has been specified. If the soul acquires the principle for its items of knowledge from these powers, by way of abstracting the universals from the particulars, then it relies upon them and combines them as definitions, descriptions, and syllogisms. In this way and in this fashion, [the soul] arrives at the perception of unknown conceptions and assents. This is attained completely only through

the consideration of things considered by the substance of soul, without concrete being in extramental reality. [The soul] needs these for positing and predicating. For example, existence, necessity, contingency, impossibility, substantiality, accidentality, and other considerations (*al-ʿtibārāt*), which will be discussed below in detail. Because of its consideration of these things, the soul comes to understand how predicates relate to their subjects, as conclusions from true syllogisms. Were this not so, it would be difficult for [the soul] to grasp the majority of true realities. For whenever we judge that one thing holds of another and that this judgment arises from a syllogism, as when we ascribe existence or necessity to God the exalted, or contingency to the world, or impossibility to a second God, or substantiality to the separate [intellects] and the bodies, or accidentality to colors, and so on, and we do not know whether these predicates have true realities extramentally or are purely mental considerations, then our goal has not been attained completely, nor is our aim in verifying the items of knowledge and disclosing them achieved. Rather, the items of knowledge remain hidden and turbid in our souls, and we go on having doubts and uncertainties. This is common to all particular items of knowledge.

Given these considerations, it behooves us to undertake a verification of their states and to remove the veil of uncertainty that has arisen from posing doubts about them, and to relate what all the schools have claimed with respect to them. For all those who rushed to make claims about items of knowledge, without first becoming versed in them, [212] claimed that they do have concrete beings (*huwiyyāt*) in extramental reality. It is for this reason that there is such great difficulty and copious doubt concerning the items of knowledge, which [difficulty and doubt] have not ceased as the ages have gone by. These mere considerations are, for instance, existence, necessity, contingency, impossibility, unity, multiplicity, numbers, substantiality, accidentality, “being a color,” universality, particularity, object, true reality, quiddity, thingness, and the ten categories insofar as they are categories and predicates. And likewise all universal predicates, be they genera, specific differences, properties, species: all of them are mental considerations. Also all privations in which contingency is taken as a condition, such as rest, blindness, and darkness: these too are mental considerations.

[T75] Al-Urmawī, *Maṭāli'*, fol. 4v19–5r3

[*neutrality of essence*]

*Then it was said:* animal as such does not exist in individuals, since if it did exist in this given individual, and if it were specific to [that individual], it would not be animal as such that is existent in it. [5r] If on the other hand it were not specific to it, it would be common, and it would be a single thing existing in many, which is absurd. The Master [Avicenna] responded that animal as such is not common and not specific, but neither is it something third. Rather, it is just animal, even though it must be one or the other.

[T76] Al-Urmawī, *Maṭāli'*, fol. 5v11–17

[*real distinction between the parts of a quiddity*]

The parts of a quiddity might not be distinct in extramental existence, like blackness, which is composed from its genus and its specific difference.

If what is meant by this is that sensation does not distinguish between its generic and its differentiating part in existence, this is true. [The distinction] is secured by the intellect, which grasps that in this case there is a species, a genus, and a specific difference: each of them is existent, despite sensation's not distinguishing between their existences. But if what is meant is that these three entities exist through a single existence, so that a single accident subsists in a subject of inherence, this is not true.

[T77] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥā'if*, 99.3–100.2

[*different kinds of composition and unity: conceptual and real*]

A quiddity is either simple (i.e., it has no parts) or composite. Either kind may be either real (*ḥaqīqīyya*) or merely conceptual (*ʿtibārīyya*), and the merely conceptual may be either existing (*wujūdiyya*) or privative (*ʿadamīyya*). So, there are six kinds. The real is that which corresponds to the bare fact (*naḥs al-amr*), whereas the conceptual is that which is posited by the intellect. The existing is that in whose meaning (*mafhūm*) there is no negation, as has been explained, whereas in the privative there is [negation].

(a) The real simple is, for instance, the Necessary [Existent], or the point. (b) The merely conceptual [simple] it is like the existence of existence. When the

intellect finds that many things have an existence that is different from them, it leaps to the conclusion that everything is like this. But after careful consideration [the intellect] claims that the existence [of existence] is identical to [existence], since that whose true reality (*ḥaqīqa*) is the same as its realization (*taḥqīq*) needs no [further] realization to be added after the occurrence of the quiddity; and because [otherwise] an infinite regress would follow. The same goes for any attribute whose meaning is the same as the meaning of what is attributed to it, such as the occurrence of occurrence, the concomitance of concomitants, the unity of unity, the priority of priority, and so on. (c) The real composite is for instance body, which is composed from the elements, or house, which is composed from parts. (d) The merely conceptual [composite] is for instance that which is composed from genus and specific difference: the intellect arrives at the idea that genus and specific difference are two existents, from which the species is assembled, but this is not so in extramental reality. Otherwise [100] neither could be truly predicated of the species. Another example is when one considers the quiddity made up of both an attribute and its subject, such as “white animal,” or two distinct things [together], like Zayd and ‘Amr.

[T78] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥā’if*, 102.6–11

[*response to the correspondence problem*]

*I say:* for some true realities, realization with respect to the bare facts (*fī naḥs al-amr*) specifically belongs to the interior faculties, for instance universals, non-existents, and the relations among these. If by their “conceptualization” and “consideration” one intends that they are like this in these faculties, then these [considerations] are true and correspond to whatever is in the bare facts. For instance when we say “genus is a universal,” in the sense that whatever is genus in the mind is also universal in [the mind]. But if one intends that they are like this in extramental reality, then we do not allow that without correspondence with extramental reality they are true in the bare facts.

[T79] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 495.11–19

[*how essences are extramentally real: “divine existence”*]

Animal as such must exist, given that animal exists as qualified, and the existence of the composite calls for the existence of its parts. The fact that the

existence of one thing is inseparable from that of another does not rule out that the former thing exists. So even though animal as such does not exist without the qualification of being individuated, it is still existent; like whiteness, which exists only together with a subject of inherence, and like many things subject to concomitance.

The truth is that animal as such does not need to have either commonality or specificity predicated of it; nonetheless it is not true that animal as such needs to have *neither* of these two predicated of it. “Animal, when taken together with its accidents, is something ‘natural’ (*al-shay’ al-ṭabī’ī*). When taken by itself, though, it is a nature whose existence is prior to natural existence, in the way that the simple is prior to the composite. This is what is referred to specifically as ‘divine existence’, since the cause of its existence, insofar as it is animal, is the providence of God the exalted.”<sup>40</sup>

[T80] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 496.6–19

[*universality in the mind*]

The universality of the intelligible universal cannot hold by being considered true of extramental particulars. Rather, if it holds [because of any relation to particulars], then it is with respect to particulars in the mind. These particulars are not the ones acquired from extramental reality, since Zayd is not universal man, whether he is outside of the mind or in it. Rather the particulars that are acquired from mental existents belong to the species of the intelligible universal.

*It has been said:* the intelligible form is universal due to its relating to extramental items, in such a way that [regardless which of] these extramental things arrives at the mind first, one and the same form will arise in [the mind] from them. Once one of them has arrived, the soul has received this attribute from it, and it will receive nothing further from anything else.

*But we say:* if the one who says this means by “intelligible form” the natural universal, then it is true. But if they mean by it the intelligible [universal], we have already explained our view on this. As for the universal in the soul as it relates to these forms that are in the soul, this consideration belongs [the universal]

<sup>40</sup> Avicenna, *Shifā’, Ilāhiyyāt* v.1, 156.6–8.



in relation to whichever of these forms of the soul arrived at the soul first. Furthermore, this form is particular in the way we have said. Also, it is within the soul's power to grasp [it] intellectually, and to grasp that it grasps [it], and so on indefinitely, with the relations heaped upon each other; so these intelligible forms can continue with no need for any limit, but only potentially, not actually.

[T81] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 504.9–15

[*correspondence problem for genus and specific difference*]

*Question:* we have distinguished two parts of blackness in the mind. If each of them corresponds to the same extramental blackness, then there is no difference between either of them and the form of blackness in the intellect. Then “being a color”<sup>41</sup> corresponds to blackness and, while being one and the same [intellectual form], also to whiteness. On the other hand, if both [parts of blackness] correspond to something in extramental blackness, then there are two things in it: one will be a generic entity, the other a differentiating entity.

*Response:* blackness in extramental reality has no genus (namely “being a color”) to which a specific difference would be added. Concrete existence is considered to involve correspondence [only] when the correspondence is taken [as involving] a relation [to concrete existence].

[T82] Al-Ḥillī, *Nihāyat al-marām*, vol. 1, 175.17–176.1

[*correspondence problem solved with appeal to nafs al-amr*]

So it has been established that one part of blackness cannot be [extramentally] distinct from the other. Rather this distinction is only in the mind and in the bare facts (*nafs al-amr*), since, if the genus were not different from the specific difference in the bare facts, [176] and they were not distinct, then the mind would predicate composition of something in which there is no composition, which would be ignorance.

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41 Correcting *al-aqrabiyya* to *al-lawniyya*.

## Platonic Forms

Having looked at the debates over universals in the post-Avicennan tradition, we may naturally turn to the topic of Platonic Forms, which are often assumed to be a kind of theory of universals. Already Aristotle treats the Forms as an attempt to explain universal features of things (e.g. *Metaphysics* 13.4, 1078b33). But other comments by Aristotle should give us pause, since he also ascribes the Plato the view that Forms are not universals but paradigms (παραδείγματα, at *Metaphysics* 13.4, 1079b25), that is, perfect instances of which sensible particulars are copies. Still, in the medieval traditions, Platonic Forms are frequently discussed in the context of the debate over universals. In the Latin tradition, Plato's theory indeed becomes more or less synonymous with a maximally realist theory of universals, with self-described moderate realists like Duns Scotus at pains to explain why they are not committed to postulating the Forms.<sup>1</sup> We could sum up the following chapter by saying that Avicenna likewise presents the theory of Platonic Forms as a confusion over the common natures we grasp by forming universals in the mind. But then, successors who claimed agreement with Plato corrected this misapprehension. For them, the Forms are neither universals nor paradigms. Instead they are intellects. Platonic Forms are needed as causes for the features of things in the sensible world, and also because God's creation would otherwise be incomplete. The central figure here, as we will see, is al-Suhrawardī.

As we have seen in previous chapters, Avicenna believes that an essence like “humanity” is neutral with respect to universality and particularity. Humanity can be instantiated in a particular, like Socrates, or be abstracted as a universal in the mind. What it cannot do is exist just by itself, independently of both minds and particulars, as Avicenna says that Plato held [T1]. He traces Plato's mistake to a subtle distinction, which turns on the scope of a negation [T2]. When humanity is abstracted by a mental operation from all the particular humans one has encountered, then humanity is considered “without the condition of anything else (*bi-lā sharṭ shay' ākhar*).” This just means that one is ignoring other things that do, in fact, come together with humanity in the external world, like all of Socrates' accidental features. But this does not mean that humanity can exist “with the condition that there is nothing else

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1 T. Bates, *Duns Scotus and the Problem of Universals* (London: 2010), 77.

(*bi-sharṭ lā shay' ākhar*)” outside of our minds.<sup>2</sup> The latter formulation would imply that humanity exists in the real world, completely unconnected to any other attributes; that would be a Platonic Form. In short, Plato’s view confuses the possibility of abstraction in the mind with an extramentally real possibility [T3]. Avicenna also follows Aristotle in rejecting the Platonist tendency to reify mathematical entities as separate Forms [T4], but this plays little role in the subsequent debate since the adherents of Platonism do not think of the Forms as being mathematical in nature (cf. however [T37] and [T42] which we discuss just below).<sup>3</sup>

Avicenna’s arguments against the Forms are rehearsed and expanded by later authors, most of whom accept it, though Bābā Afḍal does argue that Forms are needed to serve as objects of knowledge [T22, T23]. In addition to Avicenna’s complaint that essences do not exist “with the condition that there is nothing else” [T8] or “with the qualification of being separate” [T26], several other arguments circulated against reifying universals as Platonic Forms. At the end of our period, al-Ḥilli charged the Platonists with a mistake even more clumsy than the one diagnosed by Avicenna, namely that they confuse unity in kind for unity in number [T42]. Several authors were aware of the late ancient distinction between three levels of common entities, namely “after the many” (mental abstractions), “in the many” (instantiation in sensible particulars), and “before the many” (in God or the intelligible realm) [T25].<sup>4</sup> But they pointed out that the common things “before the many” need not be Platonic Forms, they could just be divine ideas, as already held in the Baghdad Aristotelian school back in the tenth century [T5, T9].<sup>5</sup>

2 The two Arabic expressions differ only in the place of the negation *lā* in the word order; one might render this into English more literally as “with no condition of any other thing” and “with the condition of no other thing.” For the distinction see S. Menn, “Avicenna’s Metaphysics,” in P. Adamson (ed.), *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays* (Cambridge: 2013), 143–169, at 158. Avicenna allows that an essence can exist “with the condition of no other thing” in the mind in *Shifā’, Ilāhiyyāt*, 1.5, 155.14.

3 On Avicenna’s critique of Platonic Forms see M. Marmura, “Avicenna’s Critique of Platonists in Book vii, Chapter 2 of the Metaphysics of his Healing,” in J.E. Montgomery (ed.), *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy: From the Many to the One: Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank* (Leuven: 2006), 355–370; R. Arnzen, *Platonische Ideen in der arabischen Philosophie: Texte und Materialien zur Begriffsgeschichte von ṣuwar aflātūniyya und muthul aflātūniyya*. (Berlin-New York: 2011); D. Janos, *Avicenna on the Ontology of Pure Quiddity*, chapter 2; M.S. Zarepour, “Avicenna on the Nature of Mathematical Objects,” *Dialogue* 55 (2016): 511–536 and idem, “Avicenna against Mathematical Platonism,” *Oriens* 47.3–4 (2019): 197–243.

4 For this classification see e.g. Simplicius, *Commentary on the Categories*, 82–83.

5 In addition to al-Fārābī, mentioned below, a view like this can be found in Ibn ‘Adī. See M. Rashed, “Ibn ‘Adī et Avicenne: sur les types d’existants,” in V. Celluprica and C. D’Ancona

Another line of attack goes back even further, to Aristotle and in fact to Plato himself (in his *Parmenides*). A whole family of arguments exploits the idea that Forms would share properties with their participants; for instance, to use Plato's example, the Form of Large would itself be large. We can call this the "univocity thesis." This leads to the famous "third man argument": if we need a Form as an exemplar to explain the commonality between all instances of humanity, but the Form is itself a further such instance, then a second Form will be needed to explain the commonality shared by the first Form plus its instances. This can be repeated, yielding an infinite regress of Forms [T24]. An interesting, and distinctively post-Avicennan, variant of the third man argument considers whether existence itself is subject to such a regress, wherein God's existence is like a Form of Existence that itself partakes in existence [T26].<sup>6</sup> The univocity thesis raises other problems too: if the Form of Human shares features with all its participants, why is the metaphysical status of the Form different from that of particulars—for instance, why is it an immaterial substance if they are not [T8]? For arguments exploiting univocity see [T10], [T24], and [T26] with a reply in [T27].

Against this litany of objections stands al-Suhrawardī, the leading proponent of Platonic Forms in our period.<sup>7</sup> In light of which, we may immediately be surprised by the fact that he actually *accepts* Avicenna's argument against postulating extramentally real equivalents of universals.<sup>8</sup> He is able to do this because for him, Forms are *not* universals; nor, indeed, are they paradigms, which would share features with their participants like models of which copies are made [T15, T16, T17, T19, T41]. But if we do not postulate Form as real universals, or as paradigms, why postulate them at all?<sup>9</sup> One reason given by al-Suhrawardī

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(eds), *Aristotele e i suoi esegeti Neoplatonici* (Naples: 2004), 109–171. See also F. Benevich, "Die 'göttliche Existenz': Zum ontologischen Status der Essenz qua Essenz bei Avicenna," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 26 (2015), 103–128 and "The Priority of Natures and The Identity of Indiscernibles: Alexander of Aphrodisias, Yahyā b. 'Adī and Avicenna on Genus as Matter," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 57 (2019), 205–233.

6 See further the chapter on God's Essence, esp. [T41].

7 It should be noted that his arguments, and generally positive attitude towards the Forms, are found in authors beyond the Illuminationist tradition. A student of al-Rāzī named al-Kashshī quotes from al-Suhrawardī on the topic in *Ḥadā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq*, 142v, but at 141v he has cautioned that this doesn't necessarily mean he follows al-Suhrawardī's views. Also as we will see, Bābā Afḍal gives arguments in favor of the Forms, without referring to the Illuminationist position.

8 On this see F. Benevich, "A Rebellion against Avicenna? Suhrawardī and Abū l-Barakāt on 'Platonic Forms' and 'Lords of Species,'" *Ishraq* 9 (2020), 23–53.

9 Cf. the interpretation of the status of the Platonic Forms in J. Kaukua, *Suhrawardī's Illuminationism: A Philosophical Study* (Leiden: 2022) as well as Arnzen, *Platonische Ideen in der arabischen Philosophie*.

and his followers is that some of the great sages of antiquity, including Plato himself, actually had direct experience of the Forms. Accepting their testimony concerning the Forms is no less reasonable than, say, accepting ancient astronomical observations [T18]. This invocation of direct experience, though, is not given in lieu of argument, or because a rational proof for Forms is impossible. To the contrary, al-Suhrawardī and other proponents of the Forms offer several demonstrations of their existence. (At [T32] al-Shahrazūrī does suggest that a special experience is needed to know the Forms exist, yet he reproduces al-Suhrawardī's arguments for them nonetheless.)

One of these seems to be inspired by Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī [T7]. It contends that routine bodily processes cannot be explained solely with reference to bodily powers. It cannot be, as Avicenna claimed, that the nutritive power of the soul suffices to explain animal or human growth, since the power would itself be seated in bodily organs and would be subject to flux [T11, T29]. Al-Shahrazūrī adds that instinct in animals and intuition in humans must also be explained in terms of the influence of the forms [T34].

A further argument, which is perhaps the most distinctive contribution of al-Suhrawardī and the other Illuminationists to the debate over Platonic Forms, is the proof from the “nobler contingency (*al-imbkān al-ashraf*).” This is like a narrower application of the famous principle of plenitude, namely that all genuine possibilities are realized at some point in time. Al-Suhrawardī does not make such a general claim, but he and his followers do argue that God's creation cannot leave room for anything nobler than the things that in fact exist [T12, T28, T30]. So if we accept that Platonic Forms are at least possible, we cannot suppose that the world contains only things inferior to these Forms. An objection to this line of thought is considered by al-Shahrazūrī [T31]: if more noble possibilities are always realized, then every individual human should be as excellent as they could possibly be. He answers that the principles behind al-Suhrawardī's argument apply only at the level of eternal entities.

If we probe further into the metaphysical nature of the Forms, we discover that yet again, al-Suhrawardī is not that far from Avicenna. Avicenna postulated that the Active Intellect, the lowest of the intellects of his celestial hierarchy, was a “giver of forms” to things in the sublunary world.<sup>10</sup> As was already

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10 On Avicenna's Giver of Forms see our chapter on Active Intellect in the *Physics and Psychology* volume, and for the reception of the idea D.N. Hasse, “Avicenna's ‘Giver of Forms’ in Latin Philosophy, Especially in the Works of Albertus Magnus,” in D.N. Hasse and A. Bertolacci (ed.), *The Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics* (Berlin: 2012), 225–250.

suggested by some of the aforementioned functions of the Platonic Forms in Illuminationism, for instance their ensuring the continuation of species, they play a similar role. The difference is really only that, instead of a single giver of forms for all species, there is one “Platonic Form” for each species. This is why the Illuminations call the Forms “Lords of Species.” Each of them is a luminous intellect or “light” [T35], with particular emphasis being placed on the claim that they are indeed intellects and not souls, because souls are too closely connected to the individual participants [T18, T19, T20, T29]. This may have been a real possibility considered by some, since Ibn al-Malāḥimī already mentions a version of the theory of Forms according to which they are intelligible souls [T6]. Bābā Afdāl’s version of the theory also speaks of souls, albeit he actually makes the Forms ideas in the Universal Soul [T23].

A significant advantage of the Illuminationist account is that the Third Man Argument and other refutations are answered, on the grounds that the intellectual Lord over a given species need not share the properties of the physical instantiations of that same species [T13, T14, T15, T16, T19, T33]. Instead, they are of a fundamentally different ontological order, for instance by having no need of material substrates, being simple rather than composite, and exercising rather than receiving providential oversight. Between the realm of Forms and the domain of sensible participants, the Illuminationists furthermore postulate a level called the “world of images” [T21, T37, T38] which is beyond the heavens but below the world of Platonic Forms [T36]. The so-called “suspended images” explain a further range of phenomena, like reflections in mirrors and dreams, as well as other operations of the imagination, including in animals.<sup>11</sup> There is room for confusion here, especially in the Arabic texts where “images” and “exemplars” are one and the same term, *muthul*, which we have disambiguated in our English translations. (The same word is sometimes used for the “images” of things abstracted in the human mind.) Al-Shahrazūrī makes it clear that these two levels of the metaphysical hierarchy, the world of images and the Lords of Species, are to be distinguished [T40].

In closing it should be noted that with this topic, we have an example of the twelfth-century spread of “Platonism,” meaning endorsement of Plato’s own views insofar as these were known at the time. One could suggest this for other topics as well, for example the nature of time.<sup>12</sup> The reasons for this remain a

11 See further N. Sinai, “Al-Suhrawardī on Mirror Vision and Suspended Images (*muthul mu’allaqa*),” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 25 (2015), 279–297.

12 See further P. Adamson, A. Lammer, “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Platonist Account of the Essence of Time,” in A. Shihadeh, J. Thiele (eds.), *Philosophical Theology in Islam. Later Ash’arism East and West* (Leiden: 2020), 95–122.

matter of speculation, but it seems clear at least that by signaling their allegiance to Plato, al-Suhrawardī and others were at the same time registering their opposition to the “Peripatetic” tradition and its leading proponent, Avicenna.

Texts from: Avicenna, Bahmanyār, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Suhrawardī, Bābā Afḍal, al-Āmidī, al-Abharī, al-Nakhjawānī, Ibn Kammūna, al-Shahrazūrī, al-Ḥillī.

## Platonic Forms

[T1] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* VII.2, 244.3–5 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*the Platonic position*]

As is known, Plato and his teacher Socrates went too far regarding this view, saying that there belongs to humanity one existing entity (*maʿnā*) in which individuals participate, and which continues to exist even if they cease to exist. It is not the sensible, multiple, and corruptible entity and is therefore an intelligible, separate entity.

[T2] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* V.1, 155.10–16 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*the sense in which essences can exist separately*]

For this reason, a distinction must be maintained between saying “animal as such is separated, without the condition of anything else (*bi-lā sharṭ shayʾ ākhar*),” and saying, “animal as such is separated, with the condition that there is nothing else (*bi-sharṭ lā shayʾ ākhar*).” If it were possible for animal as such to be separated, with the condition that nothing else exists concretely, then it would be possible for the Platonic exemplars (*al-muthul*) to exist concretely. But in fact animal, with the condition that there is nothing else, exists only in the mind. As for animal separated without the condition of anything else, it does have concrete existence. For, in itself and in its true nature, it is without the condition of anything else, even if a thousand conditions are connected to it extrinsically.

[T3] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* VII.2, 247.10–16 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*contrast between mental abstraction and actual separation*]

If we intellectually grasp the form of the human (for example, insofar as it is just the form of the human) we intellectually grasp an existent by itself and with regard to its essence (*dhāt*). But from the fact that we have grasped it in this way, it does not follow that it is by itself and separate [in existence]. For that which is mixed with something else insofar as it is what it is (*min ḥaythu huwa huwa*) fails to be separated from [that other thing] by way of negating [the copula], not by adding a negation to the predicate (*al-ʿudūl*),<sup>13</sup> which is

13 In other words we have not a straightforward negation (“S is not P”) but a so-called “meta-



how [“non-separated”] should be understood as concerns separation in subsistence. It is not difficult for us to direct attention through perception, or some other state, to one of the things which is not such as to be separate from its companion in subsistence, even though it is separate from it in definition, meaning, and true nature, since its true nature does not enter into the true nature of the other. For “being together” implies being connected, not having the meanings interpenetrate.

[T4] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* VII.2, 248.16–249.2 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*against Platonic Forms as principles*]

The fifth [error] is their belief that if material items are caused, then their causes must be some or other items that can be separate. For it is not the case that, if material things are caused and mathematical things are separate, then it inevitably follows that the mathematical things are their causes. Rather, [their causes] may be other substances that are not [249] among the nine [non-substantial] categories. Nor have they verified the fundamental truth that the definitions of geometrical [figures] among mathematical [objects] cannot omit [reference] to matter absolutely, even though they can omit [reference] to matter of a certain sort.

[T5] Bahmanyār, *Tahṣīl*, 500.12–16

[*God and the angels know universals without deriving them from multiple things*]

A universal meaning may be derived from extramental [reality], as when the meaning of “humanity” is derived from Zayd and ‘Amr; the form of humanity is provided by ‘Amr in just the same way it is provided by Zayd. In logic, this may be called “that which is after multiplicity;” in other words, this common meaning has been derived from various, multiple things. On the other hand [a universal meaning] may not be derived from extramental [reality], such as the knowledge of God the exalted, and of angels. This [knowledge] is called “that

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thetic” proposition of the form “S is non-P.” For more on metathetic propositions see our chapter on Propositions in the Logic and Epistemology volume.

which is before multiplicity," since it [i.e. knowledge] is the cause of multiplicity, as we will explain.<sup>14</sup>

[T6] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 789.17–790.12

[*Platonic world of separate intelligences, with refutation*]

Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nabawakhtī—may God have mercy upon him—related the views of Sabian philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) concerning intelligible substances. *He said*: many of those we have met, among those who learned the positions of the philosophers and read their books, claimed that Plato, and others too, held that the intelligible world is not the same as the sensible world which we see, with the celestial sphere and whatever it contains. In [the intelligible world] there are living substances that are simple, not composed. Further, [they claimed] that Plato, Aristotle, and their followers said that [these substances] live through themselves and govern whatever is in this world. They are ten souls that are not rational. (Then he mentioned the names [of these substances], as given by them.)

[*Al-Nabawakhtī*] *furthermore said*: they claimed that what comes to the sensible world from [these substances] is the rational soul, which governs over a certain thing in which it resides. As for those substances, they govern the sensible world but do not reside in it. [790] [*Al-Nabawakhtī*] *said*: there is the rational soul in the celestial sphere, according to Plato. [The rational soul] was only created in the brain because [the brain] is circular and resembles the celestial sphere.<sup>15</sup> [*Al-Nabawakhtī*] *said*: they used to justify their claims based on the fact that we find the sensible world to include things of two kinds: that which participates in the intelligible world, namely the rational souls, and the bodies that are not connected to them, namely unliving ones. Likewise intelligible substances are of two kinds: those that participate in bodies, namely the rational souls; and those that do not, these being the other substances we have described.

[790.6] *He objected to them by saying*: are you making an analogical inference from things in the sensible world to things in the intelligible world? If they say no, then one may say to them: then how have you reached the aforementioned

14 See further Avicenna, *Shifā'*, *Madkhal* 1.12.

15 Cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 69c, 73e, 90a–d.

conclusions? But if they say yes, one may say to them: then you should say that there are dead things in the intelligible world, just as in the sensible world. *And we would say*: you have not proved the reality of what you have asserted but you busy yourself with describing what these things are like, before even establishing that they are real. *He said*: they also looked for excuses by saying the proof for the multiplicity of [intelligible substances] is the multiplicity of governed things. *One may say to them*: but must they be like the governed things? If they say yes, then they should make the intelligible world to be just like the sensible world. But if they say “no,” then one may say to them: then likewise, aren’t they [similar to sensible things] in being multiple? *And one may say*: on what basis do you deny that they are all in the world of sensation and rational souls?

[T7] Abū al-Barakāt, *Mu‘tabar*, vol. 3, 167.5–11

[*angels as preserving species in the sublunary world*]

The [number] of spiritual angels equals the [number] of the visible and unseen stars, as well as the spheres that we know and fail to know. [Their number] may be even more than this, such that it reaches the number of the sensible existents, among minerals, plants, and animals. Every species among them has an angel that preserves the form in the matter, and maintains the species in its individuals according to their natures, perfections, proportionate states, and whatever they hold or even verify and know. For the preserver of the form (*ḥāfiẓ al-ṣūra*), despite the diversity of states [of the members of a species] in terms of existence and non-existence, surfeit and deficiency, must be one.

[T8] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, 79.18–27<sup>16</sup>

[*Plato’s argument for Forms, and counterarguments*]

To Plato is ascribed [the thesis] that for every nature of a species, there must be an individual which remains always and eternally. We have already defended this claim in the chapter on existence. They relate that [Plato] argued for [his thesis] as follows: there is no doubt that this human exists, and the human

16 Quoted after MS Tehran Majlis 827t, because the passage is lacking from MS Berlin or. oct. 623.

that is a part of this human is existent. The human that is participated by sensible individuals differing in their accidents is separate from all of them. Otherwise individuals having different accidents could not participate in it [human]. There is no doubt [either] that the separate man is incorruptible, even when these sensible individuals are corrupted. Therefore one must affirm the reality of the human that is separate from all accidents.

*Response:* we have shown the difference between human “without the condition of something [else] (*lā bi-sharṭ shay*)” and human “with the condition that there is nothing [else] (*bi-sharṭ lā shay*)”. In the first sense [humanity] does exist extramentally. Yet it need not be separate, since separation is a qualification (*qayd*) attached to human. What is participated is nothing but human devoid of any qualification.

Aristotle argued against these exemplars by saying that this separated is either participated by these individuals in its concrete being (*bi-ʿaynihi*), or not. The former would imply that this separate entity would be described by all attributes that occur to these individuals, so that whatever Zayd knows, ʿAmr would know as well, and vice-versa. This is absurd. But the latter is absurd [as well], since whatever is concomitant to one and the same nature is one and the same. So independence from matter or the need for it must occur to all individual instantiations of the species. Also, we have already proved that if something is not individuated in its species, it must be individuated through matter.

*Response [to these objections]:* we choose the second option [namely that the exemplar is not participated by individuals]. As for his argument that the instantiations of one and the same nature participate in their independence from any receptacle, or in their need for it, this is refuted by the case of existence, and in fact also genera’s [relation] to specific differences. As for his second argument, that whatever is not individuated can be only individuated through matter, this is based on the former argument, and the failure of [the former argument] reveals the falsehood of [this argument].

[T9] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 202.16–203.5

[*agrees with al-Fārābī’s interpretation of Platonic Forms as divine ideas*]

The eminent master Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī claimed in the book *The Harmony of The Opinions* [203] of the Two Sages that the disagreement between Aristotle and Plato is merely verbal, since existences are the intelligibles of the

First Principle.<sup>17</sup> For their forms are present to Him. Given that alteration is impossible for the First Principle, these forms remain exempt from alteration and change. These forms are those which Plato called “exemplars.” This interpretation is good, but we must furthermore provide a demonstration refuting separate exemplars [that are not divine ideas].

[T10] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 204.2–13

[*problems with univocity*]

*Second argument:* if sensible humanity and intelligible humanity are equivalent in quiddity, then whatever is true of either of them must be true of the other. It must therefore be true of sensible humanity that it becomes intelligible, eternal, perpetual humanity, and of intelligible humanity that it becomes sensible, corruptible, originated humanity, which is absurd.

*Third argument:* the sensible human either (a) requires the intelligible human [as its principle] or (b) it does not. If it does require it, then this requirement may be (a<sub>1</sub>) due to the quiddity itself. But in this case, it would follow that the intelligible human requires another intelligible human, and so on infinitely; or—even worse—it could follow that the intelligible human would require itself. (a<sub>2</sub>) If however [the sensible human] requires [the intelligible human] not due to its quiddity itself, but rather due to certain of its accidents, then the accidents of something would necessitate the existence of something else prior to it, which is absurd. (b) If however the sensible human does not require the intelligible human, then the separate [forms] would be neither the causes of the sensibles nor their principles.

If on the other hand the intelligible human is not equivalent [in quiddity] to the sensible man, then it would not be its exemplar, and that’s not what we’re talking about here.

17 See Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *L’Harmonie entre les Opinions de Platon et d’Aristote, texte et traduction*, ed. and trans. F.W. Najjar et D. Mallet (Damascus: 1999), § 68; and in the newer edition al-Fārābī, *L’armonia delle opinioni dei due sapienti il divino Platone et Aristotele*, ed. and trans. C. Martini Bonadeo (Pisa: 2008), 70. The passage is discussed in P. Adamson, “Plotinus Arabus and Proclus Arabus in the *Harmony of the Two Philosophers* Ascribed to al-Fārābī,” in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 184–199.

[T11] Al-Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, 191.3–192.2

[*argument from bodily powers for Platonic Forms*]

You should know that, in animals and plants, there are such [phenomena] as growth and nourishment. Their principle cannot be anything impressed [in the body], since [bodily] parts are [constantly] dissolving and being replaced through nourishment. So if the power were posited as being in a part [of the body], whatever [the part] has of [that power] will perish, and what remains will be dispersed through the dissolution of what has come in. So nothing is exempt from the replacement, and [the power] will be in constant flux. But that which preserves the [bodily] mixture and maintains the process of replacement cannot be something that has departed, since it could not produce anything once it is non-existent; nor can it be that which will be originated in it, since the replacement cannot be originated as a derivation from itself.

Nor are these activities in us due to our souls. For the quiddities [of our souls] are unities, not composed out of a perceiving and a non-perceiving nature. [Otherwise] these [composite souls] would be what we are in reality, and we would be informed about them and what their states are like only through a sort of inference. These activities, that is, nourishment, growth and so on, are arranged yet also in various ways diverse within a single arrangement. But non-perceiving nature cannot vary in its consequences, nor is it capable of this arrangement. Therefore what is active is not us, nor powers that belong to us. Rather there are inclinations in our bodies, and this inclination is called a “power (*quwwa*),” which originates through repulsion, attraction, or adhesion. The principle is something that is perceiving, and is outside. It is the Lord of the Heavenly Talisman. [Now,] if imagination is supposed to be corporeal, it won’t be able to come up with universal premises due to its corporeality. So soul must have a power of wisdom, which is incorporeal and is the true cogitative [power], and the Sacred Tree. [192] It is separated along with it. In bodies, there only are passive powers which when polished reveal the Forms. You must understand this, for these are the notions of the Throne (*‘arshīyyāt*).

[T12] Al-Suhrawardī, *Partūnāma*, 46.18–47.17

[*argument for Forms from the “nobler contingency (al-imbkān al-ashraf)”*]

Know that whenever a base contingent becomes existent, there must be a nobler existent prior to that existent. For, if a base contingent thing comes from

the Necessary Existent in a unified way, [47] a nobler contingent may still be supposed to exist. But then, when we posited its existence, it would not occur from the Necessary Existent, since He is one in all respects. If He has yielded [only] the base existent, there could be no other aspect in Him [through which] He would yield the nobler existent. Hence, the cause of this nobler contingent thing would have to be nobler than the Necessary Existent, but it is absurd that anything, either in the intellect or in extramental reality, would be nobler than the Necessary Existent. Therefore a nobler existent must occur prior to the base existent. Since we know that bodies, accidents, and rational souls exist, and substances that are separate from matter in all respects and free from alteration are nobler than substances that are not separate from matter, and [also nobler than the souls that] are separate from matter yet not from connections to matter, and these do exist, it must therefore be that [these nobler substances] exist prior to them. Nor is it impossible for a substance to exist without being in matter. How else, since we provided a demonstration that soul is not in matter? So it is possible that there is something separate that has no connection to matter. Furthermore, the first thing to come from the Necessary Existent must be this substance, and this is the intellect. From this rule, one may also learn that there can be no nobler existence, or more noble worlds, than those which [already] are (*hastand*).

[T13] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 65.19–67.7 [trans. Walbridge and Ziai, mod.]

[*response to the Peripatetic univocity objection*]

Among the errors that arise from taking the exemplar (*mithāl*) of something in the place of that thing is an argument used by the Peripatetics to deny the Plato's exemplars: “were the forms of man and horse, water and fire, self-subsistent, it would be impossible to conceive of anything that participated in their true nature as being [66] in a subject of inherence. For, if any of their particulars needed a subject, then the true nature itself would need a subject. Thus, none of them could do without a subject of inherence.”

*One may reply to them*, don't you acknowledge that the form of a substance occurs in the mind as an accident? After all, you say that the thing has both concrete and mental existence. If the true nature of substantiality can occur in the mind as an accident, then there may also be self-subsistent quiddities in the world of the intellect, which in this world have images (*aṣnām*) that are not self-subsistent. These are a perfection for other things, but they lack the perfec-

tion of the intellectual quiddities, just as exemplars (*muthul*) of the quiddities of extramental substances occur in the mind without being self-subsistent, so that they are a perfection or attribute of the mind and lack the independence and self-subsistence that the extramental quiddities have. So what is true of a thing is not necessarily true of its exemplar. [...]

[67.1] [Avicenna] might reply [to the univocity problem as applied to the Necessary Existent], “His necessity is the perfection, completeness, and intensity of His existence. Just as one thing is more black than another not through something added to blackness, but through a perfection in the black itself, so likewise is necessary existence distinguished from contingent existence by an intensity and perfection.” Thereby he would acknowledge that quiddities may have completeness in themselves, so they have no need for a subject of inherence, or may have deficiency, so that they do need such a subject, as is the case with necessary existence and other existence, respectively.<sup>18</sup>

[T14] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 108.17–23 [trans. Walbridge and Ziai, mod.]

[*solution to the third man argument*]

Do not suppose that these great men, outstanding in power and insight, held that humanity has an intellect that is its universal form and that is existent as one and the same in many [humans]. How could they allow there to be something unconnected to matter, yet in matter? Furthermore, how could one and the same thing be in the matter of many, indeed innumerable, individuals? It is not that they considered the Lord of the human idol, for example, to be given existence for the sake of what is below it, so as to be its model (*qālab*). They were most powerfully convinced that the higher does not occur for the sake of the lower. Were this not their teaching, they would be forced to admit that the exemplar has a further exemplar, and so to infinity.

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18 See further the chapter on God's Essence, esp. [T41].



[T15] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 461.1–6

[*the Platonic Forms are not exemplars, solving the third man problem*]

Those among them who gave it proper thought did not say that there is a subsisting Lord of Species (*ṣāhib al-nawʿ*) for every accident, but [only] for the substantial species. Nor did they say that Lords of Species arise merely to be an exemplar for that which is below them, or like models (*qālab*). For according to them, the corporeal species have idols and shadows, and the two cannot be compared in terms of nobility. And how can the True Principle need exemplars for bringing things into existence, so that they would be rules (*dustūrāt*) for His creation? If He did need [them], then [the creation] of the exemplars would require further exemplars, and so on infinitely.

[T16] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 109.1–21 [trans. Walbridge and Ziai, mod.]

[*Forms do not share all properties with their particulars and are not universals in the logical sense*]

Do not suppose that they held [the Lords of Species] to be composite, for that would imply that they would dissolve at some point. Instead, they are luminous, simple essences, though their idols (*aṣnāmuḥā*) can only be conceived as composite. The exemplar need not resemble [the idol] in every respect. For even the Peripatetics admit that humanity in the mind corresponds to multiple things, and is an exemplar of what [exists] concretely, even though it is separate [from matter] and they are not, and it is without magnitude or substance, unlike that which [exists] concretely. Thus, it is not a condition for being an image (*mithāl*) that it be wholly similar. [...]

[109.13] There are metaphors in the words of the Ancients. They did not deny that predicates are mental, or that universals are in the mind. But when they said that there is a universal man in the world of intellect, they meant that there is a dominating light containing different, interrelated rays, whose shadow among [corporeal] magnitudes is the form of man. It is a universal not in the sense that it is a predicate, but in the sense that it has the same relation of emanation to these numerically distinct things (*al-aʿdād*), as though it were the totality, and the root (*al-aṣl*). This universal is not that universal whose very conception does not preclude being shared; for they acknowledge that it has a specified essence and is self-knowing. How, then, could it be a

universal notion? When they called one of the spheres “a universal orb,” and another “a particular [orb],” they did not mean “universal” in the sense used in logic.

[T17] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 109.22–110.10 [trans. Walbridge and Ziai, mod.]

[*against equating Platonic Forms with universals*]

As for what some people offer as proof to establish the exemplars, namely that humanity in itself is not many, so it is one: this is not right. [110] For humanity as such implies neither unity nor multiplicity, but may be said of both. [...] [110.6] Furthermore, humanity as a unity that is said of a totality (*kull*) is only in the mind, and its use as a predicate does not require another form. The argument that the individuals perish but the species endures does not imply that there must be something universal and self-subsisting, [since] the opponent can instead say that what endures is a form in the intellect, and with the principles. All arguments of this sort are rhetorical.

[T18] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārīʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 459.17–460.14

[*distinction between Platonic Forms and governing souls*]

*They said:* the Lord of Species is not a soul, since souls inevitably receive damage and pain [460] through the pain inflicted of their bodies, whereas the Lord of Species feels no pain through the infliction of pain upon its species. Also, the soul is connected to just one body, whereas the Lord of Species exercises providence over all bodies within its species.

[*Zoroastrianism and Platonic Forms*]

*They said:* as has been explained, the attraction of oil to fire is not due to the necessary absence of void, as we have mentioned. Nor is it due to the attraction of fire in its specificity. [Rather] it too is due to the governance connected to the Lord of Species, which preserves pine nuts and other things [in fire]. This is the Lord of the Species for fire, the one that Persians called “Ardibehesht.” For the Persians had a strong tendency to exaggerate when it came to the Lords of Species, so that they sanctified the Lord of the Species of a plant which they called “haoma,” which is included in their scriptural texts, and called [this Lord] “God of Haoma (*hūma īzād*),” and likewise for all the species.

[*empirical evidence for Platonic Forms*]

Hermes, Agathodaemon, and Plato mentioned no proof to establish [the Lords of Species]. They did however claim to have seen them. If they really did so, then it is not for us to dispute with them. If Peripatetics do not dispute with Ptolemy and others in the field of astronomy, so that Aristotle relies on the observations of Babylonians, and the eminent Babylonians, the Greeks, and others all claimed that they have seen these things, then one observation is the same as the other, one report is the same as another; using corporeal observation is the same as using spiritual observations, and the rarity [of astronomical observations] is the same as the rarity [of spiritual observations].

[T19] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 463.3–464.4

[*the structure of the intelligible world*]

Even though the Lord of Species has providence over the species, in the opinion of the ancients, its providence is not a providence of connection, so that it and a body would become a single individual and single species. Rather it is a species in itself. According to [the ancients], the intellects are divided into the “Mothers” in the extended series, which are the principles, and the secondary [intellects], which are the Lords of Species. The rational soul [in its turn] is divided into the soul that is perpetually connected [to a body], such as the soul of the celestial sphere, and the soul that is not perpetually connected [to a body], such as the soul of human.

[*the difference between Platonic Forms and universals*]

They did sometimes call the Lord of each species by the name of this species, calling it “the universal of that species.” But they did not mean by this the universal where the very conception of its meaning does not exclude participation. Nor [did they mean] that, when we intellectually grasp the universal, our intelligible object is the very thing that is the Lord of Species. Nor [did they mean] that the Lord of species has two hands, two feet, and a nose [in the case of the form of human]. Rather they meant by it that [the Lord of Species] is a spiritual essence. The corporeal species is its shadow, as if it were its idol (*ṣanam*). The corporeal relations between the corporeal species are only like mere shadows of spiritual relations and luminous features in the essence of [this Lord of species]. Whenever its idol cannot be preserved in a concrete individual, due to its unavoidably falling under generation and corruption, it is preserved as a disseminating individual (*shakhṣ muntashir*). This is universal in the sense

that it is “the Mother of Species”; its relation to everything is equal, by being its Lord and that which extends its perfection and preserves the species through infinite individuals.

[*the Platonic Forms are not exemplars*]

When you hear that Empedocles, Agathodaemon, and others indicating the Lords of Species, you must understand their purpose. Do not think that they claimed the Lord of Species to be a body, or corporeal, [464] or that it has a head and two feet. When you find Hermes saying, “my spiritual self turned to the understandings (*ma’ārīf*), and I said to them: who are you? They said: we are your perfect nature (*tibā’uka al-tāmm*),” you should not refer to them as our exemplars. All that is ascribed to [the ancients] on this topic is not true, as shown by the fine character of their words. But mistakes have crept in due to [textual] transmission and in the [diverse] natures of the languages, and ascription of [ideas] to them by people who did not understand their words.

[T20] Al-Suhrawardī, *Hayākil al-nūr*, 65.1–6

[*the Platonic Form of humans is the Active Intellect*]

Among the totality of the dominating lights, our father and the Lord of the Talisman of our species, that which emanates our souls and bestows theoretical and practical perfections upon them, is the Holy Spirit, which the philosophers (*al-ḥukamā’*) call the Active Intellect. All of them are separate divine lights. The First Intellect is that from which existence comes forth, and is the first to be illuminated by the light of the First. The intellects are multiplied by the multiplicity of illuminations, and their weakening in the course of descent.

[T21] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 138.12–19 [trans. Walbridge and Ziai, mod.]

[*suspended images*]

You already know that forms cannot be imprinted in the eye and that, for similar reasons, they cannot be imprinted in some location of the brain. The truth is that the forms in mirrors and the imaginative forms are not imprinted. Instead, they are “suspended fortresses,” fortresses that are in no subject of inherence at all. Though they have sites of manifestation, they are not in them. The form in the mirror has the mirror as its site of manifestation. These forms are suspended and are in no place and no subject of inherence. The forms of the

imagination have the imagination as their site of manifestation, and they are suspended. If there are real exemplars that are separate, and flat, without depth or any parts behind (*zuhūr*), like in the mirror, subsisting in themselves and not an accident of [the mirror], then there can also exist a substantial quiddity that has an accidental exemplar. The deficient light is like an exemplar of the perfect light; so understand this.

[T22] Bābā Afdal, *Taqrīrāt*, 645.3–10 [trans. Chittick 2001, mod.]

[*intersubjectivity proof for the independent being of Platonic Forms*]

You should know that the intelligible meanings are self-subsistent. It is not that they have a connection to the knower's soul; rather, the knower has a connection to them. Were they attached to the knower's soul, no knower would be able to teach someone else what he has come to know, and were he to teach it, his knowledge would be destroyed. It would be impossible for anyone to reach a meaning and to know it; but all this is indeed possible and feasible. So none of the meanings and things of the mind are joined with, or subsist through, the knower's essence. Rather, the meanings are true realities through their own essences. This is why they are called "meanings (*ma'ānī*)": they are what is "intended" from and "signified" by the words. With regard to themselves they are true realities, but with regard to the relation between them and to souls, they are forms.<sup>19</sup>

[T23] Bābā Afdal, *Arḍnāma*, 194.13–21

[*proof for Platonic Forms from the imperishability of knowledge*]

Whatever is known and conceptualized in the soul remains in one and the same mode of existence, and it is not susceptible to decay, change, non-being, or destruction. But whatever exists in the world of nature either corrupts and changes, or is at least capable of corrupting and being destroyed.

If someone comes to believe that the form may be forgotten, or not known, so that even the object of knowledge may corrupt and become non-existent, then this belief is a mistake and an error. For by "object of knowledge" we intend the universal and certain true nature, which is in the universal intellectual soul

19 For the continuation of this passage see [T46] in the chapter on God's Essence.

(*nafs-i 'āqil-yi kullī*) and not in particular souls (*nufūs*). The universal intellectual soul, which has itself as the object of knowledge, never forgets [its object of knowledge]. It is the particular knowers who forget. It only through their connection to the universal intellectual soul that they intermittently observe, and are aware of, the universal and certain forms.

[T24] Al-Āmidī, *al-Nūr al-bāhīr*, vol. 5, 157.7–158.7

[*third man and univocity objections against Platonic Forms*]

As for those who speak of exemplars, [the following] consequence is forced upon them: if an exemplary form (*al-ṣūra al-mithāliyya*) exists, it must be either (a) an object of the senses or (b) not. (a) If it is sensible, then one and the same thing would have to have two different sensible forms, which is absurd. Then too, it would need to have a further exemplar, and the argument would apply to that exemplar just as it does to the first, which is absurd. (b) If on the other hand [the exemplar] is not sensible, then either (b1) it is of the same nature as the sensible form, or (b2) not. (b2) If it is not of the same nature, then it would not be its exemplar. In fact, it would have no more claim to be the exemplar of the natural form of the sensible human than the exemplar of the form of horse. (b1) If however [the exemplar] is of the same nature [as the sensible form], then by its nature, it is either (b1a) susceptible to generation and corruption or (b1b) not. (b1a) If the former is the case, then for the exemplar there would necessarily be another exemplar, and so on to infinity, given the lack of any relevant distinction among generated things. (b2b) If however the second is the case, then it would follow that the natural form is insusceptible to generation [158] and corruption, given that both [the sensible form and its exemplar] are necessarily identical in nature. For whatever must hold for one participant in a nature, due to that very nature, must hold likewise of the other.

All these absurdities follow simply as a result of supposing the exemplar to exist; therefore there is no exemplar. Rather, whatever we get hold of in terms of universal meanings and common forms that may be participated by individuals, we do it not insofar as they have existence and self-subsistence, above and beyond the subsistence of particulars. Rather we imagine forms as imitating concrete existents, and corresponding to them in their true nature. This only happens by way of supposition and [illegible word, possibly “intellection”]. They have no existence except in the intellect and supposition.

[T25] Al-Āmidī, *Daqā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq*, *Mantiq*, 49.17–21

[*what is “before the many”*]

Since the meaning of the universal in the mind has been verified, [we can say now] that includes that which is “after the many,” like the notion (*ma'nā*) of human that occurs in the soul, once the forms of Zayd and 'Amr have occurred in the imagination. Then there is that which is “before the many.” Individual entities (*ma'ānī*) corresponding to it occur in concrete reality, posterior to its existence in the intellect. For instance what occurs in relation to the souls of the spheres. It is this that some people interpret as “exemplars.”

[T26] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, 269.10–271.5

[*Plato's argument for Platonic Forms, with refutations*]

Plato claimed that every nature of a species must have an eternally remaining, perpetual individual. He argued for this as follows: this human is existent, so the human that is a part of this human is existent. Individuals with their various accidents participate in the latter, so it is separate from all of them. Otherwise things that have various accidents could not participate in it.

*Response:* we do not concede that, if it were not separate from all accidents, there could be no participation. For the participated human is not the separate human. Rather, what is participated is human as such (*min ḥaythu huwa huwa*). It does not follow from participation of various things in humanity as such that they participate in humanity with the qualification that it is separate (*ma'a qayd al-tajrīd*). A proof that the separate is not participated is the fact that, if various individuals were to participate in the human that is qualified as being separate, then one and the same thing [270] would be described by contrary accidents, which is absurd.

[*species can only be instantiated in matter*]

A disproof of Platonic exemplars is that, if there existed a separate individual for every species, then if its concretization (*ta'ayyun*) were caused by the quiddity, then its species would be limited to one individual. But if it were caused by an agent, then so long as the agent's production of concretization does not depend on some preparedness of the recipient [of the productive act], then its species would again be limited to one individual. But if it does depend [on the recipient's being prepared], then every individual instance of that quiddity would be connected to matter. But we have supposed that this is not so, thus

we have a contradiction. In other words, that quiddity either requires matter for becoming concrete, or it doesn't. And the second option is absurd, since otherwise its concretization would never depend on matter, so different concretizations could not be brought about for it by an agent, since this would be preponderation without a preponderating factor. This is why that quiddity would be limited to a single individual. And this is a contradiction. So only the first option remains, namely that it cannot become concrete without matter.

[*is existence a counterexample?*]

Imām [Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī] argued that the proof against Platonic exemplars may be refuted with the case of existence. For existence is a single nature, but some of its instances (*afrād*) are separate, while others are connected to contingent quiddities. But it is not as he claimed. For not all concretizations that have to do with existence are existing: rather the individuations vary, some of them existing, others privative. The privative ones are not caused by anything. So it is not correct to say that the nature of existence either requires matter for its concretization or not, as was the case with the quiddities of species. For the concretization of the latter is something existing, which is additional to them. That is why we say that [their concretization] is either caused by the quiddity or is not. If it is [271] caused by the quiddity, then its species must be limited to one individual, so there will be no numbering [of its instances]. But if it is not caused by the quiddity, we shall say: either the quiddity requires matter for its concretization, or it can do without [matter]. The second option is absurd, since otherwise it would become concrete by an agent without any matter. So only the first option remains. So everything concrete must be material. This however does not apply to existence, because not all of its instances become concrete by something existing, as you have learned.

[T27] Al-Abharī, *Muntahā al-afkār*, 287.10–18

[*refutation of the concretization argument from T26*]

*Against Platonic exemplars it was said:* if there were to occur a separate, self-subsistent individual of human, then the quiddity of humanity would be independent of any connection to matter. If this were the case, then its independence would be essential, since nothing is involved here apart from humanity. And that which is essentially independent from something cannot ever need it. So it would follow that humanity can never be connected to matter, which is a contradiction.



*This calls for further inquiry.* For we do not concede that its independence would have to be essential. Why couldn't it be independent only because the quiddity is stipulated as being separate from attachments [to matter]?

*Let it not be said:* if its separation were due to its quiddity, then every human would be separate; but if it were due to some cause that is distinct from it, then there would be preponderation with no preponderating factor. *For we say:* we do not concede the dilemma. This would follow only if separation were due to some cause. [But we reject this,] because separation is something privative, and is not caused by anything existing.<sup>20</sup>

[T28] Al-Nakhjawānī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, fol. 61v17–62v2

[*argument for Forms from the nobler contingency*]

This section (*namat*)<sup>21</sup> brings to completion a detailed investigation into the states of these classes, by inquiring into those entities that are outside of any connection with bodies and of the domain of sensibles and their attachments. Among these are the separate entities called “Platonic Forms,” which some more recent scholars called “Lords of Idols.” So [Avicenna] begins by establishing the existent that is not grasped by sensation, but only by the intellect. [...]

[62r8] The erudite commentator [al-Rāzī] conceded that this participated humanity exists, but in the mind, not in extramental reality. But then one can only wonder how that which is in the mind corresponds to that which is in extramental reality, since the extramental entity is in fact the cause of that which is in the soul, sense-perception, and imagination as well. [...]

[62r12] Also, if there exists the base contingent (*mumkin*), namely material things, then their existence as being separate from matter must be possible (*mumkin*). And if it is possible, then it must exist, because the nobler existent must be prior to the more base existent. For given that the aspect of actuality and existence is more powerful and more complete in the nobler contingent,

20 Al-Abhari's only engagement with al-Suhrawardī's analysis of Lords of Species seems to be a non-critical repetition of the “nobler contingency argument” in al-Abhari, *Bayān al-*asrār**, fol. 50. Note that al-Abhari does not use it there to prove the existence of the Lords of Species, but only to establish the priority of the celestial intellects over the sublunary world.

21 This is a commentary on the text quoted in our chapter on Universals [T8].

and the aspect of potentiality and contingency in it is weaker and more deficient, whereas the aspect of potentiality and contingency is stronger and more complete in the baser contingent while the aspect of actuality is weaker and more deficient, this implies that the nobler contingent is essentially prior to the more base contingent. For, given that the unqualified perfection of that Existent which is pure, necessary existence implies unqualified essential priority, it follows that the ranks of essential priority must be in accordance with the ranks of perfection in existence, and that the ranks of essential posteriority are in accordance with the ranks of deficiency in existence. And it has been shown that this possibility is the most noble of the aforementioned classes. It is the forms of the species of bodies, which are separate [62v] from matter in extramental reality and are essentially prior to the baser contingent, namely the forms of bodily species that are connected to matter. The martyr Imām Shihāb al-Dīn [al-Suhrawardī]—may God have mercy on him—mentioned this in his book *al-Talwīḥāt*.

[T29] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 352.8–355.17

[*argument from bodily powers for Platonic Forms, cf. T11*]

It may be supposed that the powers in plants are accidents, because they inhere in a subject of inherence, according to the notions of the earlier scholars, or because they inhere in a subject of inherence that can do without them, according to the notions of the later scholars. Either way, the spirit (*rūḥ*) is their bearer, and they change and perish along with it. Likewise if their bearer were a [bodily] organ, since there is no organ or part of the body that does not dissolve in some way. Also, the parts of plants dissolve and change through nutrition. So if it is supposed that the power resides in some part [of the body], whatever is in that part will perish, while the rest will change along with the dissolution that occurs through nutrition. But that which preserves the mixture that endures through the change cannot be the same as that which passes away and perishes, since nothing can have an effect after becoming non-existent. Nor can it be that which is about to originate, since it is derived from the body, and what is derived does not originate [its own] source. Thus the aforementioned factor that preserves [the mixture] cannot be anything [inherent] in that which dissolves and arises anew.

Furthermore, when the power of growth produces augmentation (*al-wārid*), then it must originate this by interpenetrating with that which is being augmented. So [the power] gives rise to a number of movements: the moving

of the augmentation, and the movement of what is augmented, through origination by interpenetration. But, as this movement is [a kind of] traversal (*kharq*), it must become manifold [as it goes] in various directions. [...] The nutritive power also gives rise to various motions when it replaces whatever was dissolved, and fastens together the [bodily] parts. These different [actions] cannot proceed from one and the same power which is homogeneous in its states.

[353] This perfect arrangement cannot possibly come from a non-perceiving nature, as anyone who is sound in nature will realize. This judgment applies especially to the power that forms the organs as they are, with wondrous order, marvelous ruling, extraordinary demarcation, beneficial distribution, and forms that are necessary for the continuance of both individual and species, as explained in the chapter on dissection and the usefulness of organs in medical science, and in the books on plants and animals.

*[Platonic Forms are intellects, not souls]*

It remains then to relate these acts to a separate existent: either soul or intellect.

As for the souls that belong to us, we find that they are unaware of these various, well-arranged regulations. As you will learn, the soul is not composed from a perceiver and a non-perceiving true nature, such that it could give rise to these activities in us without us taking any notice of them. So the occurrence of these motions and regulations in the human being does not come from his rational soul. Intuition (*ḥads*) judges that in other animals too, [these activities] do not come from souls, which are perceptive and capable of voluntary motion. As for plants, none of their parts are more deserving [than any other part] to be fixed over the whole period of time that they persist, so nothing in them is fixed. If [the plant] had a soul that is separate from matter, as we do, then it would be alive. It would follow that its soul would be suspended, futile, and hindered from its perfection; intuition denies this. So the principle of all these regulations is something separate, namely the Lords of Species, which are [self]-subsistent and emanate through their elements upon that which is like an idol or shadow for them. This emanation comes from perception and comprehension.

The Master of Species (*ṣāḥib al-nawʿ*) cannot be a soul for that species. For the soul is susceptible to pain, and is harmed by whatever harm befalls its bodies. If the Master of Species felt pain through its species' feeling pain, it would always be in pain. All that would happen for the Master of Species of plants, as a res-

ult of its dwelling in its bodies, would be constant pain from plucking, cutting, diseases, and so on. And likewise for many [other] Lords of Species (*arbāb al-anwāʿ*). Furthermore, the soul is connected to a single body, whereas the Lord of Species takes care of all of the bodies of its species. [354] Then too, the Master of Species emanates in virtue of itself. It has no need to be perfected through body. What need would that which has the rank of the principles have to dwell in the body in such a way that it would become its perfection, so that from these two would arise a single species and single individual? The connection to bodies is due only to a deficiency in substance on the part of whatever has the connection, so that it becomes perfect through the connection. The principle of body cannot act by the intermediary of body. The connection does not subject it to the control of this body that is caused by it, nor does the connection to any other body, such that [the principle of body] would wind up having no act come forth from it, unless by means of the body, and it would be the perfection of that body. It is evident that the perfection of that which is separate [from matter] consists in imitating its principle, whereas the connection to body would be a deficiency for it.

Given that the acts related to the powers do not proceed from anything inherent in the body, nor from anything that lacks awareness and perception, nor from a separate soul, they must be from a substance that is absolutely separate [from matter].

*[preservation of species]*

Furthermore, we find in this world species that do not arise just by chance, since if they did, their species would not be preserved. It would be possible that something other than a human occurs from a human, from a vine something other than a vine, and from wheat something other than wheat. Nor do things that are always the case rely on chance. Those marvelous colors in the feathers of peacock, for instance, do not originate just through different mixtures [that constitute] those feathers with no governing rule. Thus each of these species must have an abstract substance that is a universal for this species.

*[Platonic Forms are not universals properly speaking]*

By “universal” we do not here mean something where the very conception of its meaning does not prevent participation in it. For [the Lord of Species] is a specified object (*dhāt mutakhaṣṣa*), and it knows itself. Nor [do we mean] that it exists as one and the same in a multiplicity of things, since nothing can, while being one and the same, exist in many instances of matters and innumerable individuals, not being separate from matter or separate from [the individuals].

Rather, we mean that it is “the mother of species,” and that its relation to each of its individual is equal for as long as it emanates upon them, as if it were the totality and the root.

[355] The Master of Species does not bestow existence for the sake of that which is below it, so as to be its exemplar, since the higher does not happen for the sake of the lower. Whatever one takes as a model or exemplar of something, that thing must be nobler than it, since it is the final end. But this cannot be true of the [separate] intellects. If it were the case [that the Lords of Species are exemplars], then there would need to be other exemplars for [these] exemplars, and so on to infinity.

*[relations between Platonic Forms and their instances]*

Even though their idols can only be conceptualized as composite, [the Lords of Species] are simple objects that do not dissolve at any time, due to their simplicity. It is not a necessary condition for being an exemplar that it resembles in all respects. For humanity in the mind corresponds to a multiplicity among concrete individuals, yet it is separate [from matter], non-substantial, and cannot be measured, unlike what is in extramental reality. Whatever relations apply to the corporeal species are like shadows of the relations and spiritual forms in the [Lord of Species] itself. Besides there need not be an exemplar for animality, for instance, and another exemplar for animal’s being bipedal, and likewise musk and its smell, or sugar and its taste, or other analogous cases. Rather every independently existing thing from among these has something in the higher world that relates to it. The idol of their separate essences, together with their spiritual forms, is this independent thing, like humanity together with its organs, which vary according to the relations assigned to them.

Even though the form of humanity or horse, for instance, cannot but subsist in matter in the lower world, it is nonetheless separate from matter in the intelligible world. Likewise many forms in the mind are accidents that are not self-subsistent, yet they are taken from substances that *are* self-subsistent. The same goes for the forms of species that are taken from these exemplars. The intelligible quiddities have a perfection in themselves, with no need for any subject of inherence. By contrast, the quiddities which are their idols have a deficiency such that they do need [a subject of inherence]. The reason is that [the idols] are a perfection for something else, and are not self-subsistent. [Or] like the existence of the Necessary or of something else, or [again] the substance and the form that is taken from it in the mind.

[T30] Al-Shahrazūri, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 339.2–340.6

[*argument for Forms from the nobler contingency*]

One of the implications derived from the rule “from the one proceeds only one” is that, whenever there is a more base and a more noble contingent, if we find the more base to be existent, this indicates that the nobler contingent exists before it.

*Proof of the inference:* if the more base contingent is existent, it is among the effects of the Necessary in Itself. (a) If it proceeds from Him through the intermediary of some other effect, then that effect is the cause of this more base contingent. The cause must be essentially prior to the effect, and be nobler than it. From this follows the soundness of the inference. (b) If however this more base contingent is an effect of the Necessary in Itself *without* an intermediary, and if (b<sub>1</sub>) the nobler [effect] could also proceed from Him without any intermediary, then the rule stipulating that “from the one proceeds only one” would be violated. For then two things, the more base and the nobler [effects] we have supposed, would both proceed [from God]. The falsity of this has been shown repeatedly. (b<sub>2</sub>) If on the other hand that nobler [effect] proceeded from Him through the intermediary of some other thing, then it would follow that the effect is nobler than the cause. For we have supposed that the more base contingent proceeds from Him without an intermediary. So if the nobler [effect] could proceed from Him through the intermediary of another effect, then it would follow that the nobler must come forth from the more base, which is absurd. For, if the Necessary in Itself yielded that which is more base through His aspect of oneness, He would have no other aspect [left] for yielding that which is more noble. So long as the more noble is contingent, as has been supposed, and no absurdity follows from supposing that the contingent thing occurs, at least in respect of itself (though absurdity may arise in some other respect), then, if we suppose that the nobler contingent is existent, and it is not necessary through the Necessary in Itself (since it has been supposed to occur through another), nor can it be necessary through any of Its effects (since the nobler cannot proceed from the more base), [the result of all this is that] its occurrence calls for an aspect that is nobler than that of the Necessary Existent. But this is absurd, because one cannot conceptualize, either in [340] concrete or in mental existence, any aspect that would be nobler than that of the Necessary Existent. Just as one cannot conceptualize anything as being nobler than Himself, so one cannot conceptualize anything being nobler than the effect than immediately proceeds from Him. Likewise, there is nothing closer to Him than [His first, most noble effect]. So, there must be intermediar-

ies that arise between the Necessary in Itself and that which is more base: first, something nobler, and then something else even more nobler, and so on until the end of the ranks of effects is reached. The nobler does not proceed from the more base, rather the more base must proceed from the nobler, down to the last of the ranks.

[T31] Al-Shahrazūri, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 343.15–344.15

[*objection to the argument from the nobler contingency, with reply*]

*You might say:* if the nobler contingent occurred necessarily, as you have insisted on the basis of this rule, then no given individual could be prevented from [attaining] whatever is more nobler and more perfect for it. But this is not so, for most people are indeed prevented from [attaining] their intellectual perfections, even though it would be more perfect and nobler for these perfections to occur to those individuals, rather than not doing so. If the rule of the nobler contingency were valid, then no individuals could be prevented from [attaining] that which is nobler. The consequent is false, so the antecedent as well.

*Response:* the rule of the nobler contingency is not applied without exception to [344] all contingent existents, so that [this] problem would arise. Rather it [is applied] without exception only to those existents that are fixed in existence, and prevented from non-existence caused by anything that is originated. Rather, they exist eternally, due to the eternity of their causes, which are fixed and devoid of any influences from the spherical motions and rays of the stars—unlike the contingents that fall under the influence of various motions and are elemental compositions. For, although heavenly motions do produce their existence, they also produce their non-existence. A multiplicity of things is possible for the many things in the world of generation and corruption, in their essences. Then, through other causes that are extrinsic to their essences, their existence winds up being prevented from [attaining] whatever is more perfect and nobler, due to hindrance to [the influence of] the heavenly causes and prevalence of the natural causes that follow upon the heavenly motions. This is how it goes with everything that falls under the motions. Thus one and the same thing may yield something nobler at one time, and something base at another time, because of the way it has been disposed by the eternal motion, not in itself. This is not how it is with the eternal things. Their nobility and baseness differs only due to a difference in agent, or a difference of aspects in it: what was made by the nobler is more nobler, what was made by the more base is more base. Thereby one sees the difference between cases

where the nobler contingency applies without exception, and where not; so this deals with the aforementioned objection.

[T32] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 426.4–11

[*direct experience of Platonic Forms*]

These luminous exemplars are those that all divine ancient philosophers affirmed. Mere demonstration does not suffice for affirming them. Rather, to perceive them, one needs refinement, discipline of the soul, unerring intuition, the “taste (*dhawq*)” of unveiling, intelligible considerations, and [acts] of spiritual separation. It was inevitably difficult for the Peripatetic philosophers to affirm the luminous exemplars, as their philosophy (*ḥikma*) was purely investigative, with no admixture of the “taste (*dhawq*)” of unveiling and lordly divination. So they posed objections against [the exemplars], and took what the ancients (may God have mercy on them) had mentioned about [the exemplars] to be a matter of mere persuasion and rhetoric, and a weak philosophy of their times.

[T33] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 436.10–15

[*Platonic Forms do not share all the features of their participants*]

According to them the Lords of Luminous Species are simple, not composite. They cannot dissolve or perish at all, even though their resembling idols and material models are composite. For, despite the fact that these material species are semblances of those luminous separate species, it is not a condition for the exemplar (*al-mithāl*) that it resemble (*al-mumāthila*) [its model] in all respects. Otherwise the exemplar, and what it resembles, would be one and the same, with no numerical [distinction] between the two. This would imply that what resembles does not resemble, which is absurd.

[T34] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 441.5–12

[*intuitions, animal acts, and unconscious acts come from Platonic Forms*]

What leads to certainty for the insightful among those gifted with intuition, and strong opinion for everybody else, are the inspirations (*ilhāmāt*) that occur all at once in the branches of knowledge or in practical affairs (*fī al-‘ulūm wa-l-siyāsāt*); in children; whenever speechless animals heal their sicknesses



with herbs, liquids, and [other] medicaments, knowing of the benefit they will derive; and when a baby seeks for the breast, and when [chick's] embryo breaks the egg; or when one blinks when someone pokes a finger or something sharp at it; and other inspirations and amazing phenomena that are found among animal species, according to the exposition one may learn from the *Book of Animals*—all this happens due to the Lord of Species, which governs, preserves, and inspires that species with whatever suits it in terms of well-being and the beneficial.

[T35] Al-Shahrazūri, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 442.9–443.11

[*Platonic Forms are light*]

An indication that all the ancients believe that the Creator, the exalted, is separate light, and that those sorts of angels that are near to Him, and the Lords of Species, are separate lights, is what Plato and his followers declared: that the pure light is the world of intellect. Likewise those philosophers who came before him, like Socrates, Pythagoras, and Empedocles and other eminent [thinkers], mentioned that the world that is separate from matter and hidden from sense-perception due to its extreme subtlety, is pure light, and sheer luminosity.

[T36] Al-Shahrazūri, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 454.2–17

[*the world of images is beyond the heavens*]

You should know that the upper surface of the highest sphere cannot touch non-existence, as when it is said that there is no void or emptiness beyond it, since from this it would follow that there is pure non-existence beyond [the surface of the sphere]. An existing thing cannot be adjacent to non-existence or touch it. Rather, there is beyond it a spiritual sphere of images (*falak rūḥ-ānī mithālī*) that is self-subsistent, and is in neither place nor time. Although it encompasses [the outmost sphere] spiritually, it penetrates through all bodies and all things separate [from matter], and flows through them, in the mode appropriate for spiritual things. Furthermore, other spiritual spheres encompass this spiritual sphere. [...]

[454.13] Furthermore, the spiritual sphere that encompasses the highest [celestial] sphere and the spheres of the world of images (*‘ālam al-mithāl*) above it: just as it encompasses the bodies of spheres and penetrates through them,

so also it encompasses the elemental bodies, mineral composites, plants, and animals belonging to the world of images. These are the suspended images in the spiritual air, subsisting by themselves and penetrating through bodies by flowing through them.

[T37] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 457-3–458.12

[*proof for an “intermediary” world of suspended images; its role in mathematics, dreams, and mirror images*]

You have already learned, in the book on the soul, during the investigation into faculties and the forms of mirrors that is part of natural science, that no imaginative forms conjured by humans while waking or dreaming are seated in the brain, nor in any of its parts, whichever part it may be, given the demonstrations mentioned [there] that something large, such as the half the sphere of the world, or a great mountain, cannot be impressed in a small part of the brain. Nor do they exist in the world of sense-perception. Otherwise everyone who has properly functioning sense-perception would see them; but this is not the case. Nor are they purely non-existent, since pure non-existence cannot be conceptualized or imagined. Yet we do conceptualize these imaginative forms properly and completely, and we distinguish them from other sensible and imaginative forms. We also judge that they have things in common with other sensible and imaginative forms. Yet no pure non-existence can have anything in common with something else, or be distinguished from it. Therefore, none of the imaginative forms, or those forms that we behold in sleep, are pure non-existence. And if they are not pure non-existence, nor are they in any part of the brain, or in the world of sense-perception, it is determined that they are surely in some other world.

That world is called the world of images and imaginations: it is above the sensible world and place, but below the world of intellect. It is in the middle between those two worlds. [458] Everything that specialists in mathematics have imagined, whether figures, measures, bodies, and whatever is connected to them in terms of motions, rests, positions, forms, surfaces, lines, points, and other states: all of it exists in the intermediary world (*al-‘alam al-awsat*). This is why the philosophers (*hukamā*) called [mathematics] “the intermediary philosophy” and “the intermediary science.”

Likewise mirror images, as you have learned, are not in the mirrors, given the proof that has been mentioned in natural science. Nor are they imprinted

in the air or in the eye, nor are they in pure non-existence after they have been observed. So they must be in the aforementioned world of images. The divine master [al-Suhrawardī] mentioned in the *Philosophy of Illumination* that everything that is seen in dreams, whether mountains, seas, earths, terrifying, great sounds, or many enormous people: all these are images that subsist neither in place nor in any subject of inherence. Likewise those accidents that only subsist in bodies, in our [world], such as tastes, smells, sounds, the four active and passive modalities, and other accidents: they are images (*muthul*) that do not subsist in matter [in the world of images].

[T38] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 460.14–461.14

[*modalities of the world of images*]

All that is in our world, whether spheres, stars, elements, composites, motions, and other accidents, exists in the world of images. Still these things are subtler, better, nobler, and more eminent in the world of images than in this world of ours, because of their proximity to the First Principle and the intelligible principles.

You should know that the world of images is a huge world of enormous expanse, entirely without delimitation (*dīq*). For delimitation applies only to places and material dimensions, whereas the forms there subsist in themselves without needing matter. Nor do they need place, since place is needed only by that which has matter. Those spiritual forms do not compete over subjects of inherence and place. [...]

[461.6] Just as the spheres and stars of the sensible world are perpetually in motion, and its elements and composites are perpetually receptive of dispositional effects from the spheres, and souls [are in perpetual reception] from angels, and so on infinitely, in the same way, the spheres and stars of the world of images, are in perpetual motion, and the elemental likenesses, and the forms of minerals, plants, animal and human perpetually receive the effects of those imaginative motions and illuminations of the intelligible worlds, given that they are related to separate likenesses in their separation from matter. Therefore they receive intelligible illuminations, and there occur from those illuminations, in combination with the reception of those likenesses, the species of diverse forms, whether of spheres, stars, elements, and the forms of elements, plants, animal, and human, given the diverse relations that exist in that world, infinitely.

These suspended images may sometimes occur by way of origination and arise anew, thanks to the origination of a form in a polished mirror or in animal imaginations. Then these forms may also perish after having occurred in the receiver, or in the imagination. So it does not remain after having vanished from the receptacle or the imagination, [instead] being self-subsistent and essentially independent, like all the others form that are fixed in the world of images.

[T39] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 464.18–465.4

[*the world of images as the afterlife*]

The world of images has many levels, which only God the exalted and the intelligible principles can count. At each level are an infinity of individuals for the species that are in this world of ours. [465] Some of these levels are luminous, pleasant, eminent, and noble; these are the levels of paradise, which can be enjoyed by the intermediary inhabitants of the paradise. But these levels are also diverse. Some of them are more eminent and more luminous, some less so. Likewise there are dark and painful levels. These are the levels of hell, in which the inhabitants of the fire are tormented. [They are also] diverse in the intensity of their darkness and desolation.

[T40] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 469.19–470.7

[*Platonic Forms and the world of images*]

The world of images, that is, of suspended forms, is not the Platonic exemplars (*muthul*). For the Platonic exemplars are pure luminosity and they are the intellects that are separate from matter. [Some] suspended images are dark, but [others] are illuminated, and they reflect white upon the blessed, so that they may enjoy them, but for the unfortunate they are blue and black, so that they are tormented by them.

Just as Plato and some of his predecessors, like Socrates and some philosophers (*ḥukamā'*) who came earlier, affirmed [470] the luminous exemplars (*al-muthul al-nūriyya*) which are the Lords of Idols, so they also affirmed the suspended images (*al-muthul al-mu'allaqa*), both the illuminated and the dark. They claimed that these are separate substances that are fixed in thought and the imagination of the soul. Plato said: I perceived the outlines (*rusūm*) of particulars, like point, line, surface, and body, and they exist through themselves. Likewise the accoutrements of body as separate, such as motion, time, place,

and form. We are aware of them with our minds, sometimes as simple, sometimes as composite. They have<sup>22</sup> true realities through themselves, without no bearers or subjects.

[T41] Al-Shahrazūri, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 503.16–19

[*on al-Ṭūsī's account of Platonic view*]

[Al-Ṭūsī's] second [mistake]<sup>23</sup> is that he reported that the great and mighty divine Plato believed in the self-subsistence of intelligible forms. [Rather] Plato only meant to establish the Lords of the Idols of Species. For he said that every corporeal species—be it simple or composite—possesses a Lord of Species which is an abstract intellect which subsist by itself. That self-subsistent intellect is the intelligible of any species, and not that the intelligible is an accident form, or an image, or a trace which subsists by itself.

[T42] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 505.15–506.2

[*diagnosing the mistakes of the proponents of Platonic Forms*]

Also, when one says that humanity is a single meaning in which many participate, they believed that “one and the same (*al-wāḥid*)” here means numerical unity (*al-wāḥid al-'adadī*), so that humanity would be one in number existing in many things. And, when one says that material things are caused by that which is separate [from matter], they believed that whichever of the separate beings this is, it is capable of exercising causality, so they made mathematical objects the principles for natural ones.

22 Reading *lahā* with three manuscripts listed in the apparatus, instead of *lā*.

23 The context of this paragraph is a discussion whether God can have knowledge through inherent forms, or they must be separate intelligibles; see further our chapter on God's Knowledge and God's Knowledge of Particulars, especially [T75].

## Individuation

In his logical and metaphysical writings, Avicenna addressed the question of what makes each individual to be the individual it is. This might seem an odd thing to ask. It certainly makes sense to inquire why a given individual exists, which would simply be to ask after its cause. It is less obvious that we need to provide an explanation for why that given individual is an individual. Nonetheless the question was frequently posed in medieval philosophy, both in Latin Christendom and, above all thanks to Avicenna, in the Islamic world too.<sup>1</sup> It arose naturally in the Aristotelian logical framework, which (as with the famous “tree of Porphyry”) standardly envisioned broad genera under which were arranged increasingly narrow species. Thus under the genus of substance, one might have organic substances, then animals, then humans. At each stage some feature will demarcate the species within the genus, as rationality is the “specific difference (*faṣl*)” that distinguishes humanity from other members of the animal kind. In this framework it seems almost inevitable to ask what distinguishes individuals within the lowest-level species. If humanity is picked out from animality by rationality, what is it that picks out Socrates from other humans? What needs to happen to a species that it becomes an individual, rather than becoming another, narrower species?

This then is the problem of “individuation” (*tashakkhuṣ*, from *shakḥṣ*, “individual”), also called in our period “concretization (*taʿayyun*),” because to be an individual is to be one of the “concrete entities (*aʿyān*).” What is it, then, that distinguishes members of a species so as to make the individuals? Avicenna considers a couple of possible answers. One answer, which would be very influential in both the Islamic world and Latin scholasticism, is that the reason why there are numerically different individuals is matter. The idea here would be that there cannot be any distinct members of one species unless a species form

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1 For the Latin Christian tradition see e.g. J.J.E. Gracia, *Introduction to the Problem of Individuation in the Early Middle Ages* (Munich: 1988); J.J.E. Gracia (ed.), *Individuation in Scholasticism: the Later Middle Ages and the Counter-Reformation, 1150–1650* (Albany: 1994). On Avicenna’s own accounts of individuation see D. Black, “Avicenna on Individuation, Self-Awareness, and God’s Knowledge of Particulars,” in R.C. Taylor and I. Omar (eds.), *The Judeo-Christian-Islamic Heritage: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives* (Milwaukee: 2012), 255–281. Many of the issues discussed in this chapter are addressed in F. Benevich, “Individuation and Identity in Islamic Philosophy after Avicenna: Bahmanyār and Suhrawardī,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 28 (2019), 4–28.

is received in matter, having been bestowed by the Active Intellect. Avicenna seems to adhere to this view at least to the extent of thinking that matter is a necessary, though perhaps not sufficient, condition for the individuation of material objects. Immaterial objects are of course not individuated by matter. Instead, their individuation is guaranteed by the essences of things themselves, as happens in the case of one-of-a-kind things [T<sub>1</sub>].<sup>2</sup>

As Avicenna would put it, individuation “excludes” that many things “share” or “participate” (*sharika*) in the individual, the way that many individuals share in a species or genus. The need to exclude even possible “sharing” undermines another possible explanation for individuation discussed by Avicenna, which appeals to combinations of properties. Many things can be human, many humans can be in Baghdad, many humans in Baghdad can be writing, and so on. If we add enough such descriptive features, it seems we will get to something that is unique: the conjunction (human *and* in Baghdad *and* writing *and* ...) will not be shared, and this will explain individuality. But, argues Avicenna, this is not really sufficient. In principle there *could* be another individual with all the same properties [T<sub>2</sub>, T<sub>3</sub>]. Even if the conjunction of properties is not in fact shared, it will always be sharable. Avicenna illustrates with the example of someone put to death in a certain city on a certain day. Even if in fact only one person was executed there on that day, this description is still generalizable and cannot serve to pick out the unfortunate person as an individual. Lurking behind this line of argument is the assumption that no individual can share all its features with anything else, not even anything else that *might* exist. This assumption, which we now call the “identity of indiscernibles,” is explicitly endorsed in our period [T<sub>12</sub>, T<sub>19</sub>, T<sub>35</sub>].

Because any combination of properties is in principle sharable, Avicenna thinks that we can only verify that something is an individual through sense-perception, as by seeing it or pointing at it (*ishāra*) [T<sub>2</sub>, T<sub>3</sub>]. Al-Rāzī doubts even this: sense-perception too grasps a set of properties that is reproducible. He thus contrasts sensation to self-awareness, which is our grasp of ourselves as individuals [T<sub>8</sub>]. But even if we can pick out something as an individual by sensing or pointing at it, this is of course not an explanation of *why* it is an individual. Rather the reverse: it is because they are individuals that they can have unique features, so that individuality is prior to discernibility. This point was made with special force by al-Suhrawardī and his followers [T<sub>13</sub>, T<sub>14</sub>, T<sub>37</sub>, T<sub>45</sub>],

2 On the ontology of one-of-a-kind things in Ancient and Arabic-Islamic philosophy see P. Adamson, “One of a Kind: Plotinus and Porphyry on Unique Instantiation,” in R. Chiaradonna and G. Galuzzo (eds.), *Universals in Ancient Philosophy* (Pisa: 2013), 329–351.

who said that having concrete being (*huwīyya*) is prior to having varying attributes. This is one reason we may want to contrast “individuation (*tashakkkhus*)” to “distinction (*tamyīz*).” We might tell two twins apart by the fact that one has a birthmark on their left cheek, the other on their right cheek, but these birthmarks are not what makes the twins to be two different people.<sup>3</sup> Al-Ḥillī offers a further reason not to conflate distinction with individuation, namely that two species within the same genus are “distinguished” but not thereby made individual [T45].

When we think along these lines, we might begin to wonder whether there is in fact any positive feature that individuates a given individual. Perhaps individuation is merely the *absence* of being shared or sharable by many things? This position is suggested by al-Mas‘ūdī [T6],<sup>4</sup> and an intricate discussion is devoted to it by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. He argues that, on the contrary, the principle of individuation must indeed be “positive (*thubūti*).” Individuation is, in other words, not something privative (*‘adamī*), that is, the mere absence of sharing. Rather it is something “additional” to the quiddity, something that, to recall Avicenna’s language, *excludes* being shared. Al-Rāzī refutes objections against his claim that the individuating factor is positive, notably that the factor would itself need to be individuated, leading to a regress [T7, T9].

Al-Abharī takes up this debate also, agreeing with al-Rāzī that the individuating factor must be individual, since mere privation cannot explain how something would be made concrete [T22]. He proposes stopping the regress by denying that the individuating factor needs to be further individuated. Rather, once it is added to a quiddity, the quiddity becomes intrinsically concrete [T21, T23, T24]. Thus individuation is that which renders a quiddity like humanity, which *as such* can belong to many things, into a concrete or individual quiddity that belongs uniquely to just one individual. In reality we cannot separate individuation from the quiddity to which it belongs [T18]. Al-Ṭūsī agrees that the regress will not arise, since “individuation” is not really a universal notion that needs to be individuated [T25]. In fact, there is no such thing as “individuation” out there. Individuation is just a concept in our minds [T26]. But even if there is one, each thing will have its own concretization, which will need no further concretization, as al-Ḥillī puts it in explaining al-Ṭūsī’s view [T46]. On a similar note, al-Kātibī says that it is only in the mind that the concretiz-

3 See further, Benevich, “Individuation and Identity.” A different interpretation of individuation in al-Suhrawardī can be found in Kaukua, *Suhrawardī’s Illuminationism*, chapter 8.

4 For the traditional Ash‘arite idea that things differ through themselves see al-Shahrestānī and al-Āmidī in our chapter on Universals [T14, T44] as well as Benevich, “The Classical Ash‘arite Theory of *Aḥwāl*: Juwaynī and His Opponents.”



ation is distinguished from the thing's quiddity [T32], and al-Samarqandī adds that concretization is just the quiddity's being "realized (*tahaqquq*)."<sup>5</sup> In other words, to be concrete or individual is simply to exist [T39, T43].<sup>5</sup> These seem to be rather minimal, or reductionist accounts of individuation. But al-Kātibī and Samarqandī agree that the individuating factor cannot be privative, and in fact try to improve on al-Rāzī's argument against that possibility [T29–T30, T40–T41]. Al-Kātibī makes a point that goes well with al-Ṭūsī's claim that individuation is not a universal that needs to be individuated, triggering a regress. This would be true only if individuation applied to each individual univocally. But in fact, there is only an equivocal relation between, say, the individuation of Socrates and that of Plato.

These proposals may sound abstract, or even tautologous: things are individuated by individuation? But to spell out how it might work, we might return to the traditional claim that matter is what individuates and thus provides a (unique) individuation for that which is made of matter. Suppose we take two bits of matter. Both serve to individuate that which is made from them, but the bits of matter are not universal and sharable, because each bit of matter can become only one thing. In this respect matter looks to be a much better candidate than accidental features, which can always be shared. On this basis al-Rāzī accepts the appeal to matter [T10], and sometimes al-Abharī does too [T20] though his views on individuation are not very consistent.

Yet this proposal does not find, if you'll pardon the expression, universal acceptance. Al-Suhrawardī makes the excellent point that a given bit of matter can first be one, and then later another, member of the same species [T13]. A human dies, is eaten by worms; one of these worms is eaten by a fish; another humans catches and eats the fish. Thus (some of) the same matter belongs to two different humans, and can therefore individuate neither of them. Besides which, matter itself needs to be individuated just like anything else. Al-Suhrawardī might in fact say that we have been cheating by talking of "bits" of matter, as if matter comes in ready-made parcels that are already individuated. The same difficulty will also face someone who appeals to particular places or positions as individuating [T17]. Again, we see that any individuating factor seems to need its own individuation.

The strategy of combining more than one individuating factor, like time or place as well as matter, goes back all the way to Avicenna's immediate follower

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5 More generally, solutions to the problem of individuation often recall points made concerning the essence-existence distinction. For example, the objection that if individuation were positive it would trigger a regress, echoes the problem that if existence were distinct from essence, it would need to exist, yielding a regress.

Bahmanyār. He proposed that it is indeed prime matter (*hayūlā*) that provides individuals, but only because of cosmic motion, which allows that species are instantiated in matter as single individuals at single times, places, and positions [T4–T5]. Similarly, al-Abharī proposes that matter alone will not individuate, since matter by itself is undifferentiated, but it may do so if it is manipulated by a separate cause so as to produce a “disposition” for becoming an individual [T24]. A similar point is made by Bar Hebraeus, who spells out that the disposition will trigger an emanation of form from the Active Intellect, as in Avicenna [T33].

Of course this solution will not work for immaterial things. So what individuates God or the celestial movers, or as noted by Bar Hebraeus, rational souls and from his Christian point of view, the Persons of the Christian Trinity [T34]? According to Bahmanyār, for immaterial things individuality is simply essential. That is, the very nature of the immaterial entity excludes that more than one thing share in the nature [T5]. Al-Ṭūsī agrees: individuation is either essential, in the case of things that are by nature unique, or the result of matter, which “individuates by means of the specific accidents that inhere in it” [T26, T28]. As he clarifies in response to a question from Ibn Kammūna, the matter in question needs to be corporeal (not the “incorporeal matter” involved in mathematical objects), precisely because it is this kind of matter that gives rise to spatiotemporal distinction [T27].

What about the other solution considered by Avicenna, a “bundle theory” where a conjunction of generalizable properties will individuate when taken all together? Like Avicenna himself, later authors make the point that this will not work because however many features are added to the description, the description will in principle not exclude sharing [T11, T42]. Would this be so even if one of the features in question were “particularity” itself? No, says al-Rāzī, because all particulars share in particularity. Again, al-Kātibī suggests that this may not be so, if particularity is equivocally predicated [T30–T31], a possibility mentioned by al-Rāzī at the end of [T11] (“the particularity of each particular differs in quiddity from the particularity of any other”). On this account, much as we saw before, Socrates’ particularity or individuation will not be the same as Plato’s.

Univocity can also be denied in a rather different sense, by saying that things may be distinguished by instantiating shared features but with a specific grade of intensity. This idea is briefly mentioned by al-Abharī at the end of [T19], and developed further by followers of al-Suhrawardī [T36, T38]. This however will only explain “distinction,” not “individuation,” to recall this distinction of al-Suhrawardī’s. Al-Shahrazūrī’s example is that a given length like three cubits is distinguished from other lengths; nonetheless two sticks could share exactly

the same length by both being three cubits long. Note that the distinction though intensity is required only when all other kinds of distinction fail. Before we seek refuge in distinction through intensity, we should check whether things share the same subject of inherence, and if so, whether they may be distinguished based on difference in time [T15–T16]. Of course, this idea assumes that different times are themselves somehow distinguished [T16, T44], and it is unclear how that happens.

The upshot is that many candidates were offered to explain individuation, without ever really solving the fundamental problem that whatever individuates must itself be individuated. Something, whether it is matter, spatio-temporal coordinates, or a combination of several factors, must “exclude sharing,” without this being explained by something else in virtue of which it is an individual. If, as Avicenna already argued, a combination of universal or universalizable factors cannot individuate, then whatever ultimately explains individuation must itself be individual. To avoid regress, this individuality might be an unexplained, brute fact. Arguably, this is what al-Suhrawardī means when he says that a thing’s being individuated is neither more nor less than its concrete being (*huwīyya*) [T14].

Texts from: Avicenna, Bahmanyār, al-Mas‘ūdī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Suhrawardī, al-Abharī, al-Ṭūsī, al-Kātibī, Bar Hebraeus, Ibn Kammūna, al-Shahrazūrī, al-Samarqandī, al-Ḥillī.

## Individuation

[T1] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Nafs* v.3, 223.14–224.6 [trans. Black 2012, mod.]

[*matter as principle of multiplicity*]

For the multiplicity (*takaththur*) of things is in respect of either quiddity and form, or relation to the element (*ʿunṣur*) and matter, which [in its turn] is multiplied due to the places which surround all matter in space (*jiha*), and the times that are specific to each one of them [sc. material substrates] in its origination, and the causes which divide them. But [souls] do not differ in quiddity [224] and form, for their form is one. Therefore they differ only with respect to the recipient of the quiddity, or that to which the quiddity is specifically related, namely the body. As to whether it is possible for the soul to be existent without a body, [in that case] it would be impossible for one soul to be numerically distinct from another. This applies absolutely to everything. For things whose essences are mere notions, and whose species have been multiplied through their individuals, can be multiple only on account of their subjects (*hawāmīl*), recipients, effects (*munfaʿilāt*), or through some relation to them and to their times.

[T2] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Madkhal* 1.12, 70.9–20 [trans. Black 2012, mod.]

[*individuation through direct reference/indication*]

The individual becomes an individual only through the conjunction of accidental properties (*khawāṣṣ*), both necessary and non-necessary, with the nature of the species, and the assignment to it of designated (*mushār ilayhā*) matter. It is impossible for intelligible properties, however many they be, to be conjoined to the species so that the individual would thereby subsist in the intellect, without there being in the end [also] a reference to an individuated notion (*ishāra ilā maʿnā mutashakḥkaṣ*). For if you were to say: Zayd is the tall, handsome writer, and so on, [giving him] as many descriptions as you wish, Zayd's individuality would not become determinate for you in the intellect. Indeed, it is possible for the notion assembled from the totality of all these [descriptions] to belong to more than one individual. Instead, what so specifies it [as an individual] is existence (*al-wujūd*) and reference (*ishāra*) to a notion that is individual. For instance when you say that he is the son of a certain person, that he exists at a certain time, that he is tall, and that he is a philosopher, and furthermore it so happens that no one at that time exists sharing

these descriptions, and you have had previous acquaintance (*ma'rifa*) with this happenstance, this thanks to perception of the kind that indicates [the particular individual] through sensation, by way of indicating a determinate person himself (*bi-'aynihi*) and a determinate time itself (*bi-'aynihi*)—it is then that the individuality of Zayd is established, and this statement would indicate his individuality.

[T3] Avicenna, *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt* v.8, 188.10–189 [trans. Black 2012, mod.]

[*against individuation through a combination of universal attributes*]

There is, however, no definition of the singular in any respect,<sup>6</sup> although the composite does have definition in a way. For definition is composed of characterizing (*nā'ita*) names that cannot possibly indicate (*laysa fihā ishāra*) any concrete thing. For, if these did indicate [something concrete], this would be nothing but naming, or reference by making a motion, pointing (*ishāra*), and the like, and would not make the unknown understood through characterization. Since every name confined to the definition of a singular thing indicates a characterization, and since characterization may be applied to a number [of things], with composition not excluding this possibility from it, then [it follows that] if A is a universal meaning and B, another universal meaning, is added to it, then there could be some specification (*takhṣīṣ mā*). But if [this is] specification of one universal by another universal, then the thing that is both A and B would remain universal, and sharing in common may still apply to it. For example, if you define Socrates here by saying, “he is the philosopher,” then this can be still shared in common. If you say, “he is the pious philosopher,” this can be shared in common. If you say, “he is the pious philosopher unjustly put to death,” this can still be shared in common. If [189] you say, “he is the son of so-and-so,” there is still the possibility of sharing in common, besides which, so-and-so [i.e. the father] is an individual that [needs] to be understood (*ṭarīf*) just like Socrates does. If that individual is then understood by indication (*ishāra*), or by a proper name (*laqab*), then we are back to indication and proper names, and we have failed to give a definition. Even if one goes further and says, “he is the one put to death in such-and-such city on such-and-such day,” this description, despite having been made individual by artifice, is universal and can be said of many, unless it is [somehow] tied to an individual.

<sup>6</sup> Reading *bi-wajh*.

[T4] Bahmanyār, *Tahṣīl*, 503.5–14

[*prime matter and motion as the causes of multiplicity*]

The multiplicity of blackness, or of anything that has multiple individual [instances], is thus due to a cause. Conversely, the existent that has no cause cannot be made multiple, given that if it were many, there would be a cause for the existence of that multiplicity. Also, because this multiplicity would happen through division (*qaṭʿ*), and division can occur only by cause of the receptacle (*qābil*), since [division] is a notion extrinsic to the true reality of the thing. So division occurs only insofar as there is the receptacle. The receptacle is matter (*mādda*), so division occurs only to body. Therefore, the reason for multiplicity is prime matter (*al-hayūlā*).

From the foregoing you have learned that motion is the cause of everything originated. So divisions that occur to bodies are due to the multiplicity of the dividers, and the multiplicity of the dividers is by cause of motion. For multiplicity must be traced back to something that is multiple in itself, and this is motion. Thus, if there were no motion, then by this rationale there would be no multiplicity. As for the multiplication of motion, its cause is [motion] itself, since motion entails [multiplication] and it is according to the existence [of motion] that it comes to be and occurs in sequence.<sup>7</sup>

[T5] Bahmanyār, *Tahṣīl*, 505.5–7

[*matter, time, position, and motion as individuating factors*]

You should know that the very conceptualization of an individual prevents its being anything else. Sharing in common cannot apply to the concept [that corresponds to an individual]. By contrast, the essence of a thing and its constituents do not exclude the application of sharing in common. So this must be due to some accident. But the concomitant accident (*al-ʿaraḍ al-lāzim*) is shared in common. So it must be due to some accident that attaches (*lāhiq*) [to the essence] without changing, given that the reason for a thing's being concrete cannot be eliminated while the effect remains, as you will learn. So [the individuating accident] must be attached, but not concomitant (*lāhiqan lā lāziman*). Now, what is attached comes to be attached by means of matter. So

7 There is a parallel passage in al-Lawkarī, *Bayān al-ḥaqq*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, 174. See also Avicenna, *Taʿlīqāt*, 300.

the multiplication of individuals, of whatever sort, must be material. Furthermore, what is attached must come to be attached with a temporal beginning. But whatever has a temporal beginning is originated, and everything originated is preceded by matter. So [again] what is attached comes to be attached by means of matter. And what is attached at two different times does not exclude sharing in common, so the unity of time must [also] be a condition for individuation.

If you consider the nine categories, [you will see] that nothing that [falls under] them is individuated through itself so as to exclude common sharing, with the exception of position (*al-waḍʿ*). For “where” is not individuated through itself until it is specified by some position. Therefore, what individuates is position together with unity of time. Anything that has no position, or does not happen in time, has a quiddity [506] that is in no way divided among [multiple] individuals in existence. On this basis, you may know that motion is the reason for the multiplicity of the individuals of a species. As for the unity of position—like that of the human being from the start of his existence until the end—this is like the unity of time, and is the unity of the connection of positions that are multiple in potentiality.

*[individuation is essential when it is not through matter]*

Furthermore, some things have individuation through themselves, as in the case of the Necessary Existent in itself. Some have individuation through the concomitants of their essences, like the Sun. For in this case, position is among their necessary concomitants. Or like the active intellects, as we will show. Then there are those [whose individuation is] through something attaching accidentally from the beginning of [their] existence: we have shown that this is the class [of things individuated by] occupation of space (*taḥayyuz*) and time, not by anything else.<sup>8</sup>

[T6] Al-Masʿūdī, *Shukūk*, 253.5–10

*[concretization requires no additional factor]*

As for concretization (*taʿayyun*), it means simply the distinction (*tamyīz*) of one thing from another. Whatever is distinct from anything else, so that one can indicate it (with either a sensory or intellectual indication), is concrete. It need not be the case that distinction occurs through some existing item (*amr*

<sup>8</sup> Again, there is a parallel passage in al-Lawkarī, *Bayān al-ḥaqq, Ilāhiyyāt*, 176–177. See also Avicenna, *Taʿlīqāt*, 233–234; 275; 433; 409.

*wujūdi*) that is additional to the essence of the thing. Various quiddities differ from one another through themselves, not through some other item additional to them. If they are existent, then each of them is a concrete object and its concretization is not through an item additional to it.

[T7] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 164.14–166.17

[*arguments that individuation is something positive*]

There are two ways to argue that these concretizing and individuating [factors] are something positive (*thubūti*). [165]

*First*, the concretization and specificity of a thing are equivalent to its concrete being (*huwīyya*). The individual, insofar as it is what it is, is positive. Concrete being is intrinsic to it insofar as it is what it is. And whatever is a part of something positive, insofar as it is something positive, must also be positive. So concrete being is positive.

*Second*, if concretization were something privative (*amran ‘adamiyyan*), then it would be equivalent to either (a) the privation of not-being-concrete, without qualification, or (b) the privation of being concretized as something else (*‘adam ta‘ayyun ghayrihi*). (a) If it is equivalent to the privation of not-being-concrete, without qualification, since it is self-evident that the latter is something privative, then concretization would be the privation of a privation. Therefore it is [after all] something existing (*wujūdiyyan*). (b) But if it is equivalent to the denial of concretely being something else, then concretely being that other thing might be (b<sub>1</sub>) itself privative, so that its privation would be something positive. But one thing’s concretization should be like another’s concretization, so anything else’s concretization should be positive too. (b<sub>2</sub>) If, on the other hand, concretely being something else is something positive, and one thing’s concretization is like another’s, then it should be positive for it to be concrete as well.

[*arguments against the same position*]

One may say that concretization (*ta‘ayyun*) cannot be something positive, relying on the following arguments:

*First*, if concretization were something positive and additional to the quiddity, then [this addition] would also have to be concretized, and this concretization would have a third concretization, yielding an infinite regress.



*Second*, the specification of that additional [first-order concretization] with *that* [second-order] concretization, to the exclusion of any other, can happen only once that concretization is distinguished from another. Otherwise its being specified by *that* [concretization] would be no more fitting than its being specified by any other, nor would it be more fitting than something else being specified by that [concretization]. Hence the specification of that distinguishing factor by that distinction (*tamayyuz*) would come only after it is already distinct from everything else. Therefore it would have to be distinct before it is distinct, which is absurd.

*Third*, if the individuation of the individual that shares in a species along with something else were something additional, then there would need to be a further factor involved. (a) It cannot be that quiddity [itself], since otherwise its species would be in this individual [alone]. (b) Nor can it be the agent cause, since the agent's role is only to bestow existence, and bestowing existence does not entail that the result is that concrete object. (c) Nor can it be the formal cause, since its existence is posterior to the existence of the subject of inherence, so it cannot be the cause of its concrete being. (d) Nor can it be a final cause, since its existence is [likewise] posterior to the thing's existence. (e) Nor can it be a receptive [i.e. material] cause, since the problem of the concretization of that receptacle will be the same as the problem of the concretization of this thing. [The receptacle would become concrete] either due to the concretization of the thing, resulting in a vicious circle, or due to the concretization of [a further] receptacle, resulting in an infinite regress. Alternatively, [the receptacle might be concrete] due to the very quiddity of this receptacle, which would imply that each type of receptacle will be for [just one] individual. But this is absurd, given that bodies have corporeality in common. Either there is nothing that receives it, in which case we have discovered items that are one in quiddity as individuals, without this being explained by receptacles; or [their corporeality] does have something that receives it. But if these receptacles share their quiddity, then the whole argument can be run again. If on the other hand it is not like this [sc. they do not share their quiddity], then in that case [166] the receptacles of the parts that one may assume in what is corporeal would need to be actually distinct. But the parts that can be assumed in it are infinite. So these receptacles, which are distinct in terms of quiddity, are infinite, and the corporeality that inheres in each one of those receptacles would be different from the corporeality that inheres in another. So body would be composed out of an actually infinite number of parts, which is absurd.

Thus it has been established that when individuation is claimed to be additional [to quiddities], these absurdities follow, so this is false.

*[solutions to arguments against a positive principle of individuation]*

*Response. Regarding the first argument:* the solution has been presented in the chapter on existence, namely that if concretization meant anything other than being-made-concrete (*ta'ayyuniyya*), in that case the meaning of being-made-concrete would have to be connected to some other meaning. Otherwise, concretization is concretized through itself, and its concretization is identical to itself, not additional to it, so no infinite regress follows.

*Regarding the third<sup>9</sup> argument:* whenever the concretization of anything is not an effect of its quiddity, so that its species would be in [one] individual, then it must inevitably be in matter. Its matter will inevitably be specified by individual accidents. The individuation of the matter through these accidents is the cause of the individuation of that originated thing. It is impossible for any other instance of that species to be connected with that matter at that time, so that the problem [about how it is individuated] would arise. Nor do we say that that thing exists, and only then the concretization exists, and then after both have occurred, they come to be connected. Rather the occurrence of that thing in that specific matter just is its concretization. Recall what we have presented to you in the chapter on existence, as it provides an escape from many problems.

[T8] Al-Rāzī, *Manṭiq al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, 31.10–32.8

*[the senses do not perceive concrete objects as such]*

Perception of a concrete individual, insofar as it is an individual, is either through immediate feeling (*bi-l-wijdān*) (as when each person knows his concrete self, as such) or through sense-perception (as when we observe Zayd and indicate him).

*This calls for further investigation.* For sense-perception either connects to [the individual] as such, or to something that is common to both it and something else. The common view is that it is the former, but this may be doubted. For, if

<sup>9</sup> The text says “second” but this response is evidently directed against the third problem. There is no distinct response to the second problem.

we posit two bodies equivalent to one another in shape, color, magnitude, and other sensible attributes, and each of the two is like the other, then if we see one of them and thereafter it is hidden from us, and then we see it once again, we will not know whether the one we saw first is the one we see on the second occasion, or [32] the other, which looks just like it. Obviously that which distinguishes one from the other is distinct from that which they share, since what is shared cannot be that which distinguishes. So if, when sense-perception connects to the concrete individual, it were connected to the item on account of which [the individual] is what it is, then it could not resemble something else, since it would be impossible for this [individuating] item to belong anything else. So, since [such] resemblance does occur, we know that sense-perception does not connect with [the individual] as such, rather [only] to an extent (*al-qadar*) that may be shared [with others]. Or, if sense-perception does connect to it as such, one could not confirm this in imagination. Now that you understand this, it should be clear that whatever each of us indicates about ourselves when we say "I" is distinct from whatever we indicate by [saying] "it."<sup>10</sup>

[T9] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, 73.6–8<sup>11</sup>

[*another infinite regress argument*]

If these concretizations were something positive, then (a) if the quiddity to which these concretizations are related is existent, one individual would be two existents, not just one. Furthermore, in this case, the same problem would arise for each [of these two existents, the quiddity and the concretization] as arose before, and then each of them would be two existents as well. It would follow that everything is an infinite number of things, which is absurd. And even if one admitted this, there would need to be unity in it, since no multiplicity can be realized without unity. (b) If on the other hand [the quiddity] is not existent, then something existent [that is, the concretization] would be added to something non-existent and would inhere in it, which is absurd.

<sup>10</sup> See further al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-ḥikma*, vol. 1, 70–71.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted after Ms Tehran Majlis 927t, because the passage is absent from the Ms Berlin or Oct. 623.

[T10] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 166.19–167.17

[*matter as the principle of individuation*]

You should know that the concretization of a quiddity is either (a) one of its necessary concomitants or (b) not. (a) The first option implies that this species is in only one individual. (b) On the second option, individuation [167] would call for a cause that is distinct from this quiddity, and the cause of individuation would need to be prior to the occurrence of this individuation. This cause will be either (b1) separate from that individual or (b2) connected to it. (b1) The former is absurd, since the relation of this separate [cause] to this individual is the same as its relation to another individual, so it cannot be the cause of the individuation<sup>12</sup> of that individual. (b2) If however it is connected to it, then either (b2a) it is inhering in the individual or (b2b) the individual is inhering in it. (b2a) The first option is absurd, since the subject of inherence is prior to what inheres in it, but the cause of individuation cannot be posterior to the individual. Therefore (b2b) the individual must be what inheres in it [the cause of individuation]. Thus, whenever the species of anything exists in many individuals, the multiplicity occurs only by reason of matter.

So everything whose species does not consist in its individuality, must be material. This may happen in two ways. First, individuation may be through a mere relation to matter without [matter] being anything within the object itself, as with the individuation of simple things and accidents. For their individuation takes place only by their occurring in their matter and in their subjects of inherence. Second, there may be [material] states additional to relations.

[*accidents do not individuate*]

Whatever the individuating factor may be, when we assume it to be non-existent and eliminated, there follow the non-existence and elimination of the individual, since when the cause is non-existent the effect's non-existence is necessary. By contrast, this would not follow from the non-existence of any accident or property belonging to the individual. Therefore [accident or property] are not among the individuating factors. Rather they occur accidentally, only after individuation has already been realized. They are not constituents of the individual, but rather are constituted by it.

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12 Deleting *-hi* in *tashakhkhuṣiḥi*.

[T11] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, 73.11–18<sup>13</sup>

[*problems with individuation and universality*]

The qualification of one universal by another universal does not yield individuality. For if you say that Zayd is a human, this is something that is shared; and if you say he is a knowledgeable, pious human, this is still shared; and if you say that he is a son of so-and-so, who was talking today about this-and-that, at such-and-such a place, still none of this excludes being capable of being predicated of many.

*Someone might say:* the item that is added to the quiddity so that it is individuated is either (a) a quiddity or (b) not. (a) On the first option, quiddity as such is universal as well, but whenever one universal is qualified by another universal, it does not become particular, according to you. Hence, quiddity does not become concrete by reason of adding whatever is added; but it was assumed that it does, which is a contradiction. (b) But the second option is absurd, since what has no quiddity cannot be added to anything else.

*One may respond as follows:* why can't it be that, although each quiddity (I mean, both the one that is individuated and the one that individuates) is in itself universal, each of them is the cause for the other's becoming particular?

*The questioner may respond:* the particularity that you make out to be the effect of the two essences is universal too, since the true reality of "particularity" is univocally predicated of this particularity and that particularity. And if the particularity itself is a universal nature, how can the particularity come to be?

In order to solve these problems, some of them came to think that the particularity of each particular differs in quiddity from the particularity of any other. But this raises problems of its own.

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13 Quoted after MS Tehran Majlis 927t, because the passage is absent from the MS Berlin or Oct. 623.

[T12] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 333.2–13

[*identity of indiscernibles*]

A universal nature can occur as multiplied in extramental reality only through a distinguishing factor (*bi-mumayyiz*). For instance two blacknesses, or two whitenesses, must be distinguished from one another through an item apart from being blackness, which will be either the subject of inherence or something else. If neither is distinguished from the other, then the multiplicity will arise through blackness or whiteness itself, so that the quiddity of blackness would in itself imply that it is multiple. But we have already demonstrated that no quiddity can be realized that would imply multiplicity through itself. Furthermore, if *this* blackness is distinguished from *unqualified* blackness, then there occurs something together with it that distinguishes it, and the distinction is through some item additional to [its] being blackness. But if [*this* blackness] were unqualified blackness, and *that* blackness is also [unqualified blackness], then *this* blackness will be identical to *that* blackness.

Whenever a quiddity has a number of things falling under its species, it must be possible to indicate one of [these instances] separately, whether by sense-perception, estimation, or intellect. The one who indicates this [instance] is aware of it, and aware that it is distinct from another [instance]. But whenever one recognizes that one of them is not the other, one has already distinguished between them. So one has recognized something in [this instance] by which one recognizes it and distinguishes between it and another. This [distinguishing feature] is additional to the shared quiddity.

[T13] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 334.13–335.16

[*against individuation through matter*]

*Some of the people of knowledge said:* the very conceptualization of the individual excludes sharing in common. This is not by reason of its constituents, since the constituents in themselves do not exclude sharing, nor by reason of a necessary concomitant, since [things may] agree [in having this concomitant] and sharing is not excluded. Nor is it by reason of a separable accident, since this does not exclude sharing either. So it is determined to be by reason of matter (*al-mādda*).

*Investigation and critique:* this is wrong, for two reasons. *First*, when features and forms of one and the same species occur in a single matter at two different

times, this results in two different individuals. The distinction [335] of one of them from the other is due not to matter, but to time. *Second*, prime matter (*al-hayūlā*), which is [supposedly] what individuates and excludes sharing, relates to the exclusion of sharing in just the same way as anything else. For its very conceptualization does not exclude sharing either: prime matter applies with one and the same meaning to multiple things. Given that none of the attributes of a thing exclude sharing, and nor does the very conceptualization of prime matter exclude sharing, and an aggregate of universals is universal, there is no benefit in what they go on to say.

**[individuation vs. distinction; individuation through huwiyya]**

Now that you understand this, you should know that a distinguishing factor (*al-mumayyiz*) is not the same as an individuating factor (*al-mushakkhis*). Sharing in concrete quiddities is not excluded by reason of the distinguishing factor; we have already indicated an aspect of this in the principles of logic. Rather the concrete being (*huwiyya ʿayniyya*) of prime matter excludes sharing because of its being a concrete being. Likewise with blackness and whiteness. We have already shown that sharing in a true reality means nothing but correspondence (*al-muṭābaqa*). This is not just any correspondence, but the correspondence of something whose essence or true reality consists in being a perceptual representation of something else, without [this essence] itself being a fundamental concrete being. So sharing is excluded for things by their concrete being, whereas they are *distinguished* by their specifying [features]. The individuation of a thing just belongs to it in itself, whereas distinction is only relative to what shares [with it] some common character (*maʿnā*), and the aspect of multiplicity. So if there is nothing [that shares a character with it] then it requires no distinguishing factor in addition; yet it still has individuation. Otherwise, [given that] the aggregate of [features] that do not exclude sharing itself fails to exclude sharing, all particulars would be universals. But in fact two things can be distinguished, one from the other.

[T14] Al-Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, 162.3–5

**[individuation through huwiyya]**

The only judgment to make is that individuation happens in light of the concrete being that occurs concretely (*bi-ʿtibār al-huwiyya al-wāqīʿa ʿaynan*). Any concrete being that occurs concretely is individuated, and excludes sharing. The distinction between distinguished things, though, is through attachments (*lawāḥiq*).

[T15] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 337.5–16

[*kinds of distinguishing features*]

A single species of features is distinguished numerically either through numerous subjects of inherence or through time, if the subject of inherence is the same. As for the case of perfection and deficiency, this can also serve to distinguish; we will mention this case in what follows.

*Investigation and reminder:* some followers of the Peripatetics, having admitted that when we see something and its image reflected in a mirror, the forms of both are in one and the same subject, distinguished [between the two forms] on the basis of their relation to their sources. For one of the two is due to the bearer of the form, the other through the mediation of the mirror. We however force them to acknowledge that many numerically distinct things belonging to a single species, and found in a single subject of inherence, may differ in relation to [their] sources and efficient causes. In light of this, their argument fails, which was meant to establish that the soul is not based in a bodily organ (*ghayr āliyya*). [Their argument was] that if it were in an organ, and it were to grasp its organ intellectually through the occurrence of a form other than the form that belongs to the bearer in itself, then two different forms of a single species would occur in one and the same matter. *But one may say to them:* the two forms do differ, since one of the two is in the thing itself without the mediation of a faculty, whereas the other is representational, and occurs through the mediation of a faculty.

[T16] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 338.1–339.3

[*distinction and time*]

*Another investigation:* you objected by saying that two features of a single species are distinguished from each other, if the subject of inherence is the same, in virtue of time, but time itself (if it is the measure of the motion belonging to the celestial sphere<sup>14</sup>) is in a single subject of inherence. So how is each of its parts distinguished from the others?

14 On this, see A. Lammer, *The Elements of Avicenna's Physics*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018, ch. 6, and P. Adamson and A. Lammer, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Platonist Account of the Essence of Time," in A. Shihadeh and J. Thiele (eds), *Philosophical Theology in Islam: Later Ash'arism East and West* (Leiden: 2020), 95–122.



*Response:* the parts of time are distinguished from one another through themselves.

But this does not show anything, since if this were possible, then one could say of any two things within a single species that they are distinguished through themselves, without any distinguishing factor. The parts of time share in the quiddity and the subject of inherence, so they cannot do without a distinguishing factor.

*To which it might be responded:* time is one not just in species, but also as an individual. For it is one and the same continuous item (*amr muttaṣil wāḥid*).

But this is not a successful response either, because even if time is one and continuous, it is still divisible into distinct parts.

*The truth* is that the parts of time never coincide with one another in such a way that one of them would [need to] be distinguished as a concrete individual. But with regard to conception and intellection, some parts may be distinguished from others in terms of priority and posteriority, and in terms of proximity to, or distance from, what imagination (*wahm*) takes as a beginning. They are also distinguished by relations to various celestial bodies, like the stars, in terms of their oppositions, conjunctions, and interrelations.

*Problem:* you said that time is one of the factors that distinguishes between two features that have a single subject of inherence. But they might coincide in a single subject of inherence, in such a way that one of them originates at one time and another at a second time. Then they would remain together, while differing in the time of their origination.

[339] *Response:* if the time of the origination of both has passed, the relation they each bear to it no longer remains, so there is no distinction in terms of a relation to time, [this relation] having passed by means of the passing [of time]. The factor that distinguishes between two things must occur while they both still exist and are distinct.

[T17] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārīʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 339.4–10

[*against individuation through position*]

*Another investigation:* it is worth noting here that some people allege that the only category that is individuated through itself is position (*al-waḍʿ*), and that “where (*ayn*)” is not individuated through itself in the absence of position. But this is a mistake. For the case of position is no different from that of the [other] categories, since nothing excludes that two bodies may be in one and the same position at one and the same time, or that both (or just one body) are in one and the same position and in one and the same “where,” but at two different times. For that which exists at one and the same time, two positions may be distinguished through two subjects of inherence and two “wheres.” Also, what is in one and the same “where” may be distinguished through two times. But individuation in the sense of excluding sharing belongs to position to the same extent as to anything we have explained above.

[T18] Al-Abharī, *Zubdat al-ḥaqāʾiq*, fol. 152r12–19

[*individuation is distinct from quiddity as such, but not from quiddity in concrete individuals*]

Every thing has a true reality through which it is what it is. [The true reality] is distinct from its individuation, since the mere conceptualization of the quiddity as such does not exclude that sharing applies to it; whereas the mere conceptualization of the individual as such does exclude that sharing applies to it. Thus quiddity is distinct from being an individual, so the individuation is not the quiddity. On the other hand, its concrete being (*huwiyya*) cannot be separate from the concrete being of the quiddity in concrete individuals. Otherwise the quiddity in concrete individuals would [have to] receive individuation, and whatever receives anything has an individuation that is distinct from that which is received. So the quiddity would have an individuation distinct from its individuation, which is a contradiction. Therefore, individuation cannot be separate from quiddities in existence.

[T19] Al-Abharī, *Bayān al-asrār*, fol. 42v8–21

[*identity of indiscernibles and the need for an individuating factor*]

Whenever a universal nature is multiplied in concrete individuals, then its multiplication in concrete individuals must be additional [to it]. For this human is

other than that human. If his being so were in virtue of unqualified humanity, then [this human] would be the same as that [human]. So they must differ in some respect. If that which two things share is merely accidental, then the distinction lies in the quiddity to which the accidents occur. If [what is shared] is a genus, the distinction lies in the specific differences. If [what is shared] is a species, then the distinction lies in separable accidents. For in the case of quiddities that have the subject of inherence, their difference is due to the difference between their bearers. But if their subject of inherence happens to be one and the same, then they differ in time, like two cases of blackness that occur in one and the same subject of inherence, one after the other has perished. On this basis, it is clear that two different similar things cannot co-occur in one and the same subject of inherence, since they would not be distinct.

*[return of the non-existent]*<sup>15</sup>

For this reason, there can be no return of the non-existent, since whatever occurs at the second moment of time is distinct from what occurred at the first moment; it would be absurd that it should return together with the returning of its [first] time at the second time.

*[analogical distinction]*

If something is predicated analogically (*bi-al-tashkīk*), distinction may result in it due to intensity and weakness, like in the case of existence. Or it may result through these and through other distinguishing factors as well, for instance that which is more intensely white.

[T20] Al-Abharī, *Muntahā al-afkār*, 287.4–6

*[subject of inherence as the principle of individuation]*

Differing accidents occur to a quiddity only by reason of the receptacle. Otherwise the reason would be either (a) the quiddity or (b) some separate thing. The (a) first option is absurd, since otherwise a separable accident would be a necessary concomitant, which is a contradiction. (b) The second option is absurd as well, since otherwise specifying certain instances to the exclusion of others would be specification without any specifying factor (*takhṣiṣ bi-lā mukhaṣṣiṣ*).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Avicenna, *Healing, Metaphysics* 1.5, 28–29.

[T21] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*, 269.5–9

[*individuation through combination of quiddities, not universals*]

You should know that particularity does not necessarily arise from the qualification of one intelligible universal by another. For, when the universal *human* in the intellect is qualified with the universal *black* in the intellect, the universal *black human* results in the intellect, without becoming anything that would exclude sharing in common. However, when the natural universal—that is, the quiddity as such—has another quiddity added to it in extramental reality, namely the quiddity of concretization (*māhiyyat al-taʿayyun*), then it does become a concrete individual that excludes sharing.

[T22] Al-Abharī, *Tanzil al-afkār*, fol. 37v17–20

[*individuation is not privative*]

Concretization cannot happen through something privative (*ʿadamī*), as non-existence (*al-ʿadam*) has no concrete being (*huwiyya*) in concrete individuals, so nothing can be concretized by it. Also because concretization is a part of the concrete, and the concrete is existent; but [any] part of the existent is existent. So concretization is existent.

[T23] Al-Abharī, *Tanzil al-afkār*, fol. 37v34–38r29

[*arguments that individuation is not positive*]

*First*, if concretization were something positive, then it would have a quiddity that the concretizations would share in common. Then their concretization would require a further concretization, yielding a regress. [38r] Or we may say: if that which renders things concrete were affirmative, then it would have a universal quiddity. Inevitably it would need a further concretization, yielding the regress.

*Second*, if [concretization] were something positive, then its being added to a quiddity would presuppose [that quiddity's] being distinct from other [quiddities]. So [that quiddity] would have a concretization before this concretization. So it would be concretized before being concretized, which is a contradiction.

*Third*, if [concretization] were something positive, the concretization of an individual that shares the same quiddity as others would be either in virtue

of (a) the quiddity itself, (b) an agent, (c) the receptacle, or (d) something else. (a and b) The first option is wrong, as is the second. Otherwise its species would be restricted to its [one] individual. (c) The third option is wrong too, since if [concretization] were due to the receptacle, then (c1) if the concretization of the receptacle were through another receptacle, this would yield a regress. (c2) But if it were through that which is received, a vicious circle would follow. (d) The fourth option is wrong as well, since concretization is only conceivable in these three ways.

[*responses*]

But all this is unconvincing. *As for the first*, we do not concede that if it were positive, it would have a quiddity that the concretizations would share. Why can't every species of concretization be restricted to an individual? As for their argument that if concretization were something additional, it would have a universal quiddity, *we say*: if you mean by this the natural universal, we do not concede that it has a [second order] concretization. This would follow only if other [concretizations] shared in [the quiddity of this concretization] in external reality. But if you mean by it the intelligible universal, we do not concede that this must have a universal quiddity [either]. This would follow only if it occurred in the intellect in such a way that universality applied to it. Furthermore we can ask, why do you say that this sort of regress is wrong? You need to provide a demonstration for this.

*As for the second*, *we say*: we do not concede that if the adding of the concretization to a quiddity presupposes that the latter is [already] distinct, it follows that [the quiddity] requires another concretization. This is because the quiddity is distinct from other quiddities through itself (*bi-dhātihā*).

*As for the third*, *we say*: we do not concede that if the concretization of the receptacle were due to that which is received, a vicious circle would follow. For the quiddity of each of them would be the cause of the concretization of the other, rather than the concrete being of each of them being the cause of the concretization [of the other]. So, no vicious circle follows. And even if we granted this, why do you deny that the fourth option is intelligible? Why couldn't the agent ensure the concretization, but on the condition of some disposition that has occurred to the receptacle, by reason of something originated? This originated [factor] would depend on another originated [factor], and so on to infinity.

[T24] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, 268.1–6; 268.15–269

[*another version of the regress argument*]

If concretization were something positive (*thubūtī*), and if it were caused by the quiddity, then the quiddity would be prior to it in terms of concretization, given that the cause must be concrete before the effect is concrete. So the quiddity would have another concretization; that concretization would have another concretization, and so there would be an infinity of concretizations between the concretization and the quiddity, which is absurd. If, on the other hand, [concretization] were caused by a separate cause, then, if a given quiddity were specified by occurring as many concrete individuals, as opposed to others [that might have realized the same quiddity], then this would be preponderation without a preponderating factor (*tarjih bi-lā murajjih*), which is absurd. [...]

[*response: matter and a separate cause combine to individuate*]

[268.15] We do not concede that if [concretization] were caused by the quiddity, the quiddity would be prior to it in terms of concretization. Why can't it be prior to the [concretization] in terms of existence alone? For existence might occur to the quiddity, and this existence could entail the existence of the concretization, and the conjunction of the two existences would be the existence of the individual. And even if we did concede this point, why have you said that, if it were caused by a separate cause, then the specification of the quiddity with multiple individual [instances] by certain concretizations and not others would be preponderation without a preponderating factor? Why can't [269] concretization occur by reason of certain dispositions that occur to the receptacle, by some different cause?

So it should be known that, when individuation is caused due to the quiddity, the species of [the quiddity] is [uniquely] in its [one] individual. But if its species is not restricted to its [one] individual, then concretization happens by reason of the receptacle together with a disposition that occurs to [this receptacle] through causes external to it.

[T25] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 232.6–19

[*against arguments in favor of privative individuation*]

*The first argument*, which [al-Rāzī] ascribes to the theologians (*al-mutakallimīn*), holds only on the supposition of affirming that there is some univer-

sal “concretization,” which different concretizations share in common. But if this were so, then the quiddity of concretization would be shared by them, and it would not be concretization. Here “concretization” means simply that through which similar things are differentiated; it is not something shared in common. “Concretization” or “that through which there is differentiation” is applied accidentally to different instances of concretization. Every instance of [concretization] is distinct from any other through itself, not through a further concretization. So it does not follow from this that the concretization has a further concretization.

*As for the second argument*, which says that if concretization were positive, then it could not be added to a quiddity unless the quiddity already existed, this is not right. For concretization is that which, because it is added to the quiddity, the quiddity exists. No circle follows from this, nor does concretization need to be affirmed twice.

*As for the third argument*, which says that the existence of the quiddity is different from the existence of the concretization, and they are two, or even an infinite number of things, this isn’t right either. For existence is attributed to the quiddity by reason of the attribution of concretization to it. Just as the quiddity that is different from existence does not have existence as an attribute, insofar as it is distinct from existence, so likewise concretization does not have existence as an attribute insofar as it is concretization. As for the concretized quiddity, it is just one existent.

[T26] Al-Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd al-aqā'id*, 76.7–9

**[individuation is merely conceptual, and is explained by matter]**

Individuation is among the items that are conceptual (*min al-umūr al-ʿtibāriyya*). When we consider it insofar as it is an intelligible (*ʿaqlī*) item, we find that other individuations share in it. But this yields no regress: the regress is stopped as soon as one stops [adding] consideration.

As for [the principle of] individuation, it may be the quiddity itself, in which case there is no multiplicity [i.e. there is only one thing that has this quiddity], or it may go back to the matter that individuates by means of the specific accidents that inhere in it.

[T27] Al-Ṭūsī, *Ajwibat al-masā'il Ibn Kammūna*, 26.16–21; 31.4–9

[*Ibn Kammūna: can incorporeal matter individuate?*]

They showed that the individuation of things that agree in species can only be because of matter. Yet in all the cases where they actually put this premise to use, they make it more specific than what they have shown. For matter without qualification is more general than the corporeal [matter] and other [kinds of matter]. Nor have I found them giving a demonstration indicating that this [individuating] matter is the corporeal one, specifically. A number of passages in their books show that they do allow incorporeal matter, like what they have mentioned about the afterlife of the soul, etc. What then is the demonstration that things agreeing in species are specified by *corporeal* matter, as opposed to any other [kind of matter]? [...]

[*al-Ṭūsī's response*]

[31.4] The matter that is mentioned when explaining the individuation of that which agrees in species is nothing but the prime matter (*al-hayūlā al-ūlā*) that belongs to bodies. For the division of something into parts that are all equal and agree in species, is conceivable only in the case of bodies that are put together out of a form and the aforementioned matter, not in any other case. No objection can be raised against this, since if something is divided into two parts that are equal in species, that division must be in terms of measure. But measure occurs only to natural bodies whose forms inhere in matter. What we have mentioned on this issue suffices.

[T28] Al-Ṭūsī, *Ajwibat al-masā'il Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn al-Mūsawī*, 37.13–19

[*individuation through matter, place, and position*]

He [al-Mūsawī] said that individuation in extramental reality comes down to the occurrence of specific accidents to the essence, such as form, color, shape, and the like.

*I say:* these things are not individuation. For individuation is that through which something becomes such that it cannot be applied to many. But these things he has mentioned do not exclude being applied to many, whether or not they are taken together. Individuation is only through concrete corporeal matter, which belongs to nothing but this individuation. The “where” that is specific to it follows upon [the matter], which is the reason why no other [individual]



can occupy that same place. The same goes for the position specific to it, that is, the indication available to sense perception that refers to it and to nothing else. These are the causes of individuation.

[T29] Al-Kātibī, *Ḥikmat al-ʿayn*, 14.14–15.2

[*refutation of al-Rāzī's arguments for positive individuation*]

Concretization cannot be privative (*ʿadamī*), since non-existence (*al-ʿadam*) has no concrete being (*huwiyya*) in concrete individuals, so nothing else can be concretized through it. Also, because it is part of the concretized existent, so it is existent [too].

[15] This calls for further inquiry. *Regarding the first argument*, because it is question begging. *Regarding the second argument*, we do not concede that [concretization] is a part of the concretized, if “the concretized” means that to which concretization occurs accidentally. But if it means the composite of both [concretization and what is concretized], we do not concede that it is an existent.

[T30] Al-Kātibī, *Munaṣṣaṣ*, fol. 215v10–13

[*response to regress argument: concretization is equivocal*]

You argue on the assumption that the concretization of every quiddity in a species is a positive item additional to it. In this case, there can be no doubt that the concretization would be a specific, positive quiddity as well, so its concretization would also be something positive and additional to it, yielding a regress, in the way we have explained.

But obviously one can also refute what has been mentioned here. Namely by saying: we do not concede that, if concretization is an item positive and additional to the quiddity of a species, then the concretization would also be a positive specific quiddity, predicated of the individual instances of concretization. Why can't concretization be predicated of whatever falls under it equivocally, not univocally?

[T31] Al-Kātibī, *Munaṣṣaṣ*, fol. 218r17–21

[*defense of individuation through bundled universals*]

Why do you say that upon the association [of a universal quiddity and the quiddity of particularity], if one, or both, of two universal quiddities implied the particularity of the other, then it would follow that no individual results? *He* [al-Rāzī] *says*: for in this case there occur [even] three or four universals, since being particular is a universal as well, but the association of one universal with another does not yield an individual even if there are thousands of them.

*We say*: we do not concede that particularity is a universal. This would follow only if it were truly predicated univocally of what falls under it. But this is denied. Rather, according to us, the particularity of every particular is different in its true reality and quiddity from the particularity of any other particularity. This being so, what occurs upon the association of some of those things with others is particular, since the association of a universal with a particular or of one particular with another certainly does yield a particular.

[T32] Al-Kātibī, *Jāmi‘ al-daqa’iq*, fol. 134v3–9

[*individuation and essence are distinct only in the mind*]

*If it is said*: if concretization were additional to the quiddity, then in extramental reality the quiddity would be the subject of inherence for the concretization, but the subject of inherence must be concretized before the existence of that which inheres in it. So the quiddity would have concretization before its concretization, and it would have [another] concretization before that concretization, so there would need to be an infinite number of distinct ascriptions from the quiddity and its concretization, which is a contradiction.

*Then we say*: we do not concede that if concretization were additional to quiddity, then the quiddity would be the subject of inherence for the concretization in extramental reality. This would follow only if the extramental quiddity and the concretization were not united in extramental reality. Why do you deny this? On our view, the extramental quiddity and the concretization are one and the same thing in concrete individuals. But when the extramental quiddity occurs in the intellect, the intellect divides it into two things: a quiddity and a concretization, in the same way as previously stated concerning quiddity and existence.

[T33] Bar Hebraeus, *Hēwath hekhmthā, Met.*, 134.4–12

[*individuation as the joint result of material disposition and the Giver of Forms*]

If the concretization (*methyaqqnānawth*: lit. “coining”) of a quiddity takes place through either the quiddity, the agent, or the receptacle, then the species of that quiddity is limited to one [individual] substance (*qnūmā*) alone, in that, so long as the quiddity, the agent, and the receptacle remain the same, there may be a cause for one concretization alone. Yet it is the Giver of Forms that gives rise to multiple concretizations, through which a multiplicity of [individual] substances belong to one and the same species. He bestows them upon matter, in accordance with the different dispositions that occur to it. For instance, if the concretization of Socrates were through humanity or the Active Intellect or prime matter [alone], then humanity would exist only in his [individual] substance. But this is not so. So [his concretization] is not through any of them by itself. Rather it is through the agent, the receptacle, and the effects [in the matter], taken together. Indeed, different forms emanate upon prime matter from the Active Intellect in accordance with diverse dispositions, which come about through celestial motions. The individual concretizations of humanity take place through these forms, and it is likewise that multiple individual [substances] exist for every species.

[T34] Bar Hebraeus, *Mnārath qudhshē*, vol. 3, 140.19–26

[*individuation of the divine Persons*]

*We say*: it is not necessary that if the material ways [of subsistence] are responsible for plurality in making up [different] hypostases [usually], then all plurality of hypostases would be in virtue of [those] material ways. [...] [140.22] Moreover, we say that rational souls too are equal in terms of nature, but they do not fail to be distinct from each other without those material ways [of subsistence]. [They are distinct] after their separation from bodies, according to the view of Aristotle, and both before their connection to bodies and after their separation from them, according to the opinion of Plato. Likewise, the hypostases of the divine nature are distinct from each other without any material ways [of subsistence].

[T35] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī l-ḥikma*, 91.19–92.10

[*the need for a distinguishing factor*]

A universal nature is multiplied in concrete individuals only through something that distinguishes. For instance, there can be no two blacknesses unless by reason of two bodies that render them multiple, or by reason of two states. For if it were just because it is blackness [92] that it is required to be multiple, then each of [its instances] would require whatever the nature of blackness requires; but if every blackness is similar to any other, not differing in anything at all, they are one and the same (*fa-huwa huwa*). Also, if [blackness'] being blackness requires it to be *this* blackness, and it is a condition for it is that it be this one, then there must be no other [blackness]. So it is by some cause (*bi-sabab*) that it is rendered multiple, and that there is multiplicity for anything that becomes multiple in its instances. If something has no cause, multiplicity cannot apply to its universal nature. For if it were multiplied, there would be some cause for the existence of that multiplicity, but we supposed that there is no cause for [the multiplicity], which is a contradiction. Furthermore, when someone indicates a number of things [belonging] to the species of that nature, whether in a way suitable for sense-perception, estimation, or intellection, he is aware that [one] is distinct from another. He has already recognized in it something through which it is recognized, and which distinguishes it from any other. That [distinguishing feature] is additional to the shared quiddity.

[T36] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī l-ḥikma*, 92.17–18

[*distinction by intensity*]

Among distinguishing factors there is being more perfect and being more deficient, like perfect and deficient magnitude, since one exceeds the other only in terms of being a magnitude.

[T37] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī l-ḥikma*, 92.20–93.3

[*difference between distinction and individuation*]

It should be known that a distinguishing factor (*al-mumayyiz*) is not the same as an individuating one (*mushakkhkhiṣ*). Sharing in common is not prevented for concrete quiddities by reason of the distinguishing factor, but by their concrete beings (*bi-huwiyyātihā al-'ayniyya*), whereas their being distinct (*imtiyāz*)

is by whatever specifies them. [93] The individuation of a thing belongs to it in itself, whereas its distinction is simply through [its] relation to [other things] that share a common feature (*ma'nā 'āmm*) [with it]. If something had nothing that shares [a common feature with it], then it would not need any additional distinguishing factor, but it would be still individuated.

[T38] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 213.20–214.6

[*intrinsic individuation through perfection and deficiency*]

Having understood this, you should know that unqualified extension applies in common to both the particular [extension] C, which is three cubits long, and B, which is two cubits long, just as C applies in common to its concrete particular instances [i.e. whatever is three cubits long], and B [214] to its concrete particular instances. The distinction between the longer extension of three cubits and the shorter extension of two cubits, subsequent to their commonly sharing in unqualified extension, is through nothing apart from being an extension; rather, it is through themselves. This kind of distinction is called “by perfection and deficiency” or “by intensity and weakness.” For we have already shown that multiplicity only is by way of mental consideration. There is no multiplicity in extramental reality. Rather, [these lengths] are simple. There is no need to give a demonstration for the simplicity of [these lengths] and what is like them, though there may be a need for a reminder and calling to mind.<sup>16</sup>

[T39] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥā'if*, 108.11–14

[*definition of individuation*]

Whenever a quiddity is realized in extramental reality, various features (*ma'ānī*) occur to it, which are specific [to it] either by quiddity or by relation, and which cannot belong to anything else. [The quiddity] is specified through them, so that no possibility remains for sharing them in common. That through which there is specification is called “concretization” and “individuation.” That which is composed from it and from the quiddity is “concrete being (*huwiyya*).”

<sup>16</sup> See further our chapter on Universals [T37].

[T40] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 109.4–11

[*the principle of individuation is positive*]

The verifiers said that [individuation] is something affirmative, but some people said it is privative. The truth is the first position. For if it were privative, then it would need to be either (a) the privation of being unqualified [that is, universal], or (b) [the privation] of something else, whose privation is not the same as the privation of being unqualified. Otherwise it would not be like this [sc. privative].

(a) In the first case, it would follow that all individuals would share this feature in common, and none of them would be distinct from the others. So this is not how concretization works. (b) But if it is not [the privation of being unqualified], then one privation could differ from another. In which case either (b<sub>1</sub>) the privation of being unqualified does not exist together with that privation, or (b<sub>2</sub>) it does. (b<sub>1</sub>) The first option implies that one and the same thing is not unqualified, but at the same time nor concretized. (b<sub>2</sub>) The second option [implies] that something is unqualified and concretized at the same time. Both are absurd. This is an unprecedented demonstration.

[T41] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 109.13–110.8

[*refutation of al-Rāzī's argument against individuation as privative*]

*The Imām [al-Rāzī] said:* if [individuation] were privative, it would be either (a) the privation [110] of a further concretization or (b) [the privation] of being not-concretized. (b) On the second option, it would be affirmative, since being not-concretized is privative, and the privation of a privation is affirmation. (a) On the first option, if that [other] concretization were [likewise] privative, then [this one] will be affirmative; but if [the other concretization] is affirmative, and this one resembles it, then it will be affirmative too.

*But this calls for further inquiry.* For if, by “being not-concretized,” he meant nothing but this notion, then we do not grant the division [of options], since [concretization] could be the privation of something else, neither of [a further] concretization nor of being not-concretized. If however by [being not-concretized] he meant that of which being not-concretized can be truly predicated, then the division is granted, but we will not concede that it is privative. Even if we did concede this, we have already shown that the opposite

of something privative need not be something existing, for instance blindness and not-blindness.<sup>17</sup>

[T42] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 112.6–113.4

[*against the bundle theory of individuation*]

*If you say:* when we qualify a universal with a universal, and every qualification makes it more specific than it was before, why could this not reach the point (*ḥadd*) of being specific for just one thing, so that there could occur no sharing of it in common? Also, why couldn't each of two or more universals provide concretization and specification for the other? Then the aggregate could be specific for one thing alone, *jas* in the case of a composite property.

*I say:* the mind can posit an unlimited number of individual instantiations for any universal notion, since positing an individual is nothing but positing that feature as existent and individuated, and this reaches no limit. [...]

[113.3] True, [a universal feature] may happen to be specific for just one extramental existent, but this does not prevent the mind from conceptualizing another individual [that has this feature].

[T43] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 114.8–11

[*individuation is caused by the realization of a quiddity*]

The truth is that the cause of concretization is the realization of the quiddity in extramental reality. For we know necessarily that, whenever a quiddity is realized in extramental reality (regardless whether this involves matter, or a relation, or neither) this becomes a discrete, specified thing which cannot be counted or shared in common. This is the only meaning of concretization. Thus may one know that just the realization of a quiddity suffices for its concretization, and it is the cause of concretization. Individuals are counted only by counting the existences of a quiddity. But God knows best.

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17 Further on (at 110–111), al-Samarqandī follows closely the same line of argumentation that we saw in al-Kātibī, especially the idea that “concretization” could be an equivocal notion.

[T44] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 501.11–502.5

[*discernibility through time; cf. T16*]

Some have allowed that distinction comes down to time, as we have said before. Against them, it has been objected that time is a measure of motion that inheres in a single subject of inherence: how then can one of its parts be distinguished from another? To which it has been responded that the parts of time are in themselves distinct from one another. But then some hold the view that this is invalid, because if the parts of time are different in themselves, there will need to be a sequence of “nows.” Whereas, if they form a unity, then one [may as well] allow for every species that its individual instances are distinct in themselves. It has been also responded that the parts of time do not co-occur in a way that [there would need] to occur something that distinguishes them as concrete individuals; in conceptualization, though, some differ from others in terms of priority and posteriority. To this it is objected that if two [parts] of time are distinct in terms of priority and posteriority, then one of [502] two individual instances of a species could be distinguished from the other by occurring at an earlier time. But in this case two individual instances [of a species] may be in a single subject of inherence at the same time. *They responded:* if the time of the creation of the universe has passed, the relation of [the universe] to it does not remain either. So no distinction arises in consideration of its relation to the time that has passed. The distinction between two things must arise while both exist and are distinct from one another.

[T45] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 82.11–29

[*distinction vs individuation*]

*I say:* when [al-Ṭūsī] mentions that individuation and distinction are two different things, he explains that commonality does not hold of them in an unqualified sense. For one may hold true of something without the other doing so, and they may also both hold true of a third thing. For any two things of this sort, it is the case that they have something common in a certain respect [but not in an unqualified sense]. Individuation may hold true without distinction, which applies to that which is individuated and is not considered as sharing in common with anything else, even though in fact (*fī naḥs al-amr*) it will inevitably share something in common, even if [only] in respect of common accidents. Or, distinction may hold true without individuation, which applies to the universal, when it is particular relative to another universal under which it is subsumed: it is distinguished from everything else, but not individuated.



As for both holding true of a single thing, this applies to that which is individuated and subsumed under something else, when it is considered insofar as it is subsumed. Then it is both individuated and distinguished.

[T46] Al-Ḥillī, *Nihāyat al-marām*, vol. 1, 178.17–179.3; 181.6–182.4

[*an argument against individuation as something positive*]

The fact that this additional [individuating factor] is specific to that concretized object, and not for anything else, presupposes [179] the distinction of that concretized object from everything else. Otherwise its being specific to it would be no more appropriate than its being specific to anything else, or anything else being specific to it. It follows that the specification of that concretization to that concretized object presupposes the concretization of the latter, so it is concretized before being concretized, which is a contradiction. [...]

[*response: individuating accidents in matter*]

[181.6] Whenever the concretization of something is not an effect of its quiddity, such that it is one of a kind, it must inevitably have matter, and its matter must inevitably be specified by individuating accidents. The individuation of matter by these accidents is the cause for the individuation of that originated thing. It is impossible for another individual instantiation of that species to be attached to that matter at that time, given the problems that would follow from this. Nor do we say that this thing exists, and its concretization exists, and that once both have occurred, they attach to each other. Rather, the occurrence of the thing in that specified matter just is its concretization.

*But this calls for further inquiry.* For we reject matter, as will be explained. Even supposing we granted it, if those accidents are the individuating factors, the issue [of individuation] would arise for them just as it did for quiddities. So the mediating role of matter would be fruitless, and one may as well allow that quiddities are individuated through themselves.

*The most eminent among the verifiers [Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī] responded:* natures are concretized either through specific differences, as with species which are composed from genera and differences; or through themselves, as with species that are simple. Furthermore, insofar as they are natures, they are suitable to be either common and intelligible, and to be specific and individual. Just as [182] they become common through the addition of the feature of commonality (*ma'nā al-'umūm*), likewise they become individuals through the addition

of concretizations to them, with no need for a further concretization. Even if it were supposed that concretization were something negative, it [still] would not be the absolute privation of something (*'adam al-shay' muṭlaqan*). Rather it would be something privative (*shay' adamī*). There are many examples of such privative [attributes] that are suitable as differences, to say nothing of the fact that there [can] be accidents.

## Proofs for God's Existence

As one would expect, thinkers in the medieval Islamic world generally agreed that God exists. What they did not agree about was how to show that this is true. The most famous such dispute was waged between Avicenna and Averroes, who respectively critiqued and defended Aristotle's approach to establishing God's existence as a divine First Mover that explains the eternal motion of the cosmos. In notes on the section of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* establishing the First Mover (which includes [T1], but see also the eighth book of Aristotle's *Physics*) Avicenna complained, "it is extraordinary that motion should be the way to affirm a true One that is the principle for all existence!"<sup>1</sup> Averroes characteristically enough rose to the defense of the Aristotelian approach, arguing that a proof on the physical basis of motion is more appropriate than Avicenna's preferred demonstration on the basis of existence.<sup>2</sup> Averroes may not have appreciated it, but Avicenna's proof became one of his most famous legacies, in both the Islamic East and Latin Christendom. It is known as *burhān al-ṣiddiqīn*, or "demonstration of the truthful" [T2–3]. In brief, the proof argues that there must be some Necessary Existent, because if all things that exist were contingent—that is, in themselves or by their essences susceptible to both existence and non-existence—then there would be no explanation as to why they exist rather than not existing.

*Burhān al-ṣiddiqīn* takes the lion's share of attention in the present chapter, but it was not the only proof for God known and discussed in our period. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī presents a classification of proofs [T20], in which Avicenna's demonstration appears as only one of four possibilities. That proof proceeds, as we have just said, from the "contingency of essences." One can however also argue from the origination of bodies; the contingency of attributes; or the ori-

1 Avicenna, *Commentaire sur le livre Lambda de la Métaphysique d'Aristote*, ed. and tr. M. Sebti et al. (Paris: 2014), § 5.

2 See A. Bertolacci, "Avicenna and Averroes on the Proof of God's Existence and the Subject-Matter of Metaphysics," *Medioevo* 32 (2007), 61–98. On Avicenna's proofs for God's existence see further M.S. Zarepour, *Necessary Existence and Monotheism* (Cambridge: 2022); C.K. Hathery, *Avicenna on the Necessity of the Actual* (Lanham: 2022). T. Mayer, "Ibn Sinā's Burhān al-Ṣiddiqīn," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 12.1 (2001), 18–39; M. Marmura, "Avicenna's Proof from Contingency for God's Existence in the Metaphysics of the Shifā'," *Medieval Studies* 42.1 (1980), 337–352; H. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (Oxford: 1987).

gination of attributes. More or less along these lines we will discuss the various proofs offered and analyzed by our thinkers under the following headings: (A) the proof from motion known from Aristotle but dismissed by Avicenna; (B) the so-called “*kalām* proof,” which is Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s proof from the origination of bodies; (C) specification arguments, distinguished by al-Rāzī into the two kinds of proofs from attributes; and finally (D) Avicenna’s *burhān al-siddiqīn*. Then there are (E) some miscellaneous arguments that fall into none of these categories.

(A) Given Avicenna’s rejection of the Aristotelian proof from motion, along with the fact that that proof takes as a key premise that motion is eternal, something rejected by most of our thinkers, it is unsurprising that this proof does not play a major role in the 12–13th century debate. It was certainly not forgotten, though, and is mentioned for example by Fakhr al-Dīn [T18] and al-Ḥillī [T69], both ascribing this approach to “natural philosophers.” Al-Suhrawardī discusses the proof from motion in some detail [T41]: celestial souls are needed to explain heavenly motion and God is then introduced as an incorporeal final cause that inspires the celestial souls to cause motion. So far, so Aristotelian, until al-Suhrawardī adds that if this final cause is contingent, then it will need a preponderator. (For another application of the idea of preponderation see his treatment of “inclination” in [T42].) Thus al-Suhrawardī seems to think that we need an argument along the lines explored under (C) below if we are to identify the Aristotelian prime mover with God. This is echoed by al-Shahrazūrī in [T66–67], who offers proofs of something incorporeal (movers, souls) and only then moves to invoking the need for a necessary existent to cause inferior immaterial causes. ‘Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamadhānī goes so far as to dismiss proofs from motion as superfluous given the more direct approach of Avicenna [T7] (compare also the end of [T69]). Averroes would have been most vexed.

(B) Already before Avicenna, a proof had gained currency within the Islamic world, which we may call “the *kalām* proof” in honor of its origins in systematic Islamic theology.<sup>3</sup> As it happens, this proof has to do precisely with origins: the argument is that all bodies need to be temporally originated, because bodies cannot be without temporally originated properties like motion and rest. Furthermore, whatever is originated has an originator. But the universe consists of

3 See further the modern understanding of the *kalām* proof in W. Craig, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument* (London: 1979).

bodies, so the whole universe needs an originating cause which is God [T32].<sup>4</sup> Notice that this argument proceeds from the premise of the *non*-eternity of the world, whereas the Aristotelian proof employed the eternity of the world.<sup>5</sup> This argument is likewise modified by adding the idea of specification or preponderation, something we already find in al-Juwaynī [T4], al-Ghazālī [T6], and Ibn al-Malāḥimi [T11], who appeals to our own experience of voluntary action to illustrate the idea of God's originating the world when He could have refrained from doing so [T12].

Fakhr al-Dīn raises some questions about the original version of the proof [T32] and also provides a version invoking specification [T33], to get his "proof from the origination of essences." This version tries to prove the key premise that whatever is originated has an originator. It does so by using the Avicennian idea that contingent things need a cause, just as in *burhān al-ṣiddīqīn*. Fakhr al-Dīn thereby answers a possible rejoinder to the classic *kalām* argument: why not just say that the universe began to exist at some point, but for no reason at all? Because, it is replied, the contingent is precisely that which needs to be preponderated to exist or not; contingencies are not just realized as brute facts. The *kalām* proof is also subjected to a criticism by al-Abharī, who complains that all the work is really being done by a separate refutation of circular causation and of infinite causal regress [T52], which has its home in Avicenna's proof.

(C) Arguments from specification take their departure from the idea that certain features of the world could have been otherwise; God must specify or preponderate them to be as they are. This method goes back to *mutakallimūn* like Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, as reported by Ibn al-Malāḥimī in [T10], or al-Ḡuwaynī [T4], who argues by process of elimination that the specified features must be due to a "freely choosing agent," namely God. The basic intuition here, then, is that if things might in themselves be either this way or that, someone needs to make an arbitrary choice that they will be like this rather than that. For example a body, just insofar as it is a body, can be either water or fire: it is not water's being a body that makes it to be water [T10]. So a freely choosing agent must have specified the body to be water rather than fire or some other element.

4 For the original version of the *kalām* proof, see A. Shihadeh, "Mereology in Kalām: A New Reading of the Proof from Accidents for Creation," *Oriens* 48.1 (2020), 5–39.

5 The contrast is noted by al-Ghazālī at *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 79.2–7.

This is what Fakhr al-Dīn calls the “contingency of attributes” argument [T20, T34]. It might usefully be compared to another style of argument that Fakhr al-Dīn presents in [T35], drawing on an example given by the much earlier Abū Bakr al-Rāzī: just as a jug is ideally constructed for holding and pouring water, so the human body is fashioned in such a thoughtful way that a wise Creator is to be given credit. Al-Ṭūsī applies the same style of reasoning to the well-designed cosmos as a whole rather than just the human body [T61–62]. Such design arguments do also involve the attributes of created things, but it is important to distinguish them from specification arguments, as Fakhr al-Dīn indeed does in [T20].<sup>6</sup> Al-Abharī argues separately against both in [T52]. Whereas specification arguments appeal simply to the idea that things could be constituted in a variety of ways, and God is needed to choose one of those ways, the design argument adds to this that there is one *best* way for everything to be. Avicenna would be quick to say that if there is in fact one best way for things to be, then it is not after all arbitrary which way is selected. Rather this best of worlds must flow necessarily from Him as a perfect agent.

(D) Finally we come to Avicenna’s *burhān al-ṣiddiqīn*, which is succinctly restated in terms of preponderation by Fakhr al-Dīn [T19]. An initial question to be posed here is: what does the demonstration actually demonstrate? Apparently only a necessary existent that causes all the contingent existents. But then it is a further matter to show that this necessary existent has all the features one would expect of the Abrahamic God.<sup>7</sup> For instance we need to exclude that the world itself is the necessary existent [T17], for instance by demonstrating that nothing necessary can be a body [T20, T23].

But this further task arises only if the proof itself is successful, and here a number of objections were raised. One problem is that Avicenna rules out an infinite chain of contingent causes, insisting that causal explanation must terminate at a necessary existent. This may seem rather strange given that, as an eternalist, Avicenna accepts infinite causal chains of another kind, for instance

6 The argument may be an updated version of al-Ash’arī, *Lum’ā*, 6–7 [ed. McCarthy]. Our thanks to Abdurrahman Mihirig for this reference.

7 For Avicenna’s own awareness of this and attempt to ground the divine attributes in God’s necessity, see P. Adamson, “From the Necessary Existent to God,” in *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, ed. P. Adamson (Cambridge: 2013), 170–189. The discussion of God’s unity is also relevant in this context; see further T. Mayer, “Fakhr ad-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Critique of Ibn Sīnā’s Argument for the Unity of God in the *Iṣārāt* and Naṣīr ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī’s Defence,” in D.C. Reisman and A.H. al-Rahim (eds.), *Beyond and After Avicenna: Proceedings of the First Conference of the Avicenna Study Group* (Leiden: 2003), 199–218.

the infinite series of humans from whom each of us is descended. The Avicennian justification for this is that an infinite chain of causes can be taken collectively as a “whole (*jumla*)” or “aggregate (*majmūʿ*),” and this whole collection will itself be contingent. Al-Rāzī adds that we can consider only the present, simultaneous chains of causes and effects [T21–23]. Will this whole chain be contingent? This sparks a long-running discussion as to whether the property of contingency can be transferred from the “units (*āḥād*),” that is, individual members of the aggregate, to the whole aggregate [T5, T9, T14–15, T40, T47, T55]. Here a crucial proposal was that wholes are causally dependent on their parts. So as al-Suhrawardī succinctly observes [T40], if the parts that make up a whole are contingent, and if they are causes for the whole, then the whole must likewise be contingent. It must now be shown that we need a cause extrinsic to the whole of contingent parts; this is achieved by arguing that the even if the parts do cause the whole, they do not cause themselves. Thus we have an explanatory chain as follows: God, as extrinsic to the whole set of contingent things, causes the individual members of this set (the “parts” or “units”) to exist, and these then cause the whole set to exist; for the stages of this complex debate see [T55, T57–58, T63, T65, T68, T70]. Another spin on this question discussed in the 13th century is whether a kind of “super aggregate,” consisting of all the contingent things *plus God*, would be contingent or necessary [T53–54, T58, T63].

Seen in this light, it may seem that no contingent thing could be a “complete” cause. For how could such a cause render its effect necessary, when it is not necessary itself? This line of reasoning underlies another series of passages, which argue that God alone can truly cause the existence of things. As already stated by ‘Umar al-Khayyām [T8] and reprised by Fakhr al-Dīn [T16], the best a contingent cause can do is be somehow involved in causing something’s existence, without guaranteeing that thing’s existence. Al-Abharī qualifies the argument with the caveat that it does not deprive contingent things of causal power [T51]. For a contingent thing can be a necessitating cause *once it already exists*, with its own existence of course tracing back ultimately to God as the first necessitating cause. That would help to explain how it is that God does not cause all contingent things to exist simultaneously. Many of them are, so to speak, waiting for their non-eternal, immediate, necessitating causes to come along [T51]. Also worth noting is that we do not need to think of the causes as temporally originating their effects in each case, as in the classic *kalām* argument. Rather, the cause could explain the continued persistence of something, as pointed out by Ibn Kammūna [T64].

One might object to Avicenna that according to his own theory, everything and not only God will be necessary. For His causal influence on the world is

necessary, and all things necessarily arise given the presence of this causal influence. To this worry it is replied that the contingent things of course remain merely contingent in themselves [T49], which validates our intuition that in the created world existing things might not have existed [T30]. With this proviso we can admit that everything that exists is in a sense a “necessary existent,” because it will not exist until necessitated to do so [T31].<sup>8</sup>

A final major area of debate concerning *burhān al-ṣiddiqīn* is a claim we have seen invoked numerous times: that contingent things need to be determined to exist, if they are to exist. Since this premise also lies behind the proofs from specification and the classical *kalām* proof, we might go so far as to say that this “principle of preponderation” is fundamental to nearly all attempts to prove God in our period. As al-Ghazālī points out, the principle is tantamount to the claim that nothing (or at least nothing non-necessary) happens without being caused [T6]. This may remind us of the “principle of sufficient reason,” especially in the discussion of al-Āmidī [T45]. He thinks that the principle is so obvious as to need no proof, which is why he refutes one argument in favor of it [T46]. Fakhr al-Dīn also offers a criticism against Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s argumentation for the principle [T26], and he too suggests that the principle is self-evident [T24]; see also al-Ṭūsī in [T58]. Fakhr al-Dīn also gives an amusing example to illustrate [T39]: would anyone, upon being slapped, be willing to entertain the possibility that no one had slapped him? Yet he is still willing to argue positively for the principle elsewhere [T27–28]—it is this that provokes the rebuttal from al-Āmidī in [T46]—and to refute arguments against the need for a preponderator [T25, T29]. For instance it might be thought that someone fleeing from a dangerous animal and coming upon a fork in the road will just pick one path, without any preponderation. The same applies for someone choosing one of two glasses of water. These thought experiments may remind us of the famous example of the donkey unable to choose between bales of hay, used to poke fun at John Buridan in Latin scholasticism, or indeed al-Ghazālī’s example of choosing which of two dates to eat in his *Tahāfut*.<sup>9</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī and al-Āmidī also dialectically question whether everything contingent needs a cause [T13, T48].

We should also note that Avicenna’s proof was adapted by al-Suhrawardī using his own distinctive “illuminationist” terminology, where what is proven is the “Light of lights” that necessitates and preponderates other things [T43–44].

8 For a contemporary discussion of the same issue see P. Van Inwagen, “Necessary Being: the Cosmological Argument,” in P. Van Inwagen, *Metaphysics* (London: 2015), 159–182.

9 Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 23–24.



Not dissimilar is what we find in Bābā Afḍal, who transposes Avicenna's conception to his own scheme of a hierarchy of knowers [T50]. He presents God as being knowledgeable through Himself and argues that all knowledge is ultimately traceable to the divine self-knower much as Avicenna had said that all existence traces back to that which exists through itself. Al-Kashshī uses both al-Suhrawardī's "light" terminology and the idea of God as a self-knower whose luminosity makes other things knowable as well [T56].

(E) Finally we can mention a few other arguments that do not fall into the categories surveyed above. First, we have not so much an argument as a flat denial that God's existence needs demonstration: 'Ayn al-Quḍāt argues that those with mystical insight can dispense with all such proofs, including Avicenna's [T7]. Second, al-Ṭūsī contends that God can be established as the maximum of a scale of perfection, an idea also famously used in one of Aquinas' "five ways" [T60]. Third, there are some remarkable, if merely dialectical, arguments in Fakhr al-Dīn [T36–38]: that everyone believes in God; or that everyone does so when in dire straits; and that it is prudentially wise to believe in Him, which is a striking anticipation of Pascal's wager.

Texts from: Aristotle, Avicenna, al-Juwaynī, al-Ghazālī, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, 'Umar al-Khayyām, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, al-Mas'ūdī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Suhrawardī, al-Āmidī, Bābā Afḍal, al-Abharī, al-Kashshī, al-Kātibī, al-Ṭūsī, Ibn Kammūna, al-Shahrazūrī, al-Samarqandī, al-Ḥillī.

## Proofs for God's Existence

[T1] Aristotle, *Met.* Λ.6, 1071b11–1071b31 [trans. Ross]

[*proof for the actual being of the Unmoved Mover*]

Since there were three kinds of substance, two of them natural and one unmovable, regarding the latter we must assert that it is necessary that there should be an eternal unmovable substance. For substances are the first of existing things, and if they are all destructible, all things are destructible. But it is impossible that movement should either come into being or cease to be; for it must always have existed. Nor can time come into being or cease to be; for there could not be a before and an after if time did not exist. Movement also is continuous, then, in the sense in which time is; for time is either the same thing as movement or an attribute of movement. And there is no continuous movement except movement in place, and of this only that which is circular is continuous.

But if there is something which is capable of moving things or acting on them, but is not actually doing so, there will not be movement; for that which has a capacity need not exercise it. Nothing, then, is gained even if we suppose eternal substances, as the believers in the Forms do, unless there is to be in them some principle which can cause movement; and even this is not enough, nor is another substance besides the Forms enough; for if it does not *act*, there will be no movement. Further, even if it acts, this will not be enough, if its substance is potentiality; for there will not be *eternal* movement; for that which is potentially may possibly not be. There must, then, be such a principle, whose very substance is actuality. Further, then, these substances must be without matter; for they must be eternal, at least if anything else is eternal. Therefore they must be actuality.

[T2] Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 266.14–269.8 [trans. Mayer, mod.]

[*burhān al-ṣiddīqīn, version 1*]

*Remark.* Every existent, if you consider it in itself, not considering anything else, is either such that [267] existence is necessary for it in itself, or it is not. If its existence is necessary, then it is the Truth in Himself, the Necessarily Existent in itself: the Self-Subsistent.

If it is not necessary, then it cannot be said that it is impossible in itself after it has been supposed as existent. Rather, if a condition were attached in respect of its essence, such as the condition of the non-existence of its cause, it would become impossible; or [if a condition were attached in respect of its essence] such as the condition of the existence of its cause, it would become necessary. If no condition is attached to it—neither the occurrence of a cause nor its non-existence—then a third thing is left over for it in respect of its essence, namely contingency. And it is, in respect of its essence, something that is neither necessary nor impossible. Thus every existent is either necessarily existent in itself or contingently existent in itself.

*Pointer.* In the case when [something] has contingency in itself it does not become existent through itself. For its existence through itself is no more appropriate than its non-existence, inasmuch as it is contingent. If either of them becomes more appropriate, it is due to the presence of something or its absence. Thus the existence of every contingent existent is from something other than itself.

*Remark.* If this constitutes an infinite series, then each single unit of the series is contingent in itself. The totality depends upon it. Thus it is not necessary either, but becomes necessary through another. [268] Let us supply this with an explanation.

*Explanation.* Every unit in the whole totality is caused, and so [the totality] requires a cause external to its units. For either: (a) It requires no cause at all, so that it would be necessary and not contingent; but how is this feasible, it being in fact necessitated simply by its individuals? (b) Or it requires a cause which is the individuals all together, so that it would be caused by itself, for this totality and “the whole (*kull*)” are one and the same. As for “each (*kull*)” in the sense of “each unit (*kull wāḥid*),” the totality is not necessitated by it. (c) Or it requires a cause which is one of the units; but none of the units is more appropriate than any other for that, since every one of them is an effect, whereas its cause would be more appropriate for this. (d) Or it requires a cause external to all its units. And that is the only remaining possibility.

*Pointer.* No cause of a totality is anything amongst its units. For it is firstly a cause for the units, then for the totality. If this were not the case, then let the units not be in need of [the cause]. In that case the totality, since it is brought to completion through its units, would not need [the cause either]. Admittedly,

there may be something which is a cause for one of the units and not another, but then it would not absolutely be a cause for the totality.

[269] *Pointer*. For any totality arranged from causes and effects in succession, involving an uncaused cause, [the latter] would lie at the extreme (*fa-hiya taraf*), since if it were in the middle it would be an effect.

*Pointer*. It has become clear that every series composed of causes and effects—whether finite or infinite—if there is nothing but what is caused in it, it needs a cause external to it. However, it is doubtless connected to [that cause] as an extreme. It has also become clear that if there is in [the series] something that is not caused, it is an extreme and a limit. Thus every series terminates in the Necessary Existent in itself.

[T3] Avicenna, *Najāt*, 566.16–568.13 [trans. McGinnis and Reisman, mod.]

[*burhān al-ṣiddiqīn*, version 2]

Undoubtedly there is existence, and all existence is either necessary or possible. [567] If it is necessary, then the existence of the necessary is true, which is the conclusion sought. If it is possible, then we will show that the existence of the contingent terminates in the Necessary Existent. Before that, however, we will advance some premises.

These include that at one and the same time, there cannot be for everything that is contingent [in] itself an infinite number of causes<sup>10</sup> that are themselves contingent. This is because all of them either exist simultaneously, or do not. If they do not exist simultaneously but rather one after another, there is no infinite at one and the same time—but let us defer discussion of this for now. As for their existing all together with no necessary existent among them, then either the totality, insofar as it is that totality (whether it is finite or infinite), exists necessarily through itself or contingently in itself. If on the one hand the totality exists necessarily through itself, but each one of its members is something contingent, then what exists necessarily is constituted (*yakūnu mutaqaawwiman*) through things that exist contingently, which is absurd. If on the other hand the totality is something existing contingently in itself, then the total-

10 Reading *ʿilal* with ms Ch.

ity needs for existence [568] something that provides existence, which will be either external or internal to the totality.

If it is something internal to it, then one of its units is a necessary existent, but each one of them exists contingently, so this is a contradiction. Or it is something existing contingently and so is a cause of the totality's existence, but a cause of the totality is primarily a cause of the existence of its parts, of which it is one. Thus it would be a cause of its own existence, which is impossible, though if it were correct, it would in a way be the very conclusion that is sought; for anything that is sufficient to make itself exist is a necessary existent. Still, it was [assumed] not to be a necessary existent, so this is a contradiction.

The remaining option is that [what gives existence to the totality] is external to it, but it cannot be a contingent cause, since we included every cause existing contingently in this totality. Therefore, [the cause] is external to it and it also is a necessary existent through itself. Thus, things existing contingently terminate at a necessary existent cause, in which case not every contingent [effect] will have simultaneously with it a contingent cause, and so an infinite number of causes existing at a single time is impossible.

[T4] Al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 28.3–29.12 [trans. Walker, mod.]

[*specification argument*]

Having established the temporal origination of the world and shown that its existence commences, it follows that the temporally originated (*al-ḥādith*) is that whose existence and annihilation are both possible. Yet at every moment that [the originated thing] does in fact occur, it would be possible for it to have happened some moments earlier; and it is contingent whether its existence may have been delayed beyond that moment by some hours. When possible existence occurs instead of continued non-existence, which is also made possible, the mind judges as self-evident that there must be a specifying factor (*mukhaṣṣis*) that specifies the occurrence [of the temporally originated]. This (may God provide you with guidance) is necessarily clear and calls for neither deep investigation nor further inquiry.

Since it is clear that the temporally originated taken as a whole requires a specifying factor, that specifying factor must be either (a) an agent that necessitates the occurrence of the temporally originated thing, in manner of the cause

that is necessarily productive of its effect, or (b) some nature, as was held by the naturalists, or (c) a freely choosing agent.

(a) It is wrong to say that it follows the pattern of causes, since a cause necessarily causes its effect simultaneously. If the specifying factor were assumed to be a cause, it would have to be either eternal or temporally originated. [29] If it were eternal, it would necessarily cause the world to exist eternally as well, leading to the doctrine of the eternity of the world; but we have already set out the proofs for its temporal origination. If [the specifying factor] were temporally originated, on the other hand, it would require another specifying factor, yielding a regress in the argument as to how the determining factor is determined.

(b) Those who claim that the specifying factor is a nature face the same problem. For nature, according to those who affirm it, necessitates its effects as soon as any impediments are removed. If nature were eternal, that would imply the eternity of the world. But if it were temporally originated, there would have to be [another] specifying factor. This consideration suffices to refute them, though perhaps we will refute the naturalists again later on, God willing.

(c) Thus, if it is false that the specifying factor for the temporally originated thing is a necessitating cause or a nature that by itself makes it exist without choosing to do so, then from this it follows conclusively that the specifying factor for temporally originated things is an agent that chooses to produce them, specifying their occurrence with certain attributes and certain times.

[T5] Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 81.9–82.13 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*mereological problems*]

[*The philosophers may*] say: the conclusive demonstration for the impossibility of infinite causes is to say: each one of the individual causes is in itself either possible or necessary. If it is necessary, then it needs no cause, but if it is possible, then the whole is characterized by possibility. Every possible thing needs a cause additional to itself. Thus the whole needs an extrinsic cause.

*We say*: the expressions “the possible” and “the necessary” are ambiguous, unless by “the necessary” is meant that whose existence has no cause and by “the possible” that whose existence does have a cause. So if this is what is meant, let us turn back to what was said: each one is possible in the sense that it has a

cause additional to itself, but the whole is not possible in the sense that has no cause additional to itself, extrinsic to it, [rather it is necessary]. (If on the other hand the expression “the possible” means something else than what we have said, then it is not comprehensible.)

*If it is said*, this would lead to the consequence that the necessary existent would be constituted through that which is possible of existence, which is absurd, *we say*: [83] if by “the necessary” and “the possible” you mean what we have mentioned, then this is question begging. We do not admit that it is impossible. It’s like saying, “it is impossible for the eternal to be constituted through temporally originated things,” even though according to them time is eternal and the individual celestial movements are temporally originated, each having a beginning but their totality having no beginning. Thus that which has no beginning would be constituted through things that do have beginnings, and whatever is true of those that have beginnings would be applicable to the individual units but not true of the totality. In just the same way, it might be said about each individual unit that it has a cause, even though the totality has no cause. Not everything that is true of the individual units is true of the totality. For it would be true of each individual that it is one, that it is some [portion], and that it is a part, but it would not be true of the totality. Any given place on earth is lit by the sun during the day and becomes dark at night, and each [of these events] is temporally originated after it was not the case, in other words, it has a beginning. But the totality, according to them, is something that has no beginning. Hence it has become clear that whoever allows the possibility of temporal events with no beginning (namely the forms of the four elements and of changing things) is unable to deny an infinity of causes. Because of this difficulty, it results that they have no way of managing to affirm the First Principle.

[T6] Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtisād*, 24.6–7; 25.6–26.5 [trans. Yaqub, mod.]

[*kalām argument for God’s existence*]

[24.6] The existence of God, the exalted and sanctified, is demonstrated as follows: “the origination of everything originated has a cause (*sabab*); the world is originated; it follows that it has a cause.” [...]

[*everything originated has a cause; preponderation*]

[25.6] We have included in it two principles, which our opponent might deny. *We say to him*: “which of the two principles do you dispute?” *If he says*: “I dis-

pute your statement that everything originated has a cause; how do you know this?" We say: "This principle must be affirmed; for it is immediately evident and necessary according to reason (*awwalī darūrī fī al-'aql*).” Someone who is not moved by it is, perhaps, not moved because it is unclear to him what we intend by the term “originated” and the term “cause.” Once he understands them, his reason will necessarily agree that everything originated has a cause: by “originated” we mean that which was non-existent and then became existent. We say then: “was its existence before it existed impossible (*muḥāl*) or contingent (*mumkin*)?” It is false that it was impossible, since what is impossible never exists. If it was contingent, then we mean by “contingent” simply that which can exist and can fail to exist. However, it was not yet existent,<sup>11</sup> because its existence is not necessitated through itself. For if its existence came to exist<sup>12</sup> through itself, it would be necessary, not contingent. Rather, its existence required that something to preponderate it over non-existence, so that it might go from non-existence into existence. Thus its non-existence continues insofar as there is nothing to preponderate existence over non-existence: as long as there [26] exists no preponderating factor, it will not exist. By “cause” we intend nothing other than the preponderating factor (*al-murajjih*). The upshot is that something that is continuously not existing will not go to existence from non-existence until something is established that preponderates the side (*jānib*) of existence over continued non-existence.

Once the meanings of these terms are fixed in the mind, reason necessarily assents [to this principle]. This is how that principle is made clear: by verifying the terms “originated” and “cause,” not by offering a proof for it.

[T7] ‘Ayn al-Qudāt, *Zubdat al-ḥaqā’iq*, 11.17–13.2, 13.12–15 [trans. Jah, mod.]

[on *Avicenna’s burhān al-ṣiddiqīn*]

Speculative scholars have thoroughly discussed those problems from various angles, but most of them strayed from the straight path, like someone who tries [12] to prove His existence (that is, the existence of the Eternal) on the basis of motion. For even if this is an obvious way, and one that is sufficient to reach the objective, it is a long way to go, and requires the establishment of premises

11 Yaqub apparently reads *mawjūdan wājiban* instead of just *mawjūdan*.

12 Yaqub apparently reads *wujiba* instead of *wujida*.



that may be dispensed with by the one who travels the correct way. I don't deny that many useful things lie in the speculation concerning motion, but I would say that one can dispense with it when it comes to this problem as such. Imām al-Ghazālī, the “proof of Islam”—may God be pleased with him—in his book *Iqtisād fī al-ʿitiqād* devoted some ten pages to proving the Eternal. Upon my life, he may be excused for doing so, because this book of his was written in accordance with the methods of *kalām*, even if what he says there is superior to other works of *kalām*. Apart from al-Ghazālī many others have written countless pages on these problems, as is well known amongst the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*), and there's no need to get into all that here.

The certain truth concerning the establishment of the Eternal is to prove it through existence, this being the most general of things. For, if there were no Eternal in existence there would have been no existent in existence whatsoever. For existence is exhaustively divided into the originating and the eternal, that is, that whose existence does have a beginning and that whose existence does not. If there were nothing eternal in existence then nothing at all would be originated, since it is against the nature of the originated to exist through itself. Thus that which is existent through itself is necessary of existence, and the necessary in itself cannot conceivably have a beginning. From these statements results a demonstrative syllogism, which speculative scholars call the conjunctive conditional, so that it may be easily understood by a beginner who is not yet able to perceive intelligible true realities. *It says*: if there is any existent thing in existence, it necessarily follows that there must be something eternal in existence; this is a certain principle that cannot conceivably be doubted by anyone. *Then one says*: existence is known without any doubt (*qaṭʿan*), and this is a second principle that is certain like the first one was. From the two [13] foregoing principles one necessarily concludes to the existence of an eternal existent. This is the proof of the eternal using the method of existence. One cannot conceive of any further elucidation beyond this, either one that is more concise or one that provides verification. [...]

[*the ṣūfis need no argument*]

[13.12] Those who are endowed with penetrating vision which penetrates the veils of the hidden, and with angelic sovereignty, have no doubt concerning the existence of an entity (*maʿnā*) from which existence has proceeded in the most perfect of ways. He is that which is said to be “outside the veils,” when they call Him “Allah,” the exalted, in Arabic.

[T8] Al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī al-wujūd*, 113.14–118.5

[*only the necessary can be a cause for existence*]

We say: no quiddity that is contingently existent can ever be the cause of necessitation, unless [114] it [merely] prepares, or mediates, or does something else like what contingent existents do.

[Let] A be something contingent, and let A be the efficient cause of B's existence. It is then known that B is contingently existent. But nothing that is contingently existent exists without its existence's becoming necessary, so B has become necessarily existent. A, however, is not necessarily existent. Rather it is contingently existent from one perspective and necessarily existent from another: contingency of existence belongs to it through itself, whereas necessity of existence is something it acquires. So nothing but A is the cause of the necessity of B's existence, but A is contingently existent. Therefore, the contingently existent essence will become an efficient cause of necessity of existence. But this is absurd! Thus [the cause for necessitation] cannot be a quiddity that is contingently existent.

There are however some inquiries and doubts that arise concerning this proof, including the following: [115] A might become the cause of the necessity of B's existence only *insofar as* it is necessary, just as fire is the cause of igniting wood *insofar as* it is hot; for the other attributes of fire have nothing to do with igniting. There is no disputing this example.

*Response:* it is the heat that is the cause of igniting, not the essence of fire. Granted, heat can only exist in a subject, such as fire, so that igniting is related to the fire insofar it is the bearer of the efficient cause, but not insofar as it is [itself] the efficient cause. If the essence of fire were the efficient cause, then all its attributes would be involved in igniting, especially the essential attributes or those necessary concomitants of which the essence cannot be deprived. We do say that it is only insofar as it is necessary that the essence of A necessitates B. But when we say "insofar as it is necessary," necessity would be the *condition* of A's being a cause, not the cause itself. There is a difference between [116] the condition through which the cause becomes cause and the cause itself, like the cause itself of B's necessity. This [cause itself] would need to be the essence of A, whatever conditions are applied. Furthermore, this condition—that is, A's being considered as having necessity, which belongs to it due to something else—does not negate its being considered as having contingency, which it has due to itself. How can anything negate necessary attributes? Thus

A's essence, which is contingently existent, would on the condition of its necessity be the cause of B's necessity. So contingency would enter into the completion of necessity and the bestowal of existence. How could this be otherwise, given that it is one of the necessary concomitants of the efficient cause, which enters into the completing of A's essence? But how can [contingency enter into the completion of] something that A necessitates? If on the other hand being considered as contingent were negated from A's essence as soon as it exists necessarily, then the proof is obviously unsound, since after all this way of considering it belongs to it due to itself, and cannot in any way be negated from it.

*Someone may raise a doubt, saying:* A's necessity is the cause of B's necessity. Nevertheless A's necessity must exist in a subject, and its subject is A. In the same way, heat is the cause of igniting because it must exist in a subject. If A's necessity is the cause of B's necessity, [117] and A's essence entails contingency, still the contingency that is the necessary concomitant of the subject of A's necessity need not enter into the completion of [B's] necessity, [so no absurdity follows].

*Response:* in fact A's necessity is nothing that exists in concrete individuals. It is merely an item of intellectual consideration, something that exists only conceptually in the soul and is non-existent in concrete individuals. How then can it be a cause for an object that exists in concrete individuals? For it is not like the heat of fire, since the heat of fire does exist in concrete individuals. Furthermore, the igniting that occurs due to the heat is not anything existent either. Rather it is something privative (you will have a detailed exposition of this argument after this section). Moreover, if A's necessity—which they imagine to be the cause of B's necessity—were existent in concrete individuals, then the contingency of A's essence, which is a subject, would [still] enter into the completion of necessity. For the efficient cause that requires some matter for its existence can perform its act only through the participation of the matter. [118] The matter of A's necessity is A's essence. So A's essence would participate in the completion of necessity, and [therefore] its concomitants, which are contingency and privation, would participate in it as well—which is absurd.

Thus, it has become clear that all essences and quiddities emanate in accordance with an order and through an organized chain from the essence of the highest, first, true Principle alone—may He be exalted!

[T9] Abū al-Barākāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 23.17–24.5; 26.16–24

[*on the transfer of contingency from part to whole*]

*One may object to this*, saying that the mistake comes in when they say, “everything contingently existent (*kull mumkin al-wujūd*),” where by “everything (*kull*)” they mean the whole (*al-jumla*). The expression “everything” refers to each single item within the whole, but what applies to the whole (*ḥukm al-jumla*) is different from what applies to each single item (*wāḥid wāḥid*). For the whole is a multiplicity, and is either finite or infinite in number, whereas one cannot rightly say about each single item (*kull wāḥid*) that it is a multiplicity. How then, can you take the whole [series of contingent beings] in place of each single [contingent thing], inferring for it that which applies to the single item?

*We say*: what applies to the whole need not apply to the single [item] insofar as the former is the whole while the other is a single item, since the whole and the single item do differ in terms of [being] one or many. Yet they do not differ in terms of their nature and quiddity, since the quiddity of the whole and the quiddity of the single item within the whole are one and the same in respect of nature and existence. For [24] the natural place of every single [drop] of water, which is cold and wet, is limited by the outer surface of the sphere of earth and the inner surface of the sphere of air (regardless whether these are real or imaginary). The same applies to water as a whole: it does not differ in nature, location, being a cause, or being an effect. Likewise, the whole that results out of the contingent existents is just like every single one of them in respect of the contingency of existence. The fact that the contingently existent requires the Necessary Existent for its existence applies equally to every single contingent and to the whole. [...]

[*against an infinite regress of causes*]

[26.16] If every cause has a [further] cause, every effect will have an infinite number of causes that are simultaneous with it in existence, and there will be no first cause for them. *They say*: that whose number is infinite does not exist or come into existence. For if the first effect proximate to us does not exist until its cause exists, and its cause does not exist until the cause of its cause exists, and the cause of its cause of its cause, and the cause of its cause of its cause of its cause, and so on indefinitely, so that without the precedence of a first [cause] that has no prior [cause], the existence of the second will never follow. Hence, the existence of the first cause is made known by the existence of the last effect that is most proximate to us, to which we made reference. Just as causes terminate at the first cause, likewise effects terminate at the last effect, since [the

former] is simultaneous with [the latter] in respect of existence, being neither posterior nor prior to it. Therefore [the chain of] causes and effects does not go to infinity.

[T10] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 155.9–156.4

[*proof from the specification of bodies*]

The Master Abū al-Ḥusayn [al-Baṣrī]—may God have mercy upon him—proved the reality of the Originator in a different way. *He said:* we observe bodies that have in common that they are bodies, but differ in other respects, for instance that some are earth, others fire, water, or air. For this [difference] they either require something (*amr*) or they require nothing. If they require nothing then none of them deserve more to be earth and others water, rather than the other way around. Hence, they must require something [for their differences]. Next, this “something” must be either reducible to the body, for instance “being a body” or “having volume.” This however entails that either all these bodies would need to be water, or all would need to be earth, or fire, and would entail that they would all be one and the same body having this form. Hence, they need some other thing that is not the body. This other thing either has some specification and connection to bodies, or it does not. If it does have a connection to [the body] by way of inhering in it or by way of adjacency (*bi-al-ḥulūl fihi aw bi-al-mujāwira*), then, if there is only one [item connected or adjacent to the body], then the same problem follows as before: that all bodies will have one and the same form. If however [the body] has [a connection to] many different [items], then the account we give (*kalām*) concerning the bodies’ need for those things is the same as the account we would give concerning their need for these forms [they have]. If on the other hand [the specifying factor] is adjacent to them, it is either a body or a substance. Why then is what is adjacent to fire that which necessitated its being fire, whereas that which implies being air is not adjacent to it? The same goes for water and air. Furthermore, the account given concerning the separation of that adjacent [factor] from these bodies, or [the bodies’] mutual separation, would be the same as the account to be given as to why these bodies need their forms. If, however, this [factor] has no connection to these bodies—whether by inhering in them or through adjacency—it must be either a necessitating [cause] or one that chooses freely. If it is necessitating it is either one or more than one. If it is one, why did it necessitate some parts to be fire rather than [156] air? How can it necessitate opposite forms, while itself being one and the same thing? Yet if it is more than one, then if it can necessitate these forms while having no connection to these

bodies, it would result that all would be one and the same body all having this [same] form, since it is not more appropriate that it necessitate some of them to be fire and others to be air. So it remains only that it is a freely choosing [agent].

[T11] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 153.15–154.12

[*kalām argument updated with the notions of preponderation and specification*]

*One proves it [by saying]:* bodies are originated and everything originated must have an originator; hence, there is an originator of bodies. *If someone says:* why do you claim that everything originated must have an originator? *The reply is:* one may say that it is necessarily known that whatever had not been, and then came to be even though it could have failed to do so, must be due to something. Given the necessary knowledge of this, and a further proof that that thing must be freely choosing, knowledge of the originator results.

Besides which, we can mention a way of showing [the premise], *by saying:* whatever is originated must either have originated even though its failure to originate instead of its origination was possible, or have originated with its origination being necessary. If it originated and its origination was necessary, [154] then it cannot be that its origination was necessary at some times but not others; in that case, the necessity of its origination would have been eternal or it would not have been necessary at all. If then it originated even though it was possible that it did not originate, then it cannot be that it was more appropriate for it to originate at some times rather than others; hence [again] its origination would be eternal, or would not occur at all. Moreover, it would not deserve to originate more than not to originate; as if it can just as well originate or not, then its origination will not be preponderated over its non-origination unless this is due to some preponderating factor. Indeed, it cannot originate unless there is preponderating factor for its origination, since it must be specified along with being originated. Thus it is established that there must be something that originates the originated. Nothing that is originated escapes the [above] division, so, given that bodies are originated, there must be an originator for them. One may confirm this way [of showing the premise] by saying: if our actions such as building, writing, goldsmithing, and so on cannot be originated without being due to something or to an agent, then how can this world, with all that is in it, be originated without being due to something or to an agent?

[T12] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 158.1–9

[*analogy between human and divine cases*]

Our Masters—may God have mercy on them—also proved the reality of the originator of the world, *saying*: the world is originated and must have an originator, on analogy with our voluntarily refraining [from an action] (*taṣarrufinā*). This inference (*al-istidlāl*) requires a basis for the comparison (*aṣl*), a derived case (*farʿ*), a judgment (*ḥukm*), and the cause (*ʿilla*) of the judgment. The basis is our voluntarily refraining; the derived case is the world; the judgment is that an originator is required; and the cause is the origination. Concerning the basis—that is, our voluntary refraining—we have already established this when we established movement and rest. As for establishing the judgment in respect of the basis—that is, that we are needed for voluntary refraining—this is proven by the fact that it is necessitated to occur only due to our motivations or deterrents (*dawāʿinā wa-ṣawāriḥinā*). We say this because, whenever we have a motivation to do something and are able to do it, it must occur; but when we have a deterrent from that action and are able not to do so, it does not occur. Indeed, we say “whatever happens this way occurs through us, because if it occurred due to some other agent, or by itself, then it could occur even while we would prefer that it didn’t occur.” Since this is impossible, we understand that it occurs through us.

[T13] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 41.2–9

[*against the burhān al-ṣiddiqīn: preponderation without any reason*]

This proof is the one that been passed down by Islamic scholars; we have already explained how it proves the existence of the Originator in the beginning of the chapter. However this proof does not on its own prove the Necessary Existent; this is why its proponent only mentions [in the conclusion] that a cause must be either present or absent [determining, respectively, the existence or non-existence of the world]. Furthermore, the proof does not rule out that the origination of the contingent is its own cause, or its absence [i.e. the absence of a cause that would prevent it from existing].<sup>13</sup> And there is another point, namely that the view taken in their school requires them to allow that something contingently originating can originate not on the basis of anything.

13 We correct *ʿudda minhā* to *ʿadamuhā*.

For, *they say*: nature provides well-designed acts that correspond to what benefits humans, and it organizes [these] acts giving priority to whatever should come earlier and postponing whatever should come later—due to nothing additional to the essence of nature, and with no deliberation, thought, or knowledge concerning the priority and posteriority, and even though its essence is the same in relation to the prior and the posterior.

[T14] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuhfa al-mutakallimīn*, 43.8–13

[*against the burhān al-ṣiddiqīn: contingency does not transfer from part to whole*]

One may object to the proof in another way, different from those already considered, on the basis of a view taken in their own school. For, *they say*: every single motion of the sphere has a beginning, yet their aggregate (*majmūʿ*) has no beginning. Thus they have made a distinction between the aggregate and its units, even though the aggregate is identical to the units. So, *one may say to them*: if this is so, according to you, how can you exclude that the whole series composed out of causes and effects is different from its units, such that each of them would be caused, while the whole is not caused; or such that each of them would be contingently existent, while the whole is necessarily existent, just as each of them is finite while the whole is infinite?

[T15] Al-Masʿūdī, *Shukūk*, 248.10–249.16

[*an infinite series cannot be taken as a whole*]

As for the further premise that needs to be established, namely that if causes proceeded to infinity, then there would be a whole that encompasses an infinite number of units, each of which is caused: what is the proof for this premise? For an opponent may say: whatever is infinite cannot be described as a “whole.” “Whole,” “every,” and “all” (*jumla, kull, jamīʿ*) are among the accidents and concomitants of finite things. As will be obvious to you, here the meaning of “every” is not “every one (*kull wāḥid*).” Rather it means the aggregate (*majmūʿ*) of units, with none of them lying beyond it. According to this viewpoint there is no cause beyond the aggregate of causes, so causes taken all together (*kull al-ʿilal*) have no existence. But it is rather the case that, whichever aggregate you take, there will be a further cause beyond it, and it will proceed like this to infinity.



[249] This is just like what you say about the rotations of the sphere. According to you, they have no beginning or inception, their past number being infinite. Yet every single rotation does have a beginning and inception. Still, you do not say that because every single [rotation] has an inception and a beginning, the whole [collection of rotations] would have an inception and a beginning. Likewise, on your view human souls that are separated from bodies after death are infinite in number, while beforehand there was time at which they did not exist. Every single [soul] has a temporal beginning for its existence, that is, it is preceded by the time in which it did not exist. Nevertheless, you do not say that, since every single [soul] was preceded by the time at which it did not exist, the same goes for the whole, on the grounds that the whole is the aggregate of these units.

Nor are you forced to say this, precisely because “every” and “whole” do not apply here. Rather, whichever number of them you take, there would be something further beyond it. It would never come to a limit beyond which there is nothing further, so that this limited thing could be “every” and “whole.” If you however conceptualized here an “every” that is the aggregate of these units, so that none of them would remain outside it, then you would necessarily be forced to say that the whole has temporal beginning—that is, that it was preceded by a time at which it did not exist. For if time preceded every single unit out of ten, then whole ten is necessarily preceded by a time at which it did not exist. This does not follow [with an infinite series], though, because there is no “every” nor any whole here at all.

[T16] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 2, 468.12–468.20

[*al-Khayyām’s argument: only the necessary can be a cause*]

There are people who claim that this proof [i.e. *burhān al-ṣiddiqīn*] does not require rejecting circularity or stopping the infinite regress. *They said:* this is because, if there is a necessary existent among things, then the desired conclusion is achieved. If on the other hand there is no necessary existent among them, then all [things] are contingently existent; but the existence of a contingent existent cannot be traced back to [another] contingent existent, and this for two reasons. First, if the contingent were to produce the existence of something else, then its essence would be involved in that production, since the “being existent (*al-mawjūdiyya*)” of the producer is involved in its “bringing-into-existence (*mūjidiyyatīhi*).” But the essence of the contingent, as such, is contingently existent. Thus if the contingent were to produce the existence of

something else, its contingency would be a part of its being a producer. Yet contingency cannot be a part of being a producer, given that insofar as something is contingent it is not necessary, whereas insofar as it is productive it is necessary. One and the same thing cannot be both contingent and necessary in one and the same respect.

[T17] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 2, 469.12–18

[*do we need to show that the world is contingent?*]

Know that some people believe that, for establishing the reality of the Necessary Existent, one also needs to establish that the world is contingent. This is not so. Rather we may be satisfied by what has been mentioned above: if among existents there is a necessary existent, the goal [of the proof] has already been achieved. If on the other hand nothing among them is a necessary existent, so that everything is contingent, nonetheless the contingent must be traced back to the necessary, and there will in any case be among existents the necessary existent. Then, when we thereafter undertake to enumerate the attributes of the Necessary Existent, it becomes evident at that point that the world, given the substances and accidents in it, is no necessary existent but rather among the effects of its existence.

[T18] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 2, 471.5–8

[*argument from motion*]

As for the natural philosophers, they proved [God's existence] on the basis of motion, on the basis that it cannot but terminate in unmoved movers, and that anything that is possibly true of the unmoved mover must be the case eternally. And whatever is like this must be a necessary existent.

[T19] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿūn*, vol. 1, 103.10–19

[*preponderation argument*]

The first way of proving the existence of the Necessary Existent is by way of the contingency of essences. *We say*: it cannot be doubted that the true realities and quiddities [of things] are existent. In the case of each existent, its true reality is either susceptible (*qābila*) to non-existence, or not. If its true reality is not susceptible to non-existence due to what it is (*li-mā hiya hiya*), then this kind

of existent is the necessary existent through itself, and this is the conclusion sought. If on the other hand its true reality is susceptible to non-existence, we say: whenever the true reality of an existent is susceptible to non-existence, its true reality relates equally to existence and non-existence. The existence of such a thing is not preponderated over its non-existence, unless through a preponderating principle (*murajjih*), and this preponderating principle cannot but be existent. Furthermore, if this preponderating principle is contingent, then one may apply the same reasoning to it, so that either a circle or an infinite regress will follow, and both are absurd. Therefore it must terminate in the necessary existent through itself.

[T20] Al-Rāzī, *Ma‘ālim*, 42.12–44.2

[*four ways of proving the Creator*]

Know that one may infer the existence of the Artificer either through contingency or through origination. Both may apply either to essences or to attributes, so that there are four ways.

[1. *contingency of essences: a version of burhān al-ṣiddiqīn*]

The *first way* is “the contingency of essences”. We say: there is no doubt that the existent exists. If this existent is necessary through itself then this is our goal. If it is contingent, then it must have a producer (*mu‘aththir*). If that producer is necessary, then this is our goal. If it [too] is contingent, then it [too] has a producer. If that [second] producer is the effect of the [first] producer, then it follows that each of them requires the other, so that both must require themselves, which is absurd. If however the [second producer] is something other [than the effect of the first producer], then either an infinite regress follows, or it terminates in [43] the necessary. The infinite regress is ruled out, because this aggregate [of an infinity of contingent units] requires every single unit. But every single one of these<sup>14</sup> is contingent, and whatever requires [something] contingent is *a fortiori* contingent. Therefore the aggregate is contingent and has a producer. Its producer is either itself—which is absurd, since the producer is prior to the effect in rank, and it is absurd that something be prior to itself—or it is a part that is internal to [the aggregate]. But this is also absurd, for that which produces the aggregate also produces every single unit belonging to this aggregate. So if we supposed that the producer of the aggregate is

14 Reading *minhā* instead of *minhumā*.

one of its units, it would follow that this unit produces itself, which is absurd. Or [this unit] might produce that which produces it, but this would be circular, which we have rejected. Or [finally], the producer of that aggregate may be something outside it. But we know that whatever is outside the whole [aggregate] of contingents is not contingent, but rather necessary. In which case it follows that everything contingent through itself must terminate in an existent that is necessary existent through itself, which is what we wanted to show. Thus it has been established that there must be a necessary existent that is necessary existent through itself, which is the conclusion sought. Concerning the proper characteristics of the necessary through itself, we have mentioned that it must be unique (*fard*) and immune to division. But every body, and everything that subsists in a body, is composite and divisible. So it has been established that the necessary existent through itself is an existent that is distinct from these bodies [in the world] and from the attributes that subsist in bodies, which is the conclusion sought.<sup>15</sup>

**[2. origination of bodies: the classic kalām argument]**

The *second way* is to infer the existence of the Necessary Existent from the origination of bodies. *We say*: bodies are originated and everything originated has an originator. The knowledge of this is necessary, as we have shown. So all bodies have an originator. That originator cannot be a body or anything corporeal, otherwise it would have to originate itself, which is absurd. Nevertheless, one might still ask here, why can't the originator of bodies be contingent in itself? So to reject the vicious circle and the infinite regress, we need the former proof.

**[3. contingency of attributes: the specification argument]**

The *third way* is an inference on the basis of the contingency of attributes. *We say*: we have already proven that all bodies are equal in respect of their complete quiddity (*tamām al-māhiyya*). This being so, the specification (*ikhtiṣāṣ*)

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15 For al-Rāzī, the main proof for the existence of God consists of two steps, proving that there is Necessary Existent and proving that the corporeal world is created and, hence, not necessary existent. The two steps can follow upon each other in different order. For instance, the "contingency of essences" argument is turned around in the *Mulakhkhaṣ*: first one proves that the corporeal world is contingent and it requires a non-corporeal cause, and then one additionally proves that this cause must be the Necessary Existent. Here, one first proves the existence of the Necessary Existent, and then additionally proves that the corporeal world cannot be the Necessary Existent, so it must be something non-corporeal (the last version is present in *Ma'ālim* and *Maṭālib*, rejected in *Mabāḥith*, and not mentioned in *Arba'īn*).

of the body of the celestial sphere by which it turns out to be a celestial sphere, and the specification of the body of the earth by which it turns out to be earth, is something merely possible. So it cannot be without a specifier. If this specifier is a body it requires itself for its composition and arrangement, which is absurd. If however it is not a body, this is the conclusion sought.

[4. *origination of attributes: the design argument*]

The *fourth way* is an inference based on the origination of attributes. It focuses on the “signs of the horizons and ourselves,” as the exalted put it: “We will show them our signs in the horizons and within themselves” (Q. 41:53). *The clearest way [to put it] is for us to say*: semen is a body that is homoiomerous in respect of form. It is either homoiomerous by virtue of itself (*fī nafs al-amr*) or not. If the former is the case, then we say: that which produces the natures of organs and their shapes cannot be nature. For a single nature would yield a spherical shape, so that animals would have to be born spherical in shape, according to a single, simple nature, but this is ridiculous. But if the latter is the case, then each of those parts must have spherical shape, and it would follow that animals [consist] of [44] spherical shapes added one to another, and this [too] is ridiculous. Hence it has been established the Creator of bodies of animals is not nature, but a freely choosing agent. But then, to establish that it is necessarily existent through itself, we [still] need the first way we have mentioned above.

[T21] Al-Rāzī, *al-Risāla al-kamāliyya*, 42.8–22

[*simultaneity of the infinite series of causes*]

*If someone says*: there is no beginning for the movement of the spheres, according to us, but rather a motion before each motion. Since this is possible, why can't there be a cause before each cause without<sup>16</sup> end? [...] [42.13] *The response* is to make clear the difference between cause and effects, on the one hand, and the motions of the spheres on the other, namely that whenever something is a cause of the existence of something else it must be existent simultaneously with the existence of the effect. The reason for this is that the existence of the effect is together with either the existence of the cause or its non-existence. But the non-existence of the cause cannot be together with [the effect], since the non-existence of the cause is not the cause of the existence of the effect,

16 Reading *ilā ghayr for aw fī*.

so that the existence of the cause must be the cause of the existence of the effect. This being the case, the cause must be existent simultaneously with the existence of the effect. Having confirmed this judgment, *we say*: if we supposed the existence of an infinite number of causes and effects, they would have to occur at one and the same moment (*duf'atan wāhidatan*), so that contingency of existence and the need for a producer can be predicated of them [all]. As for the motions of spheres taken as a whole, they are never existent [all together]. To the contrary, no two parts of [this series] can exist at the same moment. Hence one cannot predicate of them contingency and the requirement for a limit, given that absolute negation and pure non-existence cannot be described with existing (*al-wujūdīyya*) attributes. Thus the difference between causes and motions is evident.

[T22] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 118.14–119.10

[*causes and effects must be simultaneous*]

*Let it not be said*: why can't one say that a cause, while it is [still] existent, necessitates the existence of the effect after the cause perishes? On this assumption, the existence of the effect would be caused by that cause that existed before it. *For we say*: it is false to say that this cause necessitates at this hour the occurrence of the effect the next day. For, given that it is true that this cause does at this hour truly necessitate that effect, the necessitation of the effect either (a) means the origination of that effect or (b) means something else, from which the origination of that effect derives. (a) In the former case, the existence of the effect must originate at this hour, not afterward. For, given that it is true of that cause that it necessitates [119] that effect at this hour; and this necessitation means the origination of that effect, so long as there exists such necessitation at this hour; that effect must occur at this hour. Saying that the effect has not occurred at this hour but at some other hour contradicts the first statement. (b) As for saying that the necessitation of that effect means something different from that effect, and that effect derives from it, this is false. For it must be true of that different item that *at this hour* it necessitates that effect *at another hour*. Its necessitation of that effect would therefore be additional to its essence, so that an infinite regress of necessitations would follow, but all this is absurd. So what we mentioned above has been established: an effect cannot but exist together with the complete producer (*al-mu'aththir al-tāmm*).

[T23] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 245r21–245v4; 246r20–246v3

[*there is a necessary existent that causes all bodies*]

[245r21] It has been established from these points of view, [245v] some of which were confirmed already with the others to be confirmed later, that every body is contingent. You have already learned that both options [that is, existence and non-existence] relate equally to everything contingent. You have also learned that everything like this has a producer. Hence, every body has a producer. Nothing that is the producer of any body is a body. Otherwise it would depend on and be producing itself. Nor is it anything corporeal, since otherwise a vicious circle would follow. Therefore, it has been established that the world has a principle that is neither a body nor anything corporeal. [...]

[246r20] *Section two: that the Governor (al-mudabbir) [of the world] is a necessary existent.* If the Governor of the world is a necessary existent, then this is the conclusion sought. If not, it is contingent and requires a producer. Its producer is simultaneous with it, as you have learned in the chapter [246v] on causes: the existence of the producer must be simultaneous with the effect. Then, if that producer requires another producer, it yields either an infinite regress or a vicious circle, and both are absurd. Or [the series] terminates in the existent that is necessary existent through itself, which is the conclusion sought.

[T24] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 74.8–75.5

[*the need for preponderation is self-evident*]

Those who assert the former [that is, that the need for preponderation is self-evident] argue for their position by saying: we observe that sound-minded people agree that, whenever they perceive with the senses that something is originated, they seek after a reason for it; when they hear a sound of a man, they are impelled to know that the man is there; when they see the origination of a building, they are certain that there exists a builder. Actually we may go further, saying that this kind of knowledge occurs in the souls of children who have yet to reach full development of the intellect. For, whenever a child has a place or position which it selects as being at his disposal, and then finds some food in that place which he has not put there, or finds that something is absent after having put it there, it cries out, “Who has taken it?” “Who has put it here?” This indicates that the inborn nature (*fiṭra*) of that child is aware that the contingent cannot be without a preponderating factor, or the originated be without an originator. Since this knowledge is seated in the instinct (*gharīza*)

of that child's soul, we understand that it is the strongest of self-evident ideas. [75] In fact, we say that this kind of knowledge is seated in the souls of animals as well. For if an animal hears a sound of a snake, it flees. It flees simply because its awareness of the sound of a snake implies its awareness of the snake's existence. This indicates that inborn nature and the soul make a transition from the effect to the producer, in the souls of children and even animals.

[T25] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 76.7–17; 79.18–23; 119.8–12

[*answering objections to the need for a preponderating factor*]

Those who assert that the world is originated are more numerous than those who assert that it is eternal. Though they do outnumber [their opponents], they are forced to say that He—may He be exalted—has become the agent for the world after He was not an agent for it. They agree that this agency arose without any reason (*laysa bi-sabab*), and then an instance (*ma'nā*) of origination and arising occurs for no reason in this case. If however the impossibility of this [view] were a matter of necessary knowledge [as claimed by the opponents, who insist on a need for a preponderating factor], then the sound-minded would not go along with this.

Someone who is fleeing from a beast and encounters two paths that are equivalent in all respects chooses one over the other, without any preponderating factor. The same applies to someone who chooses between two equivalent cups of water to drink from: he chooses one over the other without any preponderating factor. Clearly there are many examples of this kind. So, most people agree that preponderation may occur without any preponderating factor (*al-rujḥān lā li-murajjih*). If this premise were self-evidently known to be impossible, then a large faction of sound-minded people would not endorse the claim. [...]

[79.18] When there occurs to our minds the fact that one is half of two, and then the statement that the contingent requires the preponderating factor, we find that the judgment of the mind concerning the first proposition is more evident than its judgment over the second one. The variance in strength between two judgments indicates that the rejection of the principle of preponderation (*al-marjūḥiyya*) may occur, which in turn indicates that this principle of preponderation is a matter of belief, not certainty (*ẓanniyya lā yaqīniyya*). [...]

[119.8] We do not concede that there is no preponderating factor here [in the case of choosing a path to flee from a wild beast]. [That there is such a factor]



is shown in two ways. First, because his movement is in one place rather than in the other. And the second reason: the person's volition is for one of two movements rather than the other. Furthermore, we do not say that this volition occurred due to another volition in his heart.<sup>17</sup> Otherwise an infinite regress would follow. Instead, this volition in his heart originated due to higher reasons whose details are not revealed to us.

[T26] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 87.10–18

[*Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's argument for preponderation and its rejection*]

I have seen that Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Baṣrī, among the most insightful Mu'tazilites, proved the truth of this premise in the book he called *Taṣaffuḥ*. He said: the contingent is that which is indifferent on both sides. If preponderation occurred without a preponderating factor, the preponderation would need to occur along with the occurrence of indifference (*al-istiwā'*). This, however, is a co-occurrence of contradictories, which is absurd. *To which one might object*: the contradiction does not follow, because the contingent is that whose quiddity does not require the preponderation of one side over the other. The contradictory of this proposition would be that this quiddity *does* require the preponderation of one side over the other. But to assume the [proposition] "its true reality requires no preponderation," and then that preponderation occurs neither through itself not through anything else, entails no contradiction.

[T27] Al-Rāzī, *Arba'īn*, vol. 1, 105.11–19

[*contingent things need an external preponderating factor*]

The contingent is that to which existence and non-existence relate equally. Such a thing cannot enter into existence unless its existence is preponderated over its non-existence. That preponderation (*al-rujḥān*) must be an attribute of something else, which preceded the existence [of the contingent thing]. The existence [of the contingent] cannot be the subject of inherence for that preponderation, because if that preponderation were an attribute of its existence, it would be posterior to its existence. We have however shown that it

17 Correcting *min qablihi* to *fī qalbihi* as later in the same line.

must be prior to the existence [of the contingent], so a vicious circle would follow, which is absurd. Therefore, that preponderation must be an attribute of something else and follow from its existence. That thing is the producer (*al-mu'aththir*). So it has been established that everything contingent requires a producer.

[T28] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 106.21–107.3; 113.9–13

[*objection to preponderation, and response*]

The contingent thing's requirement for a producer will be simultaneous with either [the contingent thing's] existence or its non-existence, but both options are false, so the talk of a requirement is false. The distinction [between the two options] is obvious. The reason the requirement cannot be simultaneous with the existence [107] is that it would imply bringing [something already] existent into existence, which is absurd. But the requirement cannot be simultaneous with the non-existence either, because the producer is that which has an effect, whereas non-existence is pure negation. So saying that production happens simultaneously with the effect's being pure non-existence is absurd. [...]

[113.9] *Response*: why can't one say that the producer's production of existence occurs simultaneously with existence, not before it or after it? *The opponent says*: this would entail bringing into existence [something already] existent, which is absurd. *To which the response is*: it is indeed absurd to bring into existence an existent that was already existent before it was brought into existence. However, bringing into existence an existent that has not yet been existent before being brought into existence, but occurs only at the moment it is brought into existence—why do you say that this is absurd?

[T29] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 110.14–23; 115.9–12

[*non-existence requires no preponderation, so neither does existence*]

The possibility of existence is connected to two sides, that is, existence and non-existence. So if the possibility of existence entailed that existence requires a producer, then the possibility of non-existence would [likewise] entail that non-existence requires a producer. But it is absurd that non-existence should require a producer, since non-existence is sheer negation and pure privation, so it absurd to make it an effect or something produced. Also, given that non-

existence endures from eternity forever and that which remains cannot be traced back to a producer while it remains. Thus it has been established that, if the possibility of existence made existence require a producer, then the possibility of non-existence would also make non-existence require a producer; but it has been established that it would be absurd for non-existence to require a producer. It follows that it is also absurd that existence require a producer.

[*response*]

[115.9] There is no dispute as to whether contingency is connected with two sides, existence and non-existence. Nevertheless, the preponderation of existence is due to the existence of whatever produces existence, whereas the preponderation of non-existence is due to the non-existence of whatever produces existence. This is the well-known thesis that the non-existence of a cause is the cause of non-existence.

[T30] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 202.10–203.6; 205.18–206.3

[*argument against contingency*]

*The first proof is:* we say either that existence is identical to quiddity or that existence is distinct from quiddity. Either way, one cannot speak about contingency. (a) As for the option that existence is identical to quiddity, *we say:* [in this case] contingency is inconceivable. For, whenever something is described as being contingent with respect to existence and non-existence, it may sometimes be described with existence and sometimes with non-existence. Yet existence cannot remain while there is non-existence! Thus it has been established that if existence is assumed to be identical to quiddity, one cannot judge the quiddity to be contingent with respect to existence and non-existence. (b) As for the option that existence is distinct from quiddity, *we say:* in this case, that which is described with contingency is either (b1) the quiddity, (b2) existence, (b3) or the fact that the quiddity is described with existence. All three options are false. (b1) Quiddity cannot be that which is described with contingency, because if we say “black can be black and can fail to be black”, we would mean that black could be judged to be not black. This is absurd, since it entails that while it is black it can be not black, which is co-occurrence of contradictories, and that is absurd. (b2) Nor can [203] it be existence that is described with contingency, because this would amount to saying that existence can become non-existence, and this is obviously false. (b3) Nor can it be quiddity’s being described with existence that is described with contingency, because the points we mentioned in the case of the quiddity and existence also apply to quiddity’s

being described with existence. Thus it has been established that speaking of the contingency of existence is unintelligible, regardless whether we say that existence is identical to the quiddity or distinct from the quiddity. [...]

[*response: intuition of contingency*]

[205.18] By “contingency” we mean that something can keep on being as it has been before, or also not continue to be as it has been. Once our understanding of “contingency” is clarified [in this way], the aforementioned doubts will vanish. For we know that it is not impossible for a sitting man to remain sitting, nor is it impossible that his sitting ends. This knowledge of this is necessary (*ḍarūrī*). Having understood this, *we say*: whenever something originates after eternal non-existence, [206] there is necessary knowledge that it could have remained in that original state of non-existence, and that this non-existence can be replaced with existence. So long as both options are indifferent, neither preponderates over the other without a preponderating [factor].

[T31] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 224.17–225.9

[*everything that exists exists necessarily*]

*Eleventh chapter: So long as the contingent does not become necessary, it does not come to exist.*

*Demonstration*: the contingent [taken] together with its cause is either in the same state as it was [taken] without its cause or not. The first is false, since if this were so, then the cause would not be a cause, and this is a contradiction. If however the state [of the contingent] is different from that previous state, and without the cause it is in a position of indifference [to existence and non-existence], then [taken] together with the cause it leaves the position of indifference and one side becomes more appropriate for it. *We say then*: the preponderated side (*al-marjūh*) cannot possibly occur, since when it is indifferent and not preponderated it cannot possibly occur. However, at the point when [that side] becomes preponderated,<sup>18</sup> thereby not being any stronger in respect of the impossibility of occurrence, [the impossibility of its occurrence] is even more appropriate.<sup>19</sup> Whenever it is impossible for the preponderated

18 Reading *marjūḥan* instead of *mawjūdan*.

19 Cf. the formulation in *Mulakhkhaṣ*, ms. Tehran Majlis 827t, 82.17: “since what is indifferent cannot possibly occur, the impossibility of the occurrence of the preponderated is even more appropriate.”

(*al-marjūh*) side to occur, it is necessary that the preponderating (*al-rājih*) side occur, since it would be absurd to go outside the two sides of the contradiction.

*If someone says:* the contingent fluctuates between existence and non-existence, not between necessity and impossibility. So how can you posit necessity as prior to existence? *We say:* the contingent has two kinds of necessity: one occurs to it after its existence. As you have learned, this is the fact that something is necessarily existent (*wājib al-wujūd*) given the condition of its existence (*bi-sharṭ wujūdihi*). The other is prior to its existence. As has been shown, this is the fact that so long as it does not leave the position of indifference and does not enter the position of necessity, it is impossible that existence should occur to it. However, given that existence and non-existence are two terms of necessity and impossibility, one cannot but say that the true reality fluctuates between existence and non-existence, not between necessity and impossibility.

[T32] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 128.12–129.8

[*traditional kalām argument*]

A second way for putting forward this proof is to say: bodies are originated, and everything originated requires an originator, regardless whether that originator is possible or necessary. Most masters of theology (*kalām*) relied on this way [of arguing]. Then they have two ways [to support the proof]:

*First*, those who say there is necessary knowledge that the originated requires a producer. *They say:* an indication of this is the fact that whenever one sees a building, whether large or small, one must surely know that it has a builder and artificer, such that if someone allows that that building originated without an agent or builder, everyone thinks he's crazy. So we know that this premise is just self-evident.

*Second*, those who say that this premise is susceptible of proof. These are most of the Muʿtazilite masters, such as Abū ʿAlī and Abū Hāshim [al-Jubbāʿī]. Their approach is to establish that the servant [of God] brings his own acts into existence. Then they establish that our acts depend only upon us, given that they originated after having been non-existent. So it is evident [129] that origination is the reason (*ʿilla*) for the requirement of an originator. Since the world is originated, it necessarily requires an agent.

However there are complex questions that arise about their argument.

*First:* we do not concede that anyone among us originates acts himself. (We will explore this, God willing, [when discussing] the problem of the creation of acts.) But why can't one say that our acts originate along with our intentions and motives, not through our power and motivation but accidentally (*'alā sabīl al-ittifāq*), without any producer? If they say that accidental origination is absurd, then they should have mentioned this from the very beginning when speaking about the origination of the world, so that the origination of the world would indicate the existence of an agent without any need for this argument [of theirs].

[T33] Al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-'uqūl*, vol. 1, 399.5–400.8

[*improved version of the traditional kalām argument*]

The first way is an inference on the basis of the origination of essences. *We say:* (a) the world is originated; (b) everything originated has an originator; therefore the world has an originator.

The proof that (a) the world is originated has been already presented.

The proof that (b) everything originated has an originator is that (b<sub>1</sub>) everything originated is contingently existent, and (b<sub>2</sub>) everything that is contingently existent requires an existent producer for its existence. From which it follows that everything originated requires an existing producer.

The proof that (b<sub>1</sub>) everything originated is contingently existent is that the true reality of the originated is either susceptible to non-existence or not. If not, it is never non-existent and is [400] eternally existent [which is absurd given that it was stipulated to be originated]. If however it is susceptible to non-existence as well as to existence, then it is contingently existent, since this is precisely what we mean by “the contingent.”

The proof that (b<sub>2</sub>) everything contingent requires an existing producer [is in two steps]. As for its requirement of a producer, the reason for this is that it is susceptible to both non-existence and existence; if there were no [additional] factor (*amr*), then the one side would not preponderate over the other or vice-versa. There is necessary knowledge of this. As for the fact that that producer must be existent, the reason for this is that there is no difference between a

negated producer and the negation of a producer. Hence, claiming that a negated producer suffices amounts to claiming that there is no requirement for the producer. Yet we have already rejected this. Therefore it has been established that contingents require an existing producer.

[T34] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 245v5–18

[*proof from specification*]

The exposition of the inference on the basis of the contingency of attributes is that bodies have corporeality in common, yet differ in attributes and directions (*jihāt*). Each of them is specified, insofar as it is specified, either not due to something—but then the contingent would occur for no reason—or due to something. Which would be either those bodies [themselves]—but this is absurd, given that equivalence in corporeality entails equivalence in all those [specific] features—or something else. The latter might be (a) something that inheres in them [sc. the bodies]. But this is absurd, since (a<sub>1</sub>) if it is their necessary concomitant, then its concomitance is (a<sub>1a</sub>) either due to corporeality, but this just takes us back to what is shared in common; or (a<sub>1b</sub>) it is due to something additional, and then the argument concerning [this additional factor] is the same as the first argument [about the specific attributes of bodies], yielding either a circle, an infinite regress, or what was just mentioned about what is shared in common. (a<sub>2</sub>) If however it is not a necessary concomitant, then no necessary concomitant [such as the specific character of a certain body] will occur because of it. (b) Alternatively [the distinct specifying factor] is their [sc. the bodies'] subject of inherence. But this is absurd, given what you have learned about the impossibility of corporeality inhering in a subject. (c) Or it neither inheres in [bodies] nor is their subject of inherence. In the latter case, if it is a body or something that specifies [body] by inhering, or by being a subject of inherence, then we are just back to the [same] set of options. If however this is not the case, then it is either more appropriate for some bodies, rather than others, to receive a given effect from that separate producer—but then the same set of options can be applied to this “appropriateness”—or not. Therefore, that separate [specifying cause] is not necessitating. Otherwise it would be no more appropriate for some bodies, rather than others, to be specified by being receptive of a given effect from that separate [cause]; nor would [the given effect] be more appropriate than any other. Thus, it has been established that bodies and their attributes require a freely choosing agent.

[T35] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 224.11–226.1

[*design argument, drawing on an analogy given by Abū Bakr al-Rāzī*]

To their question, “why can’t a natural begetting power be a producer of the origination of these bodies?” We say: we know necessarily that the natural powers existing in our organs have neither complete wisdom nor complete power. And we know necessarily that whatever is devoid of knowledge and power cannot bring into existence an arrangement such as this, that encompasses these wondrous benefits. Whatever one might mention in confirmation of this premise would be a matter of clarifying things that are already clear, and whatever the opponent mentions to refute these things would be a matter of rejecting the obvious.

[Abū Bakr] Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā’ al-Rāzī has written a treatise on proving the existence of the wise God on the basis of the human body. At the beginning of this treatise he said: whoever sees a jug and considers how it is composed, sees its head like a wide funnel, sees its structure that is well balanced between narrowness and width, sees its handle that has a specific shape, and then understands that its [224] wide head is good because one can pour water into it, and understands that the rest of it has a good structure, which falls right in the middle between width and narrowness, because water will flow out of it with a moderate power, and understands that its handle is good for taking<sup>20</sup> it in the hand. Thus whoever has a mind devoid of all sorts of defect, and pure, will be certain that this jug, composed as it is out of these parts that are good for these benefits, has not come to be on its own nor created itself. Moreover it has not come to be due to nature, which is devoid of awareness and perception. Rather he is certain that a powerful, knowledgeable agent knew that what is beneficial in light of certain specific purposes with this jug would be fully attained only through the realization of these three parts, in accordance with their specific attributes. [...] [225.14] After Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā’ provided this nice discussion to prepare the way for his main purpose, he started to explain the effects of the wisdom of the Merciful on the creation of human body. He mentioned something of the wondrous compositions in it and the forms that correspond to wisdom and advantage (*maṣlaḥa*), and then said: the sound mind is aware that these wondrous and astonishing things in the composition of the body can come into being only from a wise and powerful [agent] who created the structure [of the body] through His power, and its wisely-chosen features through His wisdom.

<sup>20</sup> Reading *tu'khadhu* for *tūjadu*.



You should know that this proof mentioned here by Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā' is one that is excellent and complete. Furthermore, it is evident to the sound mind that the contrived arguments that are mentioned to show that these wondrous effects that occur in the creation of the human body can proceed from nature alone, which is bereft of knowledge and power, are unconvincing and unworthy, like [226] when the disk of the sun is hidden by dust.

[T36] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 252.10–19

*[popular belief establishes theism]*

Ancient histories indicate that people of this world were like this [that is, believers in God] from all eternity and at all times, and not a single one of them denied the existence of God, the exalted. This being established, *we say*: it is among the things known by necessity that the mind of the people of the East and West together, over a duration of more or less seven thousand years, outstrips the mind of a single obscure person. Thus, if some problem occurs to a single person, or he doubts the existence of God the exalted, then he must decide that this doubt or problem is due to the inadequacy of his mind and his lack of understanding, not because of the non-existence of that which is sought [i.e. God]. For the sound mind bears witness that the minds of all people over these long periods are more perfect than the mind of this one [person]. This is a strong and powerful way to establish the knowledge of the existence of the wise God, so long as someone concedes that his mind is weaker than that of everyone.

[T37] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 271.4–11

*[no atheists in foxholes]*

Those who like to raise doubts and pose problems exert themselves to put forth false imaginations and set up fallacious doubts about God, the providential. Yet whenever some misfortune befalls them or something dreadful occurs, they find submission and apparent obedience to a God of the world in their sound minds and hearts. They ask Him to free them from suffering and to deliver them from their trial. The intuition in this state is like things known necessarily by induction and consideration. Then, after they are freed from suffering, they often return to raising doubts and inventing fanciful worries.

[T38] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 272.7–15

[*wager argument*]

It is more appropriate (*awlā*) to take precautions in all things than to take no precautions. So *we say*: acknowledging the reality of God, who chooses to assign [duties], is more on the side of taking precautions (*aqrab ilā al-iḥtiyāt*) than denying Him. Therefore acceding to this position is more appropriate. The proof that this is the better precaution is determined by saying: either this world has a God or not. If not, then acknowledging His reality [does no harm]. If however it has a God, then rejecting Him] is harmful.<sup>21</sup> Thus it is established that admitting a God of the world is a better precaution.

Furthermore, we say that the God of the world is either a voluntary agent or not. If He is not a voluntary agent, acknowledging the reality of a voluntary agent does no harm. If however He is voluntary, then rejecting Him is harmful. Therefore, acknowledging the reality of a voluntary agent is further from harm and a better precaution.

[T39] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib* vol. 1, 273.4–17

[*slap argument*]

Some people of sound mind used to say: even one slap to the face of a young man shows that there is a God for this world. [...] [273.10] When this young man feels that slap, he immediately cries out and asks, “Who hit me? Who slapped my face?” If people gathered around him and said, “The slap just happened by itself, with no agent,” he would not accept this response, and what they say would have no impact on him. This shows that the sound intellect and initial, inborn nature (*awwal al-fiṭra*) bear witness that no act can be without an agent, and nothing originated without an originator. This premise being evident, *we say*: if the sound mind finds it implausible that that slap would originate without an agent, how can the origination of all that has arisen in the world of the [heavenly] spheres and the elements be intellectually grasped as having no originator or agent?

21 A line of text obviously fell out here. We reconstruct the text on the basis of how al-Rāzī presents the second wager, as follows: *fā-in lam yakun kāna ithbātuhu [ghayr muḍīr; ammā in kāna lahu ilāh kāna nafyuhu] muḍīrran.*

[T40] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 387.3–6

[*part-whole inference*]

Every single contingent is contingent, thus the whole [of them] is contingent; not because we base the predication of the whole on the predication of every single unit, and solely on this basis claim that the predicate of the unit can be applied to the whole, but because the whole is an effect (*maʿlūl*) of the units. When causes are contingent, the effect is contingent all the more.

[T41] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 387.13–389.14

[*proving necessary existence*]

There are two approaches to establishing necessary existence (*al-wujūd al-wājibī*). One way is to prove its existence and then establish its unity. The other way is to establish that the necessary existent must be one, and then to establish that bodies and their features are many, so that none of them is necessary; hence one is left with the option that they are contingent and require a preponderating factor, which is either necessary or leads back to a necessary preponderating factor.

[*specification argument*]

Among the ways [to prove God's existence] is establishing that the world of bodies is contingent. It is obvious that there is composition in the bodies that fall under species—regardless whether or not the inquirer agrees that there is prime matter that is simpler than bodies, and whether or not he agrees that there are forms, which is [a teaching] held only by the Peripatetics. For he cannot but agree that there exist features (*ḥayʾāt*) that are additional to bodies, through which the bodies are distinguished and individuated. [He must also agree] that these features are not necessarily existent through themselves—since otherwise they would not require a subject (*mawḍūʿ*)—and that no body entails them through itself (*li-dhātihi*)—since otherwise they would all be alike. Also, bodies require something that somehow distinguishes them: either form, as the Peripatetics claim; or, as everyone else says, the whole range of distinguishing features, of whatever sort. On any doctrine it follows that in their multiplicity, bodies are not necessarily existent, given their requirement for some distinguishing factor (*mumayyiz*); rather they are contingent. If there were no distinguishing factor, then there could be only one entity. Whatever determines multiplicity for the entities that fall under multiplicity is that which determines their existence, given that if there were no multiplicity, not a single

entity among them would be possible. If there were no determining factor for multiplicity, the single items would not be determined. If then bodies and their features are contingently existent, and none of them is a preponderating factor for any other (since otherwise it would follow that something is prior to that which is prior to it, and [hence] prior to itself, which is absurd), and their contingency thus requires a preponderating factor. This cannot but lead to the necessary existent.

[*argument from motion*]

A second approach argues on the basis of motions. You have learned that nothing that is in motion necessitates motion through itself. Rather, it requires a mover. It has been shown that the motions of the bodies of the spheres [389] are due to a soul, not to nature, while it is soul that enacts motion. There must be a goal for this. Once it is shown that its goal is nothing below them [sc. in the sublunary world], nor a state that would belong to some of them relative to others, and given that [their motions] are due neither to the bodies below or above them, nor to the souls below or above them, as has [also] been shown, it remains only that they are due to something incorporeal that has no connection to matter, so that its existence is necessary. This is the intended [conclusion]. But if [the incorporeal mover] is contingent, it needs a preponderating factor, and this leads to the necessary existent in itself, which is what was sought.

Now at first glance, there is nothing to “preponderate” this approach over others. Yet sound inborn nature (*al-fiṭra*), after having investigated other methods, chooses this one over the other approaches of the Peripatetics, since it has an admixture of intuition (*shawban ḥadsiyyan*). It is the one on which Aristotle relied. For perishing things are obviously contingent, and the things brought about in the elements by the heavens do not exist self-sufficiently; for heavenly bodies govern (*qāhira*) elementals. Stars are the noblest of heavenly things, while the sun is the most outstanding of heavenly [bodies] in evidence and governance (*aẓhar wa-aqhar*). No false supposition will befall someone who inquires into [this issue], unless he is mistaken about the heavenly [bodies]. This approach involves denying that [the heavens] are the utmost goal, and posits something more perfect beyond them. It is that which moves [the heavens], not by enacting [the motion] or causing alteration, but by [being an object of love] and supplying light. Thus motions eliminate this false supposition [that heaven is the utmost goal].

[T42] Al-Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, 185.3–15

[*preponderation and inclination*]

Another approach, which belongs specifically to this book: there is no doubt that the inclination (*mayl*) of a motion in our everyday experience (*indanā*), such as that of an arrow or a top, decreases bit by bit, as is perceived with the top [as its spinning slows down], among other cases. It is not the case that some of the inclination that has accumulated perishes, while some of it remains. You learned that this is false in the chapter on intensity and weakness: when there is a decrease the whole [inclination] perishes, and a lesser one originates [in its place]. There is a preponderating factor for this, which cannot be the nature of an arrow, for example, since [the nature] would be incompatible [with any other degree of inclination]. Nor is [the preponderating factor] the initial inclination, since it does not remain once the second [inclination] exists; nor can the [initial] inclination necessitate [the second one] along with itself, since the same would need to apply to the second and third [inclinations], and so on, so that all inclinations would be gathered together at the same moment and perish together, which is absurd. Moreover, the subsequent [inclinations] would need to become of stronger intensity, and not of weaker intensity. Nor is the preponderating factor of subsequent inclinations the agent, since he is no longer bringing them about.<sup>22</sup> If, after loosing [the arrow, the archer] does not want these different [inclinations] to occur, [the arrow] will not obey him. So for every one of these different [inclinations] there is a need for some external preponderator. This is its [real] mover, and the person only fancies himself to be its mover. Nor is its mover the air, since air is subject to compulsion by burning and division. Nor is it any other body, since it would never end the way that the weakness of the inclination leads to an end. Thus it remains only that [the preponderating factor] is something separate; if this is necessary, our intended conclusion is reached. If it is contingent, then this leads to something necessary through itself.

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22 That is, the person who fires the arrow is no longer touching it once it is in flight and cannot preponderate the inclination of its motion while it is in midair.

[T43] Al-Suhrawardī, *Hikmat al-ishrāq*, 87.3–9 [trans. Ziai and Walbridge, mod.]

[*proof of the Light of lights*]

If an incorporeal light (*al-nūr*) is dependent in its quiddity, its need is not directed towards the lifeless dusky (*al-ghāsiq*) substance, which is in no way fitting to give existence to that which is nobler and more perfect than it. How could the dusky substance emanate light? Thus, the realization of the incorporeal light depends on a self-subsistent light. Furthermore, these self-subsistent lights ordered in ranks cannot form an infinite regress. For you know by demonstration that an ordered simultaneous series must be finite. Therefore the self-subsistent and accidental lights, the barriers (*al-barāzikh*), and the features of each (*hay'ātihā*) must terminate at a light beyond which there is no light. This is the Light of lights (*nūr al-anwār*), the All-Encompassing Light, the Eternal Light, the Holy Light, the All-Highest Almighty Light, the Dominating Light. It is absolutely independent (*al-nūr al-qahhār*), since there is nothing beyond it.

[T44] Al-Suhrawardī, *Hayākil al-nūr*, 61.2–62.3

[*preponderation and the Light of lights*]

Bodies participate in corporeality and differ in the luminosity<sup>23</sup> that occurs to bodies. The luminosity of bodies is their being evident (*zūhūr*). Insofar as accidental light subsists through something else, and does not exist through itself, it does not show itself evidently (*laysa zāhir al-dalāla*). If however it were subsistent through itself, it would be light through itself. Our rational souls, by contrast, are evident through themselves and are subsisting lights. But we have already shown that they are originated, so there must be a preponderating factor. It is not bodies that bring [our souls] into existence, since nothing brings into existence that which is nobler than it. Hence, their preponderating factor too is an immaterial light. If it is the Necessary Existent, this is the intended conclusion. If not, then it leads to the necessary existent through itself, the Living, the Subsisting. [62] The subsisting soul provides an indication of the Living, the Subsisting, but the Subsisting is evident. It is the Light of lights, separate from bodies and their attachments. It is veiled because of the intensity of its evidence.

23 Reading *al-istināra* instead of *al-istināda*, with the edition of M. Karīmī Zinjānī Aşl, p. 81.

[T45] Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, 19.22–20.3

[*principle of sufficient reason*]

If every posited existent is contingent, and they are infinite in number, then either they follow upon each other (*mutaʿāqiba*) or they are all together. If they follow upon each other, then one can hardly posit any of them to exist by taking it to exist singly [without another]. It is impossible that it be the end of the sequence of existence. For, so long as we do not posit as necessary the existence of whatever brings it into existence, it will not exist. The same applies to whatever brings it into existence in relation to whatever brings *it* into existence, and so on. If its existence depends on the existence of whatever is before it, where that other thing [20] also has as a condition something else that is prior to it, and so on to infinity, its existence is impossible. We can see this from the case where someone says, “I will give you a coin only after having given you [another] coin first, and so on to infinity.” Then there is no way for him to give any coin at all.

[T46] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 163.3–10

[*refutation of al-Rāzī’s argument for the preponderation principle*]

As for the first argument, [it fails] because the opponent may deny that entering into existence depends on a preceding preponderation (*al-tarjih*). He may say that preponderation means nothing more than entering existence rather than non-existence, or vice-versa. Hence preponderation cannot precede existence. So this talk of circularity does not follow. Why would it? If preponderation did precede existence, it would be an attribute of something other than existence, so that the circle would not follow as established. If this were so, however, then that which is described with it would be the preponderating factor (*al-rājih*), not existence itself, but this is absurd.<sup>24</sup>

[T47] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 171.11–14

[*an infinite series cannot be taken as a whole*]

*They argue:* we do not concede the existence of what you are calling a “whole” (*jumla*) in the case of the infinite. *We say:* that which is called a “whole”—that

<sup>24</sup> Al-Āmidī himself thinks that preponderation principle is self-evident, and al-Rāzī in fact would generally agree.

which you have described as being infinite—is without doubt different from each one of the units (*kull wāhid*). For every unit is finite, whereas what may be described as infinite is numbers posited in such a way that none is excluded [from the series].

[T48] Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, 21.22–22.4; 26.2–17

[*argument against the need for a cause*]

As for your claim that, if something exists after not existing, its existence must be due to something else, since otherwise it would not previously have been non-existent: [we object that] if its existence were due to something else this other thing must either always be a cause, or its being a cause was originated. If it is always a cause, then the existence [22] of its effect cannot be delayed after its existence, nor can it be preceded by non-existence. If however its being a cause originated, then whatever applied to the effect applies to its cause, and so on. This leads to the fact that it is neither non-existent, nor preceded by non-existence, but that is absurd. Or, it leads to an infinite number of causes and effects, but you deny this. [...]

[*response*]

[26.2] As for your argument that the originated does not need an originator, this would follow only if [the originated] were not traced back to an intention and volition, but only to nature and cause. But this is not so.

According to the view of the philosophers (*al-falāsifa*), who speak of bringing into existence through causation, [the reason why the objection fails] is that the spheres perpetually move such that their contingent positions occur successively and are constantly renewed. They seek to resemble their object of love and to attach themselves to their object of desire, yielding circular motions through an eternal volition that belongs to the souls of the bodies of the spheres. Through the intermediary of the motions, there exist effects such as mixtures, proportions, and so on down below [the spheres], as well the reception of substantial forms and human souls among their receivers. If something fails to exist, this is simply due to the non-existence of receptivity, not because efficient causality is absent; for the efficient cause is the Active Intellect, which exists together with the body of the sphere of the moon.

But the Islamic view is as follows: the origin of all that is originated and that to which it goes back, is the willing and freely choosing Creator. By eternal voli-



tion He demanded, and by everlasting will He made to arise, every one of [the originated things], at the moment when its existence was demanded by Him, as will be verified in what follows, God willing. That which brings the originated into existence is not itself originated, such that it would need [another] originator. Nor does it bring [the originated] into existence as cause or nature, such that whatever proceeds from it would have to be eternal because it is eternal.

[T49] Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, 22.21–24; 27.16–20

*[argument that nothing is contingent when it actually exists]*

As for their claim that if causes and effects were infinite, then each of them would be contingent in respect of its essence, how will they respond if someone lays down as a condition for the contingently existent that it is non-existent, and that whatever is described as existent is necessarily existent, while the necessarily existent is not contingent? If it is said to be contingent, then only equivocally. [...]

*[response]*

[27.16] As for laying down as a condition for the contingently existent that it is denied to exist, this is very problematic. For the contingently existent also is contingently non-existent. So, if one laid down as a condition for the contingently existent that it not be existent, one should also lay down for the contingently non-existent that it not be non-existent. Just as entering into existence would mean its coming into the necessity of existence, so entering into non-existence would mean its coming into the necessity of non-existence. This implies that the contingent would never be either existent or non-existent, which is absurd.

[T50] Bābā Afdal, *ʿArḍnāma*, 225.8–226.2

*[the existence of the Knower through itself]*

Particular existents are many in terms of classes and sub-classes. In some of those existents there is revealed a trace of being knowledgeable (*dānandigī*) and a sign of awareness. Clearly that among particular existents in which there does appear a sign of awareness and of being knowledgeable, does not know through itself. But the existence of the particular is through it [that is, through being knowledgeable]. For, such a trace can be found in it only when it is alive and soul is connected to it. When the connection to the soul vanishes, its life

perishes, and those traces and signs of awareness are no longer to be found. Hence those particular individuals are knowledgeable through [their] souls, not through themselves (*bi-nafs, na bi-khūd*). Neither is the soul knowledgeable through its essence and itself. For if it were knowledgeable through itself, some trace of being knowledgeable would be found in every particular individual that possesses a soul, just as one finds the traces of life [in all of them]. Yet not everything that has a soul or is alive is knowledgeable. Rather one may find the traces and signs of soul's being active (*kunandagī*) in everything that has a soul. Hence, activity does belong to soul in itself, but being knowledgeable does not [belong to soul] through its essence and through itself. Therefore, being knowledgeable through itself belongs to something other than the soul, and soul is knowledgeable through that, not through itself. There can be only one knower through itself; there are not two things each of which is a knower through its essence and itself. For, by "knower through itself (*dānā-yi bi-dhāt*)," we mean something for whom being knowledgeable, essence, and its existence are all one. For, if there were two things for whom being knowledgeable were existence, and being knowledgeable were essence, but whenever there are two, one is different from another, and whatever is different [226] from the knower through itself is not a knower through itself, then neither of them is the knower through itself, even though we presupposed that both of them are knowers through themselves.

[T51] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, 343.15–344.16

[*only God is a cause of existence*]

Everything contingent requires a preponderating factor (*murajjih*) through which its existence is necessary, as has been argued. Either this preponderating factor is necessary through itself or it is contingent through itself. The second is absurd, since if it were contingent through itself then it would require a cause, and then the effect that requires it would require its cause, given that if one thing requires another, any [further] thing required by the latter is also required by the former. And what requires the *cause* of something is not rendered necessary through that thing [but rather the cause of the thing]. Thus it remains that [whatever the contingent ultimately requires] is necessary through itself, and everything contingent is necessary through an existent that is necessary through itself.

*Let it not be said:* if every single contingent were necessary through the necessary existent in itself, [344] then nothing contingent could ever be a producer

(*mu'aththir*) for anything else, given that its necessity is [in fact] through the necessary existent. *For we say:* if by “producer” you mean that through which the existence of something is necessary, then we concede [your] conditional proposition (*al-sharṭiyya*). But why do you say that the consequent is false? According to us, the producer<sup>25</sup> through which the existence of all contingents is necessary is [indeed] the necessary through itself. But if by “producer” you mean that which, after it is existent, renders [another] contingent thing necessary, then we reject [your] conditional proposition. For the contingent may become necessary through the necessarily existent in itself, [but only] after the existence of another contingent thing. Nonetheless the second [contingent thing] does not become necessary *through* the first. For instance, a composite quiddity becomes necessary only after the final part [of it] exists. But it is not necessary *through* [that part], since the existence of the composite does not become necessary through [its] formal part alone.

[*can the eternal cause the temporal?*]

*Let it not be said:* if every contingent were necessary through the necessary in itself, then every contingent would be eternal, due to the everlastingness of the cause that necessitates the necessity of its existence. *For we say:* we do not concede the inference that it would be eternal. This would follow only if it did not have an [additional] preparatory condition. This is because everything originated depends on condition that is itself originated—not meaning that [this condition] is a part of the cause through which its existence is necessary, but rather that [the originated effect] is necessary *after* [the condition], *through* the necessitating cause, which is necessary through itself. This amounts to saying that everything contingent that does not depend on a preparatory condition is always necessary through the necessary existent in itself; but whatever does depend on [a preparatory condition] is necessary through [the necessary existent in itself, only] after the existence of the preparatory condition.

[T52] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, 347.1–17

[*rejection of the kalām argument as presented by al-Rāzī*]

As for the first, we do not concede that if the producer of all bodies were a body then something would produce itself. Why can't the producer of each body be some other body, so that bodies [produce one another] in order, to

<sup>25</sup> Reading *al-mu'aththir* for *li-al-mu'aththir*.

infinity? And even if we admitted that the producer cannot be a body, why couldn't it nonetheless be a corporeal power? As for [al-Rāzī's] statement that a vicious circle would then follow, *we say*: we do not concede this. This would follow only if the power in question were inherent in this same body which is its effect, but why do you insist that this is so? Why couldn't the power in question be inherent in another body, with its producer being still another power that inheres in still another body, and so on to infinity? Then too, even if we did concede this, why does [the infinite series] terminate at the necessary existent principle? A demonstration is needed for this. Anyway, the falsehood of the circle and the infinite series was already [shown] at the very beginning of establishing the Creator, so there is no need for this long argument.

*[rejection of the specification argument]*

*As for the second, we say*: we do not concede that the specification of certain bodies with certain attributes is due either to corporeality or to something extrinsic. Why can't it be due to corporeality, but on the condition that some preparation (*isti'dād*) occurs, due to certain material constituents (*mawādd*) as opposed to others?

*[rejection of the design argument]*

*As for the third*: why have you said that if the semen is homoiomerous, and if that which produces it were a corporeal power, then the human would be circular in shape? Why can't the mixture of some simple [elements] with others prevent a circular shape from arising?

[T53] Al-Abharī, *Tanzīl al-afkār*, fol. 51r24–52r4

*[taking all existing things, including God, as an aggregate]*

All existents taken as a whole (*jumla*), insofar as they are this whole, are not necessary through themselves, since they require something else. Hence they are contingent in themselves. Their existence is from a preponderating factor that precedes them in existence. This preponderating factor is not outside [the whole of all existents], since whatever is extrinsic to it is non-existent, and the non-existent cannot be a preponderating principle for that which exists. Therefore [the preponderating factor] is among [the whole of all existents]. Either it is necessary through itself or contingent through itself. The latter is false, since if it were contingent, and if it is a cause of its cause either immediately or through some other intermediary, then it would precede both of them, which

is absurd. If however it is not a cause, then other things would be independent [of it] even though we supposed that it is the preponderating factor [of everything], which is a contradiction. Therefore, it remains that [the preponderating factor] is necessary through itself. [...]

*[the uniqueness of the necessary existent]*

[51v19] Once it is established that the necessary in itself is one, and since it was established that a regress of causes and effects is absurd—rather they must terminate at an existent that is necessary through in itself—it follows then that the principle of everything existent is one and is the necessary in itself, which is the conclusion sought. [...]

*[part-whole problems]*

[51v25] *If someone says:* the preponderating factor of the whole of all existents is no single [element] of the whole, since the whole depends on more than one of [its elements], so the preponderating factor cannot be only one [element of the whole]. Also, the preponderating factor is that which necessitates the existence of the effect, even when one supposes that everything else is non-existent. No single [element] of the whole, however, necessitates the existence of the whole when everything else is supposed as being non-existent. Therefore, a single [element] cannot be the preponderating principle of [the whole]. *We say:* we do not concede that if the whole depends on more than one of its [elements] then [one element] cannot be its preponderating factor. This would follow only if the preponderating principle of “all” (*kull wāḥid*) were not one of its [elements]. If however one of its [elements] is the preponderating factor of “all”—either in a mediated way or immediately—then it is the preponderating factor of the whole.

As for his claim that the preponderating factor is that which necessitates the existence of the effect, when we suppose that everything else is non-existent, *we say:* we do not concede this. Rather the preponderating principle is that which, when everything else [52r] *that is not its effect* is supposed as not existing, necessitates the existence [that effect]. Every single [element] of the whole that is other than the necessary in itself, is its effect: if we posit the necessary in itself, alongside the non-existence of any single [element of the series], then what has been posited would be the preponderating principle alongside the non-existence of something else which is its effect, so the existence of the effect need not be necessary.

[T54] Al-Abharī, *Risāla fī 'ilm al-kalām*, 62.11–15; 63.15–64.9

[*objection to taking God as a member of the whole set of existing things, and a reply*]

*As for his statement:* “if the producer of [the whole] were within it, then it would produce itself, since whatever produces the aggregate (*al-majmū'*) produces each of its parts,” *we say:* we do not concede this. For the whole that is composed out of the necessary in itself and all other existents is contingent in itself, because of its need for the parts. Yet the producer of the aggregate is within that whole and is the necessary in itself.

[*response to the reply*]

*As for his statement regarding the second argument:* “we do not concede that the producer [of the whole] cannot be within [the whole],” [64] *we say:* [no member of the whole can produce the whole] because by “producer” we mean a cause that is complete [i.e. sufficient] for the realization (*tahaqquq*) of the aggregate. But nothing that is within the aggregate is a complete cause for its realization, since the aggregate depends on all of its parts. *Someone might say in response:* why can't the complete producer be all the parts [taken together], as when the aggregate is composed of the necessary in itself and all other existents, and has a producer which is all its parts? The same would apply to all other true realities that are composed. The complete producer of the whole that is made up from its parts would be all its parts. *In answer to this we would say:* we know necessarily that every whole that is composed out of units, all of which are contingent in themselves, requires a cause that is outside them. That which is outside all the contingent things is necessary in itself.

[T55] Al-Abharī, *Zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq*, fol. 160r13–161r2

[*full proof taking into account simultaneity and part-whole problems*]

If there is an existent in existence, then there exists an existent that is necessary in itself. The antecedent is true, therefore the consequent is true.

The conditional [proposition] is shown as follows. If that existent is necessary in itself then this is the conclusion sought. If however it is contingent in itself, then it has a cause through which its existence is necessary. If that cause is necessary in itself then this is the conclusion sought. If however it is contingent in itself then [this further cause also] has a cause. This yields either a circle or a regress, or terminates at a principle that is necessary in itself.

The circle is shown to be false in the following way. If X is an effect of Y, then X requires Y.<sup>26</sup> If [Y also] requires [X], then [X] is not its effect. Otherwise, given that X requires Y, and whatever requires that which requires something [further] requires this [further] thing as well, then X would require itself, but this is a contradiction.

The regress is shown to be false in the following way. If causes and effects regress to infinity, then either (a) they coincide in respect of existence, or (b) they do not coincide. [160v] (b) The second option is not acceptable, since it would imply that the contingent exists without its cause, and so would be existent through itself and not through a cause, so that the contingent in itself would be the necessary in itself, but this a contradiction. (a) Nor is the first option acceptable, since if [causes and effects] were to coincide in existence then the whole, taken as a whole, would be contingent in itself, given that it requires each one of its units. Hence [the whole] has a cause through which it is necessary. The cause of the whole must either be (a1) within it or (a2) outside it. (a1) It cannot be within it, since if the cause of the whole were within the whole, either (a1a) the whole depends on its other parts, or (a1b) not. (a1b) If it does not depend [on its other parts], then it follows that the whole exists without the other parts, and this is a contradiction. (a1a) If however it does depend [on its other parts], that [part] which we mentioned will not be a complete cause, yet we supposed that it is a complete cause, and this is a contradiction. Also, if something inside [the whole] were a complete cause, then it would either (a1a1) be the cause of other parts or (a1a2) not. (a1a2) If it is not the cause of the other parts, then the whole is necessary through it, without the other parts co-existing with it, and this is absurd. (a1a1) If however it is the cause of the other parts then its own cause is either (a1a1a) within the whole or (a1a1b) outside it. (a1a1a) If it is within it, then it is the cause of the cause of itself and it requires itself, but this is a contradiction. (a1a1b) If however [its cause] is outside the whole—and whatever is outside the whole [of contingents] is necessary in itself—then the infinite series is interrupted. The cause of the whole is therefore outside it, but we supposed it was within it, and this is a contradiction. Therefore, (a2) the whole has a cause that is outside the whole. That which is outside the whole [of contingents] is necessary in itself. Hence, causes and effects terminate at a principle that is necessary in itself. But we supposed that they form a regress, and this is a contradiction. The regress is therefore false, and there must be an existent that is necessary in itself.<sup>27</sup>

26 We have introduced the letters to clarify the argument.

27 This becomes the standard version of the *burhān al-ṣiddīqīn*, which e.g. al-Kātibī and al-Ṭūsī discuss.

[T56] Al-Kashshī, *Ḥadā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq* fol. 140r25–140v18

[*God as Light of lights*]

*Lights are either sensible or intelligible [140v] or a composite of both*

The sensible [light] is that which is evident (*zāhir*), and whose observation does not depend on the observation of anything else. It is of two kinds. The first is that which is self-evident, but makes nothing else evident, such as the stars whose light is hidden [...]. [140v4] The second is that [whose light] is stronger than the former: it is that which is self-evident and makes other things evident, such as the Sun, the Moon, and burning lights. As for intelligible light, it is that which perceives (*al-mudrik*) something: for instance, the faculties of outer and inner perception, intelligible and sensible perception, and the vision (*al-ra'y*) of something. [...]

[140v14] As for the light that which both sensible and intelligible, it is that which is evident in itself (*bi-nafsihi*) and from itself, through its self (*bi-dhātihī*), from its self, and [evident] in its self and making other things evident (*li-dhātihī wa-li-ghayrihi*). This is the strongest light. It is God the exalted, since He is evident in Himself, as there must necessarily exist that which makes all things evident through the emanation of the lights of existence upon them.

[T57] Al-Kātibī, *Ḥikmat al-'ayn*, 25.17–26.3

[*part-whole problems; the chair example*]

We do not concede that whatever produces the whole produces each of its parts. It could be that the whole requires a producer while some of its parts do not, or occur through some other producer. If it were necessarily so that [the producer produces all the parts], then in the case of an effect some of whose parts precede others in time, such as a chair, if its complete cause existed simultaneously with a part that comes first, then the effect would have to follow with a delay after the complete cause, [which is absurd]; but if [the complete cause] were simultaneous with the part that comes last, this would imply that the effect comes earlier than the complete cause [which is also absurd].

[*infinite series of infinite series*]

But suppose we concede this. Still, why have you said that whatever is outside that whole is outside the whole of contingent existents? This would follow only if that whole included all contingent existents. But this is rejected, because



there could exist an infinite whole, each of whose [parts] encompasses an infinite number of contingent existents.

*[refutation of infinite series is not necessary]*

But suppose we concede this too. Still, from the fact that whatever is outside [the whole of contingent beings] is a necessary existent, it does not follow that there can be no regress. You should prove this. [26] Rather, once one has been forced into [admitting either] a circle or regress in order to avoid the conclusion, one ought to say that inferring a circle is false, as has been shown, whereas if the inference is a regress, then this may be either false or not. But either way, the intended conclusion [i.e. the existence of God] will follow.

[T58] Al-Kātibī and al-Ṭūsī, *Mubāḥathāt bayna al-Ṭūsī wa-al-Kātibī*, 111.8–11; 114.3–10; 114.17–115.2; 116.22–117.21; 120.10–22; 122.7–13; 123.4–9; 123.12–19; 125.22–126.12; 126.15–22; 146.6–11

*[al-Kātibī: there could be an infinite series of infinite series]*

[111.8] They say that whatever is outside the whole (*jumla*) of contingents is an existent that is necessary in itself. Which is true. But why does it follow from this that whatever is outside *this* aggregate (*al-majmūʿ*) is necessary in itself? This follows only if all contingent existents are included in this series. This however is not obvious, because there could be more than one series, each of which encompasses only some contingent existents, not all of them.

*[al-Kātibī: the whole containing the Necessary Existent]*

[114.3] *One may say:* we do not concede that whatever produces the aggregate (*al-majmūʿ*) produces all (*kull*) of its parts. Why can't [something] produce the aggregate, taken as an aggregate, yet not produce each (*jamīʿ*) of its parts, due to the fact that some of its parts are sufficient without a producer, or occur through a producer other than this one? Do you not see that the aggregate composed out of *all* existents—that is, the necessary in itself and all contingent existents—is contingent in itself? For it needs its parts, which are distinct from it, and this entails its contingency. Its cause is the necessary in itself, even though [the necessary in itself] is not a cause for itself, because it is sufficient without a cause.

*[al-Kātibī: the chair example]*

[114.17] If the producer of the aggregate composed out of contingent units were necessarily a producer for each of its parts, one of two things would follow.

Either the effect would be prior to the complete cause, or the effect would be delayed after the complete cause. But both are absurd. The inference is explained as follows. When something is composed out of two parts, each of which is contingent, and one part is prior to the other in time—like a chair, because one of its parts, the matter, is prior to the other part, the form of chair—then if its producer were to produce each of its parts, then the producer must either exist simultaneously [115] with the prior part or not. If not, then the effect is prior to the complete cause. But if it does exist [simultaneously], then the effect is delayed after the complete cause. The absurdity of both options is evident.

[*al-Kātibī: another version of the argument, with objection*]

[116.22] We have taken the trouble to formulate the following argument for establishing the conclusion sought: the contingent as such (*al-mumkin min ḥaythu annahu mumkin*) is existent. From this follows the existence of something that exists through itself.

[117] The first premise [holds], because *this* contingent is existent, and the contingent as such is a part of this contingent thing. But a part of the existent is existent. Hence the contingent as such is existent.

The second premise [holds], because whenever the contingent as such is existent, it is either necessary in itself or contingent in itself. If the first is the case, then we already have the conclusion sought. But if the second is the case, then doubtless it has a cause, given that every contingent requires a cause to bring it into existence. This cause is either (a) itself, that is, the contingent as such; or (b) one of its elements (*afrād*); or (c) something that exists outside it and its elements. (a) The first is absurd, because an essential cause is prior to the effect, and nothing can be prior to itself. (b) The second is also absurd, because each of the elements of [the whole] requires [the whole], given that the part must require the whole.<sup>28</sup> So if one of its elements were a cause for [the whole], then that [i.e. the whole] would require that element, given that the effect must require the cause. It would follow that each of them requires the other [i.e. the whole would require the element and vice-versa], but such a circle is absurd, as you have learned, since it implies that something is prior to itself. Having refuted both first options (a) and (b), the third option (c) remains: the cause of the contingent as such is something existent outside of it and its elements.

28 Correcting *al-kull* to *al-juz'* and *al-juz'* to *al-kull*.

And everything that exists outside of it and its elements is necessary in itself. Thereby is established the existence of the necessary in itself, which is the conclusion sought.

But this too is inadequate. *For we say:* we do not concede that the contingent as such is a part of *this* contingent. Rather it is a merely conceptual consideration (*i'tibār 'aqlī*) that is applied to each of the contingent elements; namely that neither its existence nor its non-existence is through itself; rather either one arises for it due to a cause outside it. Clearly this intellectual [consideration] has no extramental existence or reality. This being so, it cannot be a part of something that is extramentally real and present.

[*al-Ṭūsī: there must be a first in the series of causes*]

[120.10] One [aspect] of this demonstration requires additional clarification. So let us put forward the following premise: we say that every ordered series of causes and effects, where the causes are complete in giving rise to their effects, must have a first among its causes. This series, being continuous after the first cause—regardless whether it is finite or infinite in the other direction—can be traced back only to that which has been posited as the first of the causes. Otherwise it would not be a complete cause. Through the occurrence of all units of the series, the whole occurs. If there were no cause among them that is first, but instead the causes ascended up the causal chain infinitely, then there would be no cause for that series or its parts, so that neither the units nor the whole could be traced back to it. For nothing outside [the series] can be its cause, because otherwise two independent causes would co-occur for one and the same thing, given that the parts taken together are an independent cause [of the whole]. Nor can any element among the units [of the whole], nor any [smaller] whole which is a part of the series, be the complete cause [of the whole]. For if it were a cause then first it would be the cause of the independent proximate cause [of the whole], which is the parts taken together. If this were the case, then that element or that [smaller] whole would be the cause of itself and of its causes, which is absurd. [...]

[*al-Ṭūsī: the causal relation between parts and whole*]

[122.7] The complete proximate producer of the aggregate can be nothing other than the parts taken together. For if there are two things, one of which is essentially prior to the other, and if the prior cannot be disjoined from the posterior in existence or non-existence, then the prior is the complete cause (*'illa tāmma*) of the posterior. This being so, the aggregate does exist as essentially posterior to the parts taken together, while the parts taken together are prior to it, and

cannot be disjoined [from the whole] in existence or non-existence. Therefore, the parts taken together are the complete cause of the aggregate. Nothing other than the parts can be the producer of the aggregate, given that there cannot be two distinct causes for one and the same effect. [...]

[123.4] As has been shown, the issue he [sc. al-Kātibī] is investigating is whether the producer of an aggregate is the producer for each of its parts. Now, nothing but the parts [taken together] can be conceptualized as the producer of the aggregate taken as an aggregate, given that nothing other than the ordered units can be the producer of the ordered [series of] causes and effects. The cause of the ordering (*al-tartīb*) is the parts themselves, taken as causes and effects. So what we have shown on this issue is that the cause that produces the aggregate, and nothing else, must first produce the parts. [...]

[*al-Ṭūsī: response to al-Kātibī's chair case*]

[123.12] We said that the complete producer of the aggregate is the complete producer of all parts taken together, but we have not said that it is the complete producer of only *some* of its parts, so that the implication you drew would follow. The complete producer of the matter of the chair is not the complete producer of the chair. Once the complete producer of the form of the chair is added to it, then they will together become the complete producer of the chair and of its parts. In saying that the complete producer of the aggregate is the complete producer of its parts, we do not mean that it is itself an essential producer of every part [taken singly]. Rather we mean that it encompasses the complete producers of each and every part, even if the producer of a given part is distinct from the producer of each and every part and from [the producer] of the aggregate; for this does not detract from our argument. [...]

[*al-Ṭūsī: on al-Kātibī's argument from contingency*]

[125.22] The contingent as such is neither existent nor non-existent, nor is it a part of *this* contingent. There is no division of it into necessary and contingent. The contingent, qualified in this [126] way, cannot be described with anything else, since its meaning is the contingent on the condition that nothing else is [taken] together with it. Yet the contingent that is described as "existent" is taken with no qualification (*qayd*), not even the qualification of *lacking* any qualification; rather it admits of being either qualified or not qualified. It is this sort of the contingent that is part of the existent contingent.

There can be no division of existence taken with an eye to [its] contingency [again] into the necessary and the contingent, because a subject of division must be shared, but the contingent existent is not shared between the contingent and the necessary. If one takes the existent and divides it into the necessary and the contingent, then the contingent cannot belong to the division of the necessary. Rather, the contingent is the contingent existent, and requires a cause not for its being contingent (the cause of its being contingent is its own essence), but requires a cause for its being existent. Its cause may be something else that is contingent, but this other thing will not be one of its elements. Rather it will be distinct from it, and something to which existence has already occurred. So the first demonstration that contingent causes must terminate at the necessary in itself, comes down to this. [...]

*[al-Ṭūsī: the principle of preponderation]*

[126.15] Saying that one of two equal [options] can be preponderated (*tarajjuh*) without a preponderating factor goes against that which is evident to the mind. If one allows this, it leads to the existence of something contingent for which the option of existence is equal to the option of non-existence, but without anything that would bring it into existence.

A problem arises concerning the difference between two cases. To say that in one case, there is an agent that preponderates one option over the other even though it has no claim [to be preponderated, in its own right], while in another case there is no agent, so that nothing preponderates one of the two options, does not show that there is a difference. For the agent is posited as having an equal relation to both options. The argument based on someone who flees from a hungry beast does not prove that there is no preponderating factor. It only amounts to showing that there the preponderating principle is unknown; but nothing necessarily follows for each case where the existence of [a preponderating factor] is unknown. [...]

*[al-Ṭūsī: refuting the infinite regress is not necessary]*

[146.6] Not only we have proven the falsehood of an infinite series by arguing that its cause cannot be among the items outside and inside [the series], but we have also proven its falsehood by showing that there cannot be a cause for all [its parts], given that neither they themselves, nor what is among them, nor what is outside them, can be [their cause]. But if someone does not admit the impossibility that [the cause] be something outside them, and we confine ourselves to refuting the options that the cause is [the members of the series] themselves or among them, then insofar as they require something other than

them, they require something outside them. So we have established the necessary on the basis of the requirement that the infinite series [plural] encompassing all contingents have for something outside it. For this, one does need not to refute the infinite series.

[T59] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 246.13–18

[*the parts taken together are the cause of the infinite series*]

The refutation of the regress calls for further investigation. For [Rāzī] establishes a producer for the aggregate of the infinite number of things, on the grounds that it requires its units. From this, however, it follows only that the aggregate has an infinite number of producers which are [its] units. From the fact that none of these units is the cause for itself, or the cause for its own causes, it does follow that it is not all by itself the cause of the aggregate. It does not follow, however, that it cannot be the cause when taken together with all other units. In fact this is true! In which case the causes of the aggregate are within it, and from this one cannot infer that the cause of the aggregate is outside it, so the sought conclusion is not reached.

[T60] Al-Ṭūsī, *Risāla-yi ithbāt-i al-wājib*, 8.7–15 [trans. Morewedge, mod.]

[*perfection argument*]

And from this [consideration] it becomes evident that the relationship between the prophets [on the one hand] and mixtures and elements (*mawālīd wa ummahāt*) [on the other hand] is like the relation between the heavens [on the one hand], and the mixtures and elements [on the other]. Whatever is closer to the Agent is nobler. Among mixtures, whatever is stronger than another, its perception, ability to discern, knowledge, wisdom, laudable character traits (*akhlāq*), and its esteemed qualities are greater and nobler. This order and organization are among decisive proofs and plain indications that show that these elements, their [derived] mixtures, and the heavens [must] have an Artisan who is immaterial and is void of actions. Indeed, He is an essence with all-encompassing grace and perfect wisdom. This composite [universe], which is the best of all possible structures, is derived from Him.

[T61] Al-Ṭūsī, *Risāla-yi ithbāt-i al-wājib*, 11.13–12.5, [trans. Morewedge, mod.]

[*fine-tuned universe argument*]

The fully developed wisdom of the exalted, wise Artisan entails that the order of the elements be according to its present structure. If something touching (*mumāss*) the heavenly sphere [from the outside] were some body other than fire, and fire were in another element, then that other body which was adjacent to the heavenly sphere would by its contact with the heavenly sphere turn it into fire; the nature [of fire] would thereby become even more intense and the equilibrium [in the heavens] would be destroyed. Likewise, if in the center [12] of the universe there were a body other than earth and earth were in that other body, then that body, due to its being furthest from the heavenly sphere, would become cold and dense and thus would be transformed into earth. In this way the nature of earth would become even more intense and equilibrium would be destroyed. Such noble composition and delicate order could have arisen only through the governance of the wise Artisan, and the ordinance of a knowing, eternal Creator (*mūjid*).

[T62] Al-Ṭūsī, *Risāla-yi ithbāt-i al-wājib*, 13.4–14 [trans. Morewedge mod.]

[*astrological argument*]

An argument for the existence of the Artisan based on the signs of the Zodiac in the heavens. When we consider the order of the Zodiac, we find that [the signs] are at variance with the order of the elements, and with the order of the human body. For in the order of the Zodiac of the first heavenly sphere there is a fiery sign, which is Aries; then there is an earthy [sign], which is Taurus; then there an airy [sign], which is Pleiades; and then there a watery [sign] which is Cancer; the rest are in that same order up to Pisces. Thus it is evident that the elements are ordered in one way in the lower world, in another way in the human body, and in still another in the higher world. If this ordering were demanded by the elements, it would have been alike in each case. But this is not so. Thus it is evident that beyond nature, there is something else that has given existence to these different bodies with these different orders, as demanded by His own wisdom and will.

[T63] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 405.6–407.13

[*proof considering all possible part-whole problems*]

If there existed no existent that is a necessary existent, then all true realities (*al-ḥaqā'iq*) and quiddities would be contingently existent. Everything that exists contingently requires a cause for existence that exists simultaneously with it and preponderates it to exist rather than not existing. Hence the aggregate of contingent existents requires an existent of this kind. This existent is either (a) that aggregate itself; (b) inside it; or (c) outside it.

(a) If it is the aggregate itself, then one either (a<sub>1</sub>) thereby means all units, without considering their composition (*al-ta'līf*), or (a<sub>2</sub>) with the composition taken into consideration. (a<sub>1</sub>) If one means the case where the composition is not considered, then let us talk about just the units. (a<sub>1a</sub>) They are not the cause of themselves, given that the cause must be different from the effect. Otherwise it would be [406] essentially prior to itself and it would require itself and acquire existence from itself, which is obviously false. (a<sub>1b</sub>) Nor is the cause [of the elements altogether] some of these elements, given that they cannot be the cause of themselves or of their causes. For if one thing is a complete cause of another, it cannot require anything else outside it. Rather, if this thing were composed out of contingent items and some of these contingent items required something outside the thing, then it would follow that this thing would require that external [cause] as well. For it requires its part, which in turn requires the external [cause], and if one thing requires another, the former requires whatever the latter requires too. Thus the complete cause would not be complete, which is a contradiction. So if some elements of the whole were the complete cause of the whole, then some other [elements] would not require anything outside them. It would follow that their causes are their effects, and that they are their own effects. Not only is this obviously impossible, but it also implies that more than one proceeds from the one, and you have already learned that it is impossible. (a<sub>1c</sub>) Nor is the cause [of the elements altogether] anything outside them, since (a<sub>1c1</sub>) if these units are infinite, this will be false. For each of them, and every subset (*kull jumla minhā*), is traced back to the complete cause which is not outside the infinite series. [That cause] is prior to this unit or subset. So if the cause of the units, taken altogether, were outside them, then a cause for some of them would be simultaneous with the complete cause [for all of them], and you have already learned that this is impossible. (a<sub>1c2</sub>) If however these units are not infinite, then they must terminate at an uncaused cause, and that will be the necessary existent. If therefore the units, taken altogether, are caused, then [paradoxically] it is impossible that they have



a cause, given that their cause can neither be they themselves, nor something inside them, nor something outside them, on the assumption that there is no [407] necessary existent involved in their cause. (a2) If one however means by “the aggregate” something where composition is taken into consideration, then something will be the cause of itself, which is evidently false.

(b) If that which is the cause of the aggregate of contingents is something inside it, then it is that cause either (b1) all by itself, or (b2) together with the other units. (b1) It cannot be [the cause] all by itself. Otherwise it would be the cause of itself or of its causes, [which has been disproven] by the preceding argument. (b2) Nor can it be the cause together with the rest of the parts, as this would be tantamount to saying that the cause is the aggregate taken in one of the aforementioned meanings [from option (a)]; but you have just learned that this is absurd.

(c) It remains then that the cause of the whole of contingent existents is outside them. If whatever is outside the whole of contingent items were itself contingent, then it would belong to that whole and not be outside it. Therefore, it must be the necessary existent.

[T64] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 411.14–412.1

[*argument from the persistence of originated things*]

We know that there exists an existent that has persistence (*ṭhabāt*), such as the body that is the bearer of motion, the soul that moves the spheres, prime matter, the substance in the human being that grasps itself, and so on—in fact everything originated apart from motion. For the moment (*ān*) of its origination is distinct from that of its perishing. Some time elapses between the two moments, and this time is its persistence. The causes of persistence are simultaneous [with that which persists], since nothing can persist once that which makes it persist perishes. The aggregate of that which is contingently persistent is itself contingently persistent. Its persistence is rendered necessary by something else. Otherwise its persistence would be through itself and it would be necessary in itself, despite being contingent in itself, which is absurd. This “something else” must be necessary in itself. For if it were contingent in itself, then its persistence would be due to some cause, and then the persistence of the aggregate of contingents would be necessary through both it and its cause, and its persistence would not be [412] through it alone, as was assumed, which is a contradiction.

[T65] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 166.9–168.6

[*overview of previous thinkers on the part-whole problem*]

The *imām* Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī—may God have mercy upon him—expressed doubts concerning [this proof], *saying*: we do not concede that whatever produces the aggregate, insofar as it is an aggregate, is that which produces every single [part] of it. It might become the producer of the aggregate, insofar as it is an aggregate, by being the producer of its final part, without being the producer of all its parts. He has illustrated this with the fact that the aggregate made up of the necessary and the contingent is contingent, given that it cannot be without what is contingent; and its producer is the necessary in itself, without its being the producer of every [part] of [the aggregate] since it cannot be the producer of itself. [Al-Abharī] answered his own objection by saying that the claim [needed for the proof] is that whatever produces the aggregate *of contingents* is the producer of every single [part] of [the aggregate]. But to this he answered that [the claim] is not self-evident, and stands in need of demonstration.

He has also organized the proof in another way, but again raised doubts about it. *This way is as follows*: the aggregate must have a complete cause (*'illa tāmma*). Its complete cause cannot be the aggregate itself, nor can it be something within it, since whichever [part] from within the aggregate [you take], the aggregate will always depend on another [part as well]; and by this reasoning the complete cause cannot be anything that belongs to the aggregate. Hence, the complete cause will be either outside [the aggregate] or composed out of what is inside it and what is outside it. Either way one must accept that there exists an existent that is the necessary existent.

[167] [Al-Abharī's] doubt concerning this proof is as follows. If by “complete cause” one means a whole, each item of which is truly needed by the aggregate, then why can't you say that the aggregate itself is the “complete cause” understood in this way? But if [the complete cause] is that which produces the existence of the aggregate, but only given the condition of something else, then why have you said that an effect does not depend on anything other than the complete cause, understood in this way? For support [al-Abharī] appealed to what he had already mentioned, namely that whatever is composed out of the necessary and the contingent things does have a cause, which is neither the aggregate itself nor anything outside it, but something inside it.

This is the thrust of [al-Abharī's] doubts. I have already given an answer in my response to the doubts expressed by the *imām* 'Allāma Najm al-Dīn [al-

Dabīrān i.e. al-Kātibī]—may God reward the people of knowledge by making his life long and securing his duration—on [al-Rāzī’s] book *al-Ma‘ālim*: when the aggregate is composed out of units each of which is contingent, then the complete cause of this aggregate must be that which produces every single unit from which the whole is composed. Otherwise whichever [units] it does not produce would either have no producer at all—so that something contingent would require no producer, which is absurd—or it would have a producer other than that cause. This would be either necessary, which is the conclusion sought, or it would be contingent, and if it were not factored in, those units would not occur at all. Yet so long as those [units] do not occur, neither does the aggregate. Hence that complete cause will not [really] be complete, since the effect will be delayed after it, and this is a contradiction.

In the book *Muntahā al-afkār*, imām Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī, after having argued for the falsehood of this demonstration, pursued [the following argument]: if contingent things regressed to infinity, the whole composed out of this regress would need to have a cause through which the aggregate is necessary, either through [this cause] itself or through something that [the cause] implies. For [the whole series] is contingent, and whatever is contingent requires a cause of this kind. [168] One knows this necessarily. That cause cannot be within the aggregate, since when so understood, the cause cannot be preceded by another cause. Otherwise the aggregate would [in fact] require the prior cause, in which case [the cause we are considering] will not be the cause [after all]. Whatever is within the whole series that is composed out of units characterized by contingency is preceded by another cause, so [anything in the series] is not a cause, so understood. Nor is [the cause of the aggregate] the aggregate itself given that it cannot be prior to itself. Therefore [the cause] is outside the aggregate. Yet whatever is outside the aggregate [of contingents] is necessary in itself. Therefore the infinite series must terminate, whereas we supposed that that it exists [as infinite], and this is a contradiction.

[T66] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 249.4–8

[*argument from motion combined with specification argument*]

Know that the cause of motion is not corporeality itself, because otherwise [motion] would be eternal due to the eternity of [body], so that every body would be in motion; but this is not so. Also it would follow that motions would be the same and not different, since corporeality is the same in [all] bodies;

when the causes resemble one another, so do the effects. Therefore, there must be a cause of motion which is incorporeal. If it is the necessary existent, then this is the conclusion sought. But if it is contingent then it leads to the necessary existent, as has been explained more than once.

[T67] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 249.10–13

[*argument from souls*]

You have already learned that the rational soul originates with the origination of body. Hence it is contingent and requires a cause. Its cause cannot be a body, since nothing can give existence to something that is nobler than it. If then its cause is the necessary existent, then this is the conclusion sought. But if it is contingent, it leads to the necessary in itself, as you have learned more than once.

[T68] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥā'if*, 143.4–13

[*part-whole problems regarding the impossibility of infinite regress*]

[The part cannot be the cause of the whole], since otherwise it would be the cause of its cause and of itself, since the cause of the aggregate is the cause of every single [part] (*kull wāhid*). For, if some [parts] occurred through something else, then the cause would be a cause only taken together with this other thing, and then it would not be an independent [cause]. [...]

[143.9] This calls for further investigation. For, why not concede that some [parts] are not due to a cause? Why can't whatever is beyond the first effect be the cause, and so on to infinity? For, as soon as it is realized (*taḥaqqāqa*), so necessarily is the aggregate, and in that case none of the consequences you mentioned would follow. Whatever is beyond the first effect, to infinity, would be the cause of those [parts], and likewise the cause of their cause, and so on indefinitely.

[T69] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 519.10–14

[*argument from motion*]

The natural philosophers (*al-ṭabī'yyūn*) used to prove [God's existence] in another way which is distinctive of them. *They said*: the spheres do not move

by themselves, given the aforementioned [arguments] that nothing can move itself. Nor are they violated and moved by nature. Hence they are spiritual and they must have a goal (*ghāya*). Their goal is not anything corporeal above or below them. Hence [the goal] is something non-corporeal. If it is contingent, an infinite series follows. Otherwise it is necessary. [520] This way of arguing is based on false premises whose falsehood will be shown in what follows. Moreover, it amounts to the first way [that is, Avicenna's *burhān al-ṣiddiqīn*] anyway.

[T70] Al-Ḥillī, *Taslīk al-nafs*, 136.4–13

[*short version of al-Ṭūsī's proof*]

You should know that establishing the Necessary is nearly self-evident, for inevitably, there is some existent. If it is necessary, this is the conclusion sought, but if not then it is contingent. If there is a regress then the aggregate of contingent things is contingent and must have a cause. But simply having a cause does not suffice for the existence of the contingent; rather there must be a *complete* cause, with which [the contingent] is rendered necessary and without which it is rendered impossible. The complete cause for the aggregate of contingents must be necessary. For if it were contingent, and if it were the complete cause of every single contingent, then it would be the cause of itself, since it belongs to the whole of contingents. But if it were the cause of some contingent things but not others, it would be a part of the complete cause for the aggregate of contingents, while at the same time being the cause of the aggregate of contingents, which implies that something is a part of itself, [which is absurd].

## God's Essence

One of Avicenna's most influential and well-received ideas was the identification of God as a Necessary Existent. Even critics of his metaphysics and philosophical theology frequently call the First Cause *wājib al-wujūd*, literally “the necessary of existence,” almost as if this were a proper name. This conception of God effectively replaced an earlier approach to God which described him as a pure unity, something al-Kindī's *On First Philosophy* borrowed from Neoplatonic texts translated in his circle; a kind of transitional text between al-Kindī and Avicenna is found in al-Fārābī [T1]. But what exactly does it mean to conceive of God as a Necessary Existent? Answers to this question were framed with reference to the distinction between essence and existence. Most simply, God might have an existence that is caused by His essence (*dhāt*) or quiddity (*māhiyya*), whereas all other things have merely contingent essences and must therefore receive their existence from another cause. But as Avicenna points out [T3], this would be rather paradoxical: in order for God's essence to cause His existence, it would surely already need to exist, since nothing can exert causal influence without existing.

Thus Avicenna suggests a closer relationship between God and His existence, which he expressed in various, not obviously compatible ways. In the metaphysical section of his *Shifā'* we find that God is said to have no quiddity at all [T4], or at least no quiddity *apart from existence* [T2]. This suggests that the essence-existence distinction breaks down in God's case, but elsewhere Avicenna proposes that God does after all have a quiddity or essence, namely “being necessary (*wājibiyya*).” He hastens to add that there is nothing more to this notion than actual existence [T5–T6],<sup>1</sup> cf. ‘Umar al-Khayyām's report of this position [T12–T13]. In these same passages, Avicenna already addresses a question that will be much discussed in coming generations.<sup>2</sup> If God is exist-

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- 1 We acknowledge that the *Ta'liqāt* and *Mubāhathāt* may better represent the debates over the Avicennian doctrines in his school, rather than his own positions. Still, until further research is done, we ascribe both works to Avicenna. See further J. Janssens, “Les *Ta'liqāt* d'Avicenne: essai de structuration et de datation,” in A. de Libera, A. Elamrani-Jamal, and A. Galonnier (eds.), *Langages et philosophie: Hommage à Jean Jolivet* (Paris: 1997), 109–112.
  - 2 On the debate on God's essence in post-Avicennan philosophy see Benevich, “The Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd*): from Avicenna to Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī”; Mayer, “Faḥr ad-Dīn al-Rāzī's Critique of Ibn Sīnā's Argument for the Unity of God in the *Išārāt* and Naṣīr ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī's Defence”; and Griffel, *Formation of Post-Classical Philosophy in Islam*, Part 3, Chapter 1.

ence, then what is the difference between God and the existence that belongs to contingent things? Avicenna's answer is that there is a difference between the actual existence of a given thing and existence in general or without qualification; this is the meaning of "in an absolute sense" in [T5]. The latter is the kind of existence that many things can "participate in" or "share," and unlike actual existence, it is somehow an effect or "necessary concomitant (*lāzīm*)" of God's essence [T6]. These variations in Avicenna's doctrine were noted and discussed, for instance, by al-Rāzī and al-Suhrawardī [T24, T39].

As if this were all not confusing enough, Avicenna offered a further device for understanding the relation between God's existence and the existence of other things. Since His actual existence is equivalent to His essence whereas other things receive existence from an extrinsic cause, we cannot really say that His existence is of the same kind as that found in contingent beings. Yet they are clearly related notions. In the chapter on the univocity and equivocity of existence, we have seen that Islamic philosophers saw a middle way between purely univocal and purely equivocal predication of existence. They called it the analogy of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*).<sup>3</sup> Now, Avicenna uses the notion of analogy to explain the relationship between divine and created essence [T7] (reiterated by Bahmanyār in [T8]). That should sound familiar to students of Latin Christian medieval philosophy.<sup>4</sup> In the late thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent defended a version of the "analogical" reading of being (*esse*). God's transcendence requires that His being is fundamentally different than that of a created thing: God is "being itself" and the source of all being. Against this, Duns Scotus mounted a defense of the univocity of being. True, God is a very different sort of entity than a human, but the difference is not to do with God's mode of being. Rather it has to do with other properties superadded to being, such as His infinity and necessity.

Al-Ghazālī criticizes Avicenna for going too far in the direction of negative theology. He sees no need to deny that God has a quiddity, so long as no causation of God's essence is thereby implied [T9], cf. [T2]. Moreover, Avicenna is wrong to worry about a causal dependence of God's existence on God's essence, since existence is an attribute, and attributes belong to essences by subsisting

3 For the secondary literature regarding *tashkīk al-wujūd*, see the chapter on Univocity and Equivocity of Existence.

4 For an overview of this debate and further references see J.F. Wippel, "Essence and Existence," in R. Pasnau (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, 2 vols (Cambridge: 2010), vol. 2, 622–634; R. Cross, "Duns Scotus on Essence and Existence," *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy* 1 (2013), 172–204. For an overview and more suggestions for further reading, see P. Adamson, *A History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps: Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: 2018), ch. 48.

in essences, rather than being caused by them [T10]. The real problem with Avicenna's view, though, is that there seems to be no content to the notion of necessary existence other than lacking a cause [T11], cf. [T21]. Bringing this together, then, we see that al-Ghazālī wants God to have a genuine essence or "true reality (*ḥaqīqa*)" as a basis for philosophical theology, rather than calling Him pure existence or "being necessary," where these phrases turn out to be empty of all positive attribution.

But there is a potential problem, even if we agree with Avicenna that God has no essence apart from being Necessary Existent: if God has existence and also necessity, where these are not purely empty or privative notions, then won't God be composed from two things? This problem is known to a number of figures early in our period, including Ibn al-Malāḥimī [T14], al-Sāwī [T16], and al-Shahrastānī [T17], who poses the difficulty by suggesting that God would be composed of a genus and differentia, namely existence and the necessity that distinguishes His existence from all others. There are two natural ways out of the composition problem, both based closely on Avicenna and both rejected by al-Shahrastānī [T18]. These ways in effect eliminate the reality of attributes, including "necessity," as additional aspects of God. One way is to make either necessity or existence in general a mere conceptual generalization [T18, T21]. The other way is to insist that divine attributes can all be seen as concealed negations or extrinsic relations, which introduce no multiplicity into God. This recourse to negative theology is echoed in several of our texts [T20, T38, T54].

There are however difficulties with suggesting that God is nothing but existence. Already al-Mas'ūdī complained that existence isn't the sort of thing that can exist purely by itself, rather it is an accident that is always joined to an essence; either God's existence must be like this too, or it must be a wholly different sort of existence [T22]. This anticipates what we find in al-Rāzī, who develops the most complex and influential set of objections to the idea of pure existence. If the existence in question is univocal with created existence, then it is hard to see how it can be an accident for contingent things on the one hand, and no less than identical with God on the other hand [T23]. How can one and the same kind of existence be the principle of the universe when it is God, and a caused feature of other things [T25]? How can it be unknowable in the divine case, and eminently knowable when it is created things that are at stake [T26], knowable indeed as something that must be additional to essence [T28]? Furthermore, existence should be a predicate ascribed to God as a subject of predication, which implies that existence is not just the same as God or His essence [T27].

Al-Rāzī thinks that this leaves us with only two options: either we say that existence is equivocal between God and created things, or existence is univocal,



but additional to God's essence after all [T23]. Where al-Shahrastānī and the Ash'arites (as commonly interpreted in our period) take the former option and defend equivocity [T19, T23, T30], al-Rāzī is partisan of the univocity of existence, as we saw in a previous chapter. So he goes for the latter option: while existence is not a single genus because of its "unequal" application to God and creatures [T33], it is still applied with the same meaning and with no variation in "intensity" [T32]. But doesn't this just land us with the previous problem that God is composed from two things, essence and existence? Rāzī's answer is, in a nutshell, that existence is indeed distinct from essence in God but that this introduces no problematic composition. He does not accept Avicenna's "priority problem" from [T3], namely that the essence would first need to exist in order to receive existence as a real problem, since he genuinely believes in the priority of essence over existence [T29].<sup>5</sup> Moreover, he sees no difficulty with saying that God's essence simultaneously produces its own existence and receives it [T34], something often discussed by other authors as well [T38, T43, T63].<sup>6</sup> Al-Rāzī also tries to solve a "causation problem" from [T2], namely that God's status as uncaused may be undermined if we admit that His essence gives rise to His existence [T31], possibly inspired by al-Ghazālī's position in [T9]. Al-Rāzī's argumentation would be much-disputed, though. Al-Āmidī agrees with al-Rāzī's and al-Ghazālī's point on causation problem, saying that all we need to deny in God's case is an external agent that would produce Him [T43]. But al-Abharī rebuts al-Rāzī's various objections against the Avicennan position that God is simply pure existence [T47, T51], and argues that al-Rāzī's own solution would founder on the priority problem [T50], cf. al-Kātibī [T58] and Bar Hebraeus [T61].

Al-Ṭūsī also thinks al-Rāzī's worries can be solved [T55, T56]. He is not interested in defending the idea that God is identical with existence in the same sense with which we apply "existence" to contingent things (not unlike al-Samarqandī [T68]). Rather, al-Ṭūsī adopts an analogy theory, which he explains with particular lucidity at [T56], cf. al-Tustarī's commentary [T67].<sup>7</sup> For al-Ṭūsī,

5 See also [T22–T25] in the Essence-Existence Distinction chapter.

6 Al-Samarqandī says in [T28] from the chapter on the Subject Matter of Metaphysics that the decision regarding this issue marks the principled distinction between *falsafa* and *kalām*.

7 Al-Tustarī's depiction of the analogy of existence as a motion between two extremes may remind some readers of Mullā Ṣadrā's metaphysics. On these see further S. Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics: Modulation of Being* (London: 2009), and for the comparison to Aquinas, see D. Burrell, "Thomas Aquinas and Mulla Sadra Shirazi and the Primacy of *esse/wujūd* in Philosophical Theology," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 8 (1999), 207–219; S. Rizvi, "Process Metaphysics in Islam? Avicenna and Mullā Ṣadrā on Intensification of Being," in D.C. Reisman (ed.), *Before and After Avicenna* (Leiden: 2003), 233–247.

the analogy of existence amounts to stating that God's own existence is of a very special kind, completely different from ours. Still both God's and our existence share the same notion of existence that we conceptually attribute to them [T57]. Al-Ṭūsī also uses the analogy of existence to avoid the argument posed by al-Shahrastānī, that God would be existence plus the distinction of being necessary [T52]. This is not to say that the theory of analogy had found no adherents between Avicenna and al-Ṭūsī. Al-Abharī, like al-Ṭūsī, is concerned to refute al-Rāzī's attacks on Avicenna in order to uphold an analogy theory, whereby divine existence is, uniquely, identical with the essence to which it "belongs" [T48, T49], although he has doubts concerning the analogy of existence in [T47]. Al-Urmawī likewise says that an analogy theory could allow the Avicennan to avoid al-Rāzī's univocity problem [T59].

Abū al-Barakāt also defends a position which seems to be classifiable as an analogy theory, according to which God is actually the *only* genuinely existing thing, with other cases of existence being mere derivatives of His [T15]. He draws a helpful analogy here to motion: the one who initiates a motion is a true mover, while the intermediaries and ultimate moved things are moving but not movers. One might imagine here a sailor piloting a ship, on which there are passengers: the passengers' motion is the end goal, but it is only the sailor who is "moving" in the sense of generating motion.

Alongside Abū al-Barakāt, the most influential proponent of the analogy of existence solution was al-Suhrawardī (al-Abharī follows his lead in some passages mentioned above). In fact, al-Suhrawardī's contribution to the debate consists mostly in a new set of arguments for the Avicennan claim that God is pure existence. As al-Suhrawardī himself notes [T36], in the *Lamaḥāt* he was initially content to repeat Avicenna's own argument for this equation between God and existence, namely the priority argument [T3, T35]. In time though, al-Suhrawardī comes to think he can improve on this reasoning. He develops what we call the "contingency of individuation" argument [T36, T37], which is further expounded by later thinkers influenced by him [T60, T66]. The central idea of the proof is that if God had a quiddity distinct from His existence, then He would be contingent: for it is always a matter of contingency (and so, there is always a cause to explain) that a given quiddity be realized in a given individual. For example there is nothing in the quiddity of human that says it must be instantiated as the individual Zayd. Ibn Kammūna puts this point well in [T60]: "no universal quiddity in itself excludes that an indefinite number of particulars might belong to it." Thus, to avoid saying that in God's case too there is a cause for His realizing His quiddity as a particular existent, we must say that God (or His quiddity) just *is* His existence, rather than a being that necessarily acquires existence *through* His essence or quiddity. On this

basis, al-Suhrawardī concludes that God's essence cannot be even conceptually separated from His existence: something that makes God's case unique. The cogency of this is challenged by al-Abharī [T47], in part on the rather *ad hoc* grounds that God's essence and existence might be distinct even if we are unable to understand how they are distinct.

When it comes to God's attributes and perfection, Suhrawardī accepts Avicenna's idea that divine attributes are not positive properties that could involve multiplicity, but only relations and negations [T38]. He avoids the problems that would arise from saying that God's existence is univocal to the existence of created things (the sort of problems mentioned by al-Mas'ūdī [T22] and al-Rāzī [T23]), by suggesting that God is "pure existence." This existence differs from other kinds of existence by way of perfection [T40–41] (accepted by al-Shahrazūri [T64]).<sup>8</sup> From the chapter on essence and existence, we remember that al-Suhrawardī insisted that existence is merely a conceptual consideration. For the case of God, he mostly makes an exception and agrees with Avicenna that God is the only case in which existence is something real outside our minds. As [T42] shows however, sometimes al-Suhrawardī wants to insist that there is no such thing as existence outside our minds, even in God's case—al-Suhrawardī's intention being nicely spotted by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī [T69]. Therefore, al-Suhrawardī replaces pure existence with the Illuminationist concept of the "Living" [T42], a being which is apparent to itself, an idea repeated enthusiastically by al-Shahrazūri [T65].

A comparable account of God as pure existence comes in Bābā Afḍal. He has an idiosyncratic approach to our topic that focuses on God as a knower [T44–T46]. In an obvious parallel to Avicenna's idea that God, as the Necessary Existent, is existent through himself, Bābā Afḍal says that God "knows through Himself" and that His knowledge constitutes existence. This is highly reminiscent of the Neoplatonic tradition, in which a universal intellect is equated with the realm of true being.

So a wide range of thinkers in our period defend a variety of analogy theories to account for God's existence. But just as with univocity of existence, analogy of existence comes in for criticism. One worry is that it would bring in the problem of composition in a different way: if God has a special existence unlike other cases of existence, then in Him existence must be qualified by whatever makes it special. This objection looks at first rather question-begging, especially in the form we find in al-Abharī: he simply assumes that analogical existence can be analyzed as univocal existence plus "some addition," which

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the passages on what can grant distinction in the chapter on Individuation [T15].

is obviously not what the analogical theorists have in mind [T47]. But after all, there must be *some* basis on which two analogical cases of existence both count as cases of "existence." The force of al-Abhari's critique may be better understood by looking back to Ibn al-Malāḥimī, who calls the core of existence shared by two supposed analogical cases the "principle (*aṣl*)" [T14].<sup>9</sup> Just as some animals are better than others, even though both are animals in the same sense, God and creatures could share in a univocal existence even though God is vastly, even infinitely, superior to creatures. Generalizing this point, al-Ḥillī wonders whether it ever makes sense to talk of analogy in the first place [T70], against [T56]. According to al-Ḥillī, the analogy of existence violates the rules of linguistic meaning.

One final development worth noting comes in the Christian author Bar Hebraeus. He is well-acquainted with the debate just surveyed, as we can see for instance from his use of al-Rāzī's position that God's essence can be simultaneously productive and receptive [T63, cf. T34] as well as with al-Ṭūsī's analogy of existence [T61]. He argues that our ways of knowing that God is Necessary Existent are different from our ways of knowing that He is "wise" and "living." Therefore, these two features must be distinct from God's necessary existence. Some Ash'arite thinkers (but not faithful Avicennists) would be willing to agree with this position, if one understands these as divine attributes. But Bar Hebraeus makes a further move that his Muslim colleagues would not accept, by modifying Avicenna's account of God to make it compatible with the Trinity [T62-T63]. "Wise" and "living" must be hypostases in the Godhead, as according to the standard Christian view. Bar Hebraeus thus exploits a problem that had been worrying Muslim intellectuals since at least al-Ghazālī: Avicenna's rigorously abstract and simple first principle doesn't really sound like the God of the Abrahamic traditions. To show that the Necessary Existent has the traits we expect to find in God, we will have to tolerate a minimal form of multiplicity in Him after all.

Texts from al-Fārābī, Avicenna, Bahmanyār, al-Ghazālī, 'Umar al-Khayyām, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, al-Sāwī, al-Shahrastānī, Ibn Ghaylān, al-Mas'ūdī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Suhrawardī, al-Āmidī, Bābā Afḍal, al-Abhari, al-Ṭūsī, al-Kātibī, al-Urmawī, Ibn Kammūna, al-Shahrazūrī, Bar Hebraeus, al-Tustarī, al-Samarqandī, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, al-Ḥillī.

9 The same criticism of *tashkīk* can be found in al-Samarqandī, *Ma'ārif*, fol. 11v5-14, where he likewise argues that *tashkīk* involves one and the same *aṣl*.

## God's Essence

[T1] Al-Fārābī, *Mabādī*, 68.7–13 [trans. Walzer]

[*God's existence is specific to Him and is His oneness*]

If then the First is indivisible with regard to its substance, the existence it has, by which it is distinguished from all other existents, cannot be any other than that by which it exists in itself. Therefore its distinction from all the others is due to a oneness which is its essence. For one of the meanings of oneness is the particular existence by which each existent is distinguished from all others; on the strength of this meaning of oneness each existent is called “one” inasmuch as it has its own particular existence. This meaning of the term “one” goes necessarily with “existence.” Thus the First is one in this respect as well, and deserves more than any other one the name and the meaning (of the “one”).

[T2] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* VIII.4, 275.4–7; 275.15–276.2 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*causation argument*]

If [God] has a true reality which is other than that quiddity [i.e. any quiddity] then—if that necessity, with respect to existence, must be connected with that quiddity and would not be necessary without it—the meaning (*maʿnā*) of the Necessary Existent inasmuch as it is the Necessary Existent would come to be through something that is not itself. Hence it would not be the Necessary Existent inasmuch as it is the Necessary Existent. [...]

[275.15] It thus remains that the Necessary Existent in itself is unqualified and realized inasmuch as it is a necessary existent in itself as a necessary existent without that quiddity. Therefore, that quiddity would occur accidentally (if this were possible) to the Necessary Existent that realizes its subsistence (*al-qiwām*) in itself. The Necessary Existent would thus be indicated in itself by the mind (*fa-wājib al-wujūd mushār ilayhi bi-al-ʿaql fī dhātihi*) and the Necessary Existent would be realized even if that occurring quiddity did not exist. Hence that quiddity would not be a quiddity of that thing indicated by the mind as being a necessary existent, but would be the quiddity of something that attaches to it. But it was [276] postulated as the quiddity of that thing and not another. This is a contradiction. Hence, there is no quiddity for the Necessary Existent other than its being the Necessary Existent. And this is [its] “thatness” (*al-anniyya*).

[T3] Avicenna *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt* VIII.4, 276.9–13 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*priority argument*]

Hence, either [existence] would be a necessary concomitant of the quiddity because it is that quiddity, or it would be its necessary concomitant because of something [else]. Now, when we say “necessary concomitance (*luzūm*)” we mean following in respect of existence (*ittibā' al-wujūd*). An existent cannot follow anything but an existent. So if “thatness” (*annīyya*) follows quiddity and is in itself a necessary concomitant for it, then, in its existence, “thatness” would follow an existence. But for everything that in its existence follows an existence, that which it follows in itself exists prior to it. Thus the quiddity would have existed in itself prior to its existence, which is contradictory. It remains that it has existence due to a cause. Hence, everything that has a quiddity is caused [in respect of existence].

[T4] Avicenna, *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt* VIII.4, 276.16–277.3 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*differentiating between two kinds of saying “existence”*]

Thus the First has no quiddity. Those things possessing quiddities have existence emanate on them from Him. He is pure existence with the condition of negating privation (*mujarrad al-wujūd bi-sharṭ salb al-ʿadam*) and all other descriptions of Him. Furthermore, the rest of the things possessing quiddities are contingent, coming into existence through Him. The meaning of my statement “He is pure existence with the condition of negating all other additional [attributes] of Him,” is not that He is the absolute existence in which other things may participate (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq al-mushtarak fihi*). If there is an existent with this attribute, it would not be the pure existent with the condition of negation, but rather the existent without the condition of positive affirmation. I mean, regarding the First, that He is the existent with the condition that there is no additional composition (*bi-sharṭ lā ziyādat tarkīb*), whereas this other is the existent without the condition of this addition. For this reason the universal is predicated of every thing, whereas [pure existence] is not predicated of anything that has addition; everything other than Him has addition.

[T5] Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 180.7–181.9

[*existence in an absolute sense is a necessary concomitant of God, but actual existence is not*]

Existence in the case of the Necessary Existent is among His necessary concomitants, and He is that which necessitates it (*al-mūjib*). His essence is “being necessary” (*al-wājibīyya*) and the necessitation of existence (*ṭjāb al-wujūd*). He is the cause of existence. The existence of anything other than Him is not intrinsic to its quiddity. Rather it occurs to [the quiddity] extrinsically (*min khārij*). Nor is [existence] among the necessary concomitants of [the worldly quiddity]. However, His Essence is “being necessary” or existence in actuality, not existence in an absolute sense; the latter is instead among His necessary concomitants. [...] [181.8] Existence in actuality is intrinsic for the true reality of the Necessary Existent, since it is the necessity of existence (*wujūb al-wujūd*); [existence in actuality] is not a necessary concomitant of His true reality.

[T6] Avicenna, *Mubāḥathāt*, 140.10–142.9

[*God's essence is “being necessary” which is non-participated existence*]

Perhaps the solution to the preceding is that the existence that is the quiddity of the First is “being necessary.” “Being necessary” is not “existence<sup>10</sup> that cannot be impossible” (*wujūd lā yumkinu an yastahīla*), but rather is “that whose existence is necessary” (*huwa alladhī yajibu wujūduhu*). For if “being necessary” were existence that cannot be impossible, the Truth [i.e. God] would have to be [either] that existence for which “not being impossible” would be a necessary concomitant, so that this [characteristic] would be a necessary concomitant of every existence; or [God] would be composed of existence and what is attached to it, and would be composite in terms of quiddity [which is absurd]. So He is that whose existence is necessary, and hence “being necessary” is His quiddity.

If you mean by existence that abstract thing (*al-mujarrad*) [i.e. “that the existence of which is necessary”], then there is no participation (*mushārika*) in it. If however you mean by it [141] that which is opposite to non-existence, then

10 Reading *huwa wujūd* with ms L instead of *huwa anna al-wujūd* in the edition, because the next sentence clearly speaks of the identification of *wājibīyya* and *wujūd*, not *anna al-wujūd*.

there is participation in it and it is among the necessary concomitants of His "being necessary." So His quiddity is such that existence is necessary for it, meaning that existence in which there is participation, so that this existence, as such, is among the necessary concomitants of His quiddity. How could it be otherwise? We say that existence is necessary for [His quiddity] just as having angles equal to [two right angles] is necessary for triangle.

Furthermore, that quiddity is not like humanity and other [species], so that somebody could say that the existence of its necessary concomitant is possible only after its [coming into] existence, since a necessary concomitant (as opposed to a constituent) is caused by the quiddity, and so long as the cause does not exist neither does the effect.

Furthermore, how can existence pertain to human, for example, prior to existence, so that through that existence it could be a cause for an effect which is this existence? Yet this is impossible only in the case of the quiddities that lack necessity, and for which existence is only a necessary concomitant.

As for the quiddity "being necessary," whose meaning is precisely that existence is necessary for it due to itself (*min dhātihā*), it is either existence itself along with a further condition (if such a thing were possible), or it is something that has no name, for which this participated existence is a necessary concomitant. As for what this might be, it has no name but is recognized (*yu'rafu*) only through that which is its necessary concomitant, like a power. Indeed its concrete being (*huwīyyatuhu*), namely "that its existence is necessary," is like the concrete being of powers, insofar as they necessarily give rise to their activities.

*Let no one ask:* does the quiddity of the First Truth exist in order that its necessary concomitant exists, so as to be the cause of its own necessary concomitant, when it already existed in a moment [142] before its existence? *To this one may respond:* [God's quiddity] is either (a) an existent that is not through existence which is attached to it—it is not like humanity, which is existent through the fact that existence pertains to it, rather it is existence itself (*nafs al-wujūd*),<sup>11</sup> without an existence that overlays it, and there is no participation in this thing; it is "being necessary" itself and is a simple entity, even though one explains it with a complex verbal expression—or (b) existence pertains to it and this

11 Reading *al-wujūd* instead of *al-mawjūd*.



is its necessary concomitant, so that one may say “this is necessary for it,” or that the existent exists in the general sense (*bi-al-maʿnā al-ʿāmm*) and this is its necessary concomitant which cannot be eliminated from it. In fact [existence in the general sense] belongs to Him through an existence that attaches to Him through the fact of His being existent, since it makes Him existent in the first place. So when someone poses the tricky question whether He possesses existence or not, one should either concede that existence does belong to Him, having in mind the general meaning, given that it is a necessary concomitant; or one should disagree and respond that He is not an existent through any existence that would be an attribute of something in Him.<sup>12</sup>

[T7] Avicenna, *Mubāḥathāt*, 232.12–14 [trans. Treiger, mod.]

[*existence as analogical*]

As for the application of existence to the First [Principle] and to what is posterior to it, this is not an equivocal term, but an analogical expression (*min al-asmāʾ al-mushakkika*), and the referents (*musammīyyāt*) of an analogical name may fall under a single science.

[T8] Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 282.1–5

[*analogy*]

Thus it is clear that existence is something common which is not predicated of what falls under it univocally (*bi-al-tawāṭūʾ*), but analogically (*bi-al-tashkīk*). Therefore it is predicated of what falls under it as a necessary concomitant, not as a constituent, and it is not common in the same sense as genus is common. If existence were predicated of what falls under it univocally, that is, as a constitutive predicate, then it would have to be predicated of the Existent that is necessary in itself and of other existents as a constituent. Then the Existent that is necessary in itself would have to be distinguished from everything else through a differentia, but this is absurd.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Rāzī quotes this whole passage at *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 122–123 and wonders whether Avicenna really thinks that God’s essence is existence.

[T9] Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 116.8–117.8 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*the causation problem*]

We say that He has a true reality and a quiddity. This true reality exists, that is, it is neither non-existent nor negated, and its existence is added (*muḍāf*) to it. If [the philosophers] want to call this existence “consequent (*tābiʿ*)” and a “necessary concomitant (*lāzim*),” then let there be no quarrel about names, so long as it is acknowledged that there is no agent for [His] existence, but rather this existence has always been eternal without having an efficient cause. If however they mean by “consequent” and “effect” that it has an efficient cause, this is not so. If they mean something else, this is conceded and it involves nothing impossible, since [117] the proof [i.e. Avicenna’s proof of God’s existence] has only shown that the regress of causes comes to an end. Its ending in an existing true reality and a real quiddity is possible, so there is no need in this for the negation of quiddity (*ilā salb al-māhiyya*).

*If it is said:* the quiddity then becomes a cause of the existence that is consequent on Him, so that existence is caused and brought about, *we say:* the quiddity in created things is not a cause of existence. How then could it be so in the case of the eternal, assuming they mean by “cause” that which brings it about? If they mean by [quiddity’s being a cause] some other aspect, namely that [existence] presupposes it (*lā yastaghni ʿanhu*), let this be so, since that involves no impossibility. The impossibility lies only with the regress of causes.

[T10] Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 99.17–100.2 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*in general, essences do not cause attributes*]

If you mean by its being consequent to the essence and the essence being a cause for it that the essence is an efficient cause for it and that it is brought about by the essence, this is not so. For this does not follow necessarily in the case of our knowledge in relation to our essence, since our essences are not an efficient cause for our knowledge. If you mean that the essence is a subject of inherence (*maḥall*) and that the attribute does not subsist by itself without such a subject, this is conceded; what is to prevent it? For it to be referred to as “consequent,” as “accidental,” as an “effect,” or however one wishes to express oneself, does not change [100] the meaning, given that the meaning is simply its subsisting in the essence, in the way that attributes

subsist in their bearers. There is nothing absurd in its being in an essence and still being eternal and having no agent.

[T11] Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 117.12–120.21 [trans. Marmura mod.]

[*Avicenna's position is purely negative*]

In general, their proof on this point goes back to their proof denying [God's] attributes and their denial of any distinction of genus or species [in His case], except that it is even more obscure and less convincing. For this multiplicity comes down to sheer verbal utterance (*mujarrad al-lafẓ*). In any case reason may accept the supposition of an existing quiddity that is one, whereas [the philosophers] say that every existing quiddity is rendered multiple, since it includes both quiddity and existence. But this is the height of waywardness. For it is in any case intelligible for an existent to be one, but there is never an existent without a true reality, and the existence of a true reality does not undermine unity. [...]

[118.11] They thought they were elevating [God above all similitudes to His creation] in what they say, but the end result of their account is pure negation (*al-nafy al-mujarrad*). For the denial of a quiddity is the denial of a true reality. Nothing remains with the denial of a true reality save the verbal utterance “existence” (*lafẓ al-wujūd*), which has no referent (*musammā*) at all so long as it is not related to a quiddity. If it is said, “His true reality consists in His being necessary (*annahu wājib*), and this is [His] quiddity,” we say that there is no meaning for [His being] necessary other than the denial (*nafy*) of a cause. But that is a negation (*salb*), through which the true reality of an essence is not constituted (*yataqawwamu*). Denying a cause for His true reality is a necessary concomitant (*lāzim*) of this true reality. So let the true reality be understood in such a way that it is described as having no cause, and as something whose non-existence is inconceivable, since “necessity” means nothing but this. Yet if necessity is additional to existence, this would yield multiplicity; but if it is not additional, how can it be the quiddity given that existence is not a quiddity? The same goes for anything that is not additional to existence.

[T12] Al-Khayyām, *Risālat al-dīyā' al-'aqlī*, 63.24–64.2

[*composition problem*]

Similarly, if existence were something additional to the essence of the existent, which would become existent through it, then God's existence would also be additional to His essence, I mean this existence [64] that is opposed to non-existence, which is under discussion here. Hence God's essence would not be one but rendered multiple, which is absurd.

[T13] Al-Khayyām, *Risālat al-dīyā' al-'aqlī*, 66.13–20

[*composition problem and "being necessary"*]

Look at what the eminent later scholar—let his tomb rest in peace and his soul be sanctified—said in a passage from his *Mubāḥathāt*: perhaps the existence that is the quiddity of the First Truth is “being necessary” (*al-wājibīyya*). He said this just because there is no share at all in “being necessary” taken absolutely. Then he said that the existence that is opposed to non-existence and is said of all things is among the necessary concomitants of that quiddity. If this entity (*ma'nā*) were a thing in its own right, then the essence of God would thereby be rendered multiple—may He be exalted by far above what the benighted ones say!

[T14] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 65.5–66.6

[*composition problem*]

*We ask them:* when you attribute to God the exalted that He is existent just as you attribute it to other concrete individuals, you must either (a) want to convey in saying that He is existent the same as when you say of concrete individuals that they are existent, or (b) want to convey something different.

(a) If you convey the same meaning for all things—both in God Himself and in other things themselves—then you are using “existent” as one of the univocal names (*al-asmā' al-mutawāḥḥa*). According to them, univocal names are those that convey an identical (*muttafiqan*) meaning for different things, like “animality” for different living creatures and animals. Accordingly you are forced to admit that existence is a genus for the existent, and there is no escape from saying that God the exalted is differentiated from existents by a differentia (*faṣl*). For the true reality of His “self” (*ḥaqīqat dhātīhi*) cannot be like [the existence

that is] an attribute of the existent thing. When however you say that he is differentiated by a differentia, you must admit that He is composed (*murakkaban*) out of a genus and a differentia. This would amount to a multiplicity (*kathra*) within the essence of the exalted.

(b) If, however, by saying that he is existent you want to convey a different meaning from the one you convey when you describe other things as existent, then your saying “existent” becomes equivocal (*min al-asmā’ al-mushtarika*), since you thereby render two different meanings. And this is our view.

[*rejection of analogy*]

*They say:* our saying “existent” cannot be among the equivocal names, given what we mentioned about the correctness of the division (*al-qisma*) of existence, which is not possible in the equivocal names. Nor can it be among the univocal names, since existence is affirmed for some things more appropriately and primarily (*awlā wa-awwalan*) than in others, for instance for body (*al-jism*) [as opposed to] accident (*al-‘araḍ*). For the “existence” of the Necessary Existent is one of the “coinciding names” (*al-asmā’ al-muttafiqa*); this is what they mean by coinciding names, that is, they are affirmed for some things more appropriately and primarily and in others not.

*To this it may be said:* the fact that an attribute is more appropriately and primarily in some things and in others not, [still] entails that they all share this attribute, and [only] thereafter is it affirmed for some of them in a stronger and more preponderated (*arjah*) way than in others. For preponderation with respect to an attribute [66] entails some sharing in the basic principle (*aṣl*) of that attribute. This is what is actually meant by sharing in the attribute of existence. Don’t you see that “animality”—just as you say—is more appropriate and primary for some living creatures [than for others], for instance, when you speak of the intellects and spheres as “living” or when you say about God the exalted that He is alive? Furthermore you allow that life perishes in living beings other than Him, on the supposition that their cause is absent, and in the case of the human when the cause perishes he dies, whereas this sort of thing is impossible with the essence of Him, the exalted. So they [would have to] say that animality is among the coinciding names and not among the univocal ones. [As for their argument against existence being equivocal], we already replied to their statement that there is division for the attribute of existence.<sup>13</sup>

13 See [T8] in the chapter on Univocity and Equivocity of Existence.

[T15] Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 64.15–66.7

[*univocity and analogy*]

This existent, whose existence and true reality are identical (*'ayn al-wujūd wa-ḥaqīqatuhu*), is the Necessary Existent through Itself, through whom the existence of other things is necessitated. His quiddity is not rendered multiple by any verbal reference or mental conception<sup>14</sup> which happens prior to careful examination and perfect understanding. The Necessary Existent is necessary existence and the necessarily existent through himself, the existence of every existent being through Him.

*Someone may ask:* is the existence that is the attribute of every one of the many existents, both eternal and perishing, the same as this simple existence that is necessary through itself or not? If it is the same, how then can the abstract existent which is eternal and necessary by itself be an attribute for other existent things, whether they are necessary of existence or not, eternal or not? If however it is not the same as the existence of other existing things, then other existing things are not existent and there is no existent apart from [65] this one [i.e. God]. But how can existing things be non-existent, that is, not described with existence, and how can this account can be accurate, and this meaning verified?

*The answer to this, providing verification, is:* the expression “existence” and “existent” is predicated equivocally (*bi-al-ishtirāk*) of this first existence, which is simple in meaning and concrete being (*al-huwiyya*), and of that existence where there is a quiddity to which existence is attributed. In the former true sense there is no existent apart from Him. As for the existent whose existence is an attribute that occurs to its quiddity through something else, for it the meaning of existence is its being connected to that Existent, its relation to Him, its togetherness and association (*iḍāfatuhu*) to that First. The former kind of oneness [of “existence” and “existent”] can be grasped intellectually for no particular being other than that One, which is the First Existent and the First Principle, and is affirmed only in His case. The existence that is attributed to caused existents and through which one says that they are existent is not the same as that self-subsistent existence, in which the meaning of the attribute and the subject of attribution, that is “existence” and “existent,” are one and

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14 That is, a contrast between “existence” and “existent” as he has just explained in the passage translated at [T14] in the chapter on essence-existence distinction.

the same. The expressions “existence” and “existent” are said of the two cases equivocally, in an extended use (*al-naql*) and by way of likening, considering priority and posteriority, the second borrowing from the first and following it.

*Collorary:* we call the first simple existence that is necessary by itself “existent” and also call His effects, whose existence is concomitant on His existence and follows upon it, “existents,” in the same way we say that each sailor, the ship, and the passenger on the ship are “moving.” It is the passenger who is “moving” primarily and in himself (*bi-al-dhāt*) in terms of the goal and aim (*al-ghāya wa-al-qaṣd*) for the sake of which there is the ship, while the sailor is for the ship. Yet what is “moving” in terms of activity and initiation (*al-fi'l wa-al-bidāya*) is the sailor, with the ship following upon his setting it in motion, while the passenger in his motion follows upon the ship’s motion. The sailor is the agent mover in himself, whereas the ship moves accidentally and the passenger moves accidentally to an accident. That which is truly a mover in itself is the sailor, so it is more appropriate to say that he is “moving,” while this is said of the ship secondarily and of the passenger thirdly. If one verifies this account, [one realizes that] the passenger is not actively moving (*ghayr mutaḥarrik*) [properly speaking].

In the same way, one says “existent” of the First Existent in the true sense, says it of His proximate effects on account of Him and secondarily, and of later effects in a still more remote way. [66] The truly existent is the First, just as the truly moving was the sailor. The last [effect in the chain of creation] is the one more remote from the [proper] application of the meaning of existence, even though it is existent, just as the passenger is more remote from the meaning of “moving”, even though he is moving, and only because he is [moving] by following, and accidentally. The First is first in Himself. Thus for Him the meaning of “existence” is truly different in suitability and appropriateness, priority and posteriority. The only existent, in the sense of “existence” said truly in this intellectually grasped way, is this One Existent. In this sense there is no existent other than Him. That meaning which is the true meaning intended by the expression “existence” is the one said of the cause. Hence the caused existent is existent through existence (*bi-wujūd*), whereas the First Existent is the true reality of existence (*ḥaqīqat al-wujūd*), and He is not existent through existence. The existence of the caused is an attribute that belongs to it (*ṣifa lahu*), namely to the caused existent. Its meaning is not the same as the existence that is the essence of the First Existent. Thus the “caused existent” is said to be existent through its existence, and “existence” is said of its existence accidentally, as

borrowing from and following upon the existence of the First. It is an existent through an existence that is dependent on [another] existence, whereas the First Existence is followed, and is both attribute and subject of attribution, that is, both existence and existent.

[T16] Al-Sāwī, *Muṣāraʿat al-Muṣāraʿa*, fol. 99v4–100v5

[*composition problem*]

*Rebuttal* of the statement of al-Shaykh al-Raʿīs Abū ʿAlī [Ibn Sīnā] made in *al-Najāt*,<sup>15</sup> when he said: there cannot be any principles (*mabādin*) for the essence of the Necessary Existent in itself, which would be brought together so that the Necessary Existent would be constituted from them. Nor can there be quantitative parts nor parts of definition, whether they are like matter and form or in another way, so as to be parts of an utterance that explains (*al-qawl al-shāriḥ*) the meaning of His name, and each of [the parts of the utterance] would refer to things in existence that essentially distinct from one another.

*Shaykh Muḥammad* [*al-Shahrastānī*] said:<sup>16</sup> I say that, as for the impossibility of the first two kinds of division [100r] for the Necessary Existent, this is admitted and there need be no argument about it. But the third kind of division requires investigation. For the parts of an explanatory utterance may be either like genus and differentia, like common and specific, or like one concept (*iʿtibār*) and another concept. Commonality and specificity would be like existence and necessity; one concept and another concept would be like “principle” and “intellect.” It is acknowledged that there is a difference between our saying “principle” and saying “intellect,” insofar as neither of the two meanings (*mafhūmayn*) enters into the other, nor does it constitute (*yuqawwimuhu*) it or necessarily follow upon it (*yalzamuhu*). After all the meaning of “principle” is “something whose existence is completed through itself, and then the existence of something else is constituted through it,” whereas when we say “intellect by itself” we mean “an existence that is essentially abstracted [100v] from matter.” If both notions (*mafhūmāni*) are predicated of a single subject, their intellectually grasped true realities do not perish. Rather [this predication] implies numerically distinct concepts (*taʿaddud al-iʿtibār*) and diversity in respect of “how” [the thing is], so that somebody could know one of them without know-

15 Cf. Avicenna, *Najāt*, 551.11–552.1.

16 Missing in Revan Koşkü MS.



ing the other and one of them could be primary (*awwaliyyan*) and the other acquired (*muktasaban*). Hence one of the kinds of multiplicity (*al-kathra*) is forced upon [Avicenna], and this is an absurd result.<sup>17</sup>

[T17] Al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāraʿa*, 30.3–31.2 [trans. Mayer, mod.]

[*composition problem in terms of genus and differentia*]

As for the rebuttal of [Avicenna's] arguments and remarks, *we say*: in your statement “we do not doubt that there is existence, and either it is necessary in itself or it is contingent in itself,” you have made a counterpart (*qasīman*) for the Necessary of Existence, namely the contingent in itself. This implies that existence includes two divisions which are equal in respect of ‘being existence,’ which thus has the status of a genus, or a concomitant tantamount to a genus. And one of the divisions is distinguished by a meaning which has the status of a differentia or is tantamount to a differentia. Thus the essence of the Necessary of Existence is compounded (*tatarakkabu*) of a genus and a differentia, or what is tantamount to them by way of concomitants. That contradicts [God's] unity and contradicts absolute self-sufficiency. For whatever is compounded from two meanings (*maʿnayaʾn*) or [31] from two concepts (*iʿtibāraʾn*), one general and one specific, is deficient, in need firstly of its constituents for its true reality to be realized, and secondly of the thing which compounds it so as to bestow existence upon its quiddity.

[T18] Al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāraʿa*, 35.11–40.4

[*rejection of the conceptualist solution and of the analogy of existence*]

As for his statement that the distinction between existence and necessity in terms of commonality and specificity is something conceptual (*iʿtibārī*) in the mind, and is not in existence, it obviously has to be admitted. For the distinction between the meanings of genera and differentiae is in the mind only, and there is no [36] “animal” in existence that would be a genus, nor any “rational” that would be a differentia. Rather both of them are mere concepts (*iʿtibārānī*) in the mind, and are not in extramental reality. How can anything universal occur

17 Cf. al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāraʿa*, 26. Al-Shahrastānī says there that each notion in the expression “Necessary Existent through Himself” must refer to the realities that are distinct in existence (*ghayr fi al-wujūd*).

in existence, given that the universal is only in the mind? And you know that “being a color” and “whiteness” are intellectually grasped concepts (*i'tibārāni 'aqliyyāni*) in the mind, and are not in extramental reality. Otherwise there would be “being color” of white in existence that would be distinct (*ghayr*) from its “whiteness.” [...]

[37.1] What I say is that the meanings (*al-mafhūmāt*) of the generic and specific expressions (*al-alfāz*) are not generic and specific in the mind due to their relation to linguistic expressions. The meanings in the mind are true (*ṣaḥīḥa*) precisely because of their correspondence (*muṭābiqatihā*) to what is outside the mind. By “correspondence” I do not mean that the universal in the mind corresponds to the universal outside in extramental reality, since there is no universal in concrete individuals. Rather the universal in the mind corresponds to each particular in extramental reality just as the common humanity in the mind corresponds to each individual, whether existent or not. Furthermore, the distinction between different species is due to essential specific differentiae, while the distinction between individuals is due to accidental concomitants.

Now that this has been verified, it is clear that common existence somehow includes the necessary and the contingent. If it includes [them] equally (*bi-al-sawīya*), it has the status of a genus and there is surely an essential differentia, so that the essence would be compounded of genus and differentia. If it not shared equally [that is, if there is analogy of existence], still this implies commonality and inclusion, so that there would surely be an essential or non-essential differentia [38] and the essence would be compounded of the general and specific. If the generality [of existence] were the same as its specificity, and its specificity were the same as generality, there would be neither generality nor specificity at all. So your statement “we do not doubt that there is existence, and it is divided into necessary or contingent” is false. False too is your positing absolute existence as a subject of metaphysics. And what you mentioned about the concomitants of existence as such in the books you wrote is false, as is your enumeration of the necessary concomitants of [existence] insofar as it is necessary, not insofar as it is existence. Do you not say that non-existence (*al-'adam*) or not-existence (*al-lā-wujūd*) are opposed to [existence] insofar as it is existence, whereas contingency is opposed to it insofar as it is necessary, yet not insofar as it is existent? Its being one is its necessary concomitant insofar as it is necessary, and likewise for the fact that it does not require anything, being sanctified above the designations of temporary origination, as well as for the fact that it is the principle of everything that comes to be.

His statement that the multiplicity of negations and relations (*al-sulūb wa-al-idāfāt*) does not entail multiplicity in essence was commonly accepted [39] by [Avicenna's] adherents, however it is neither certain (*yaqīniyya*) nor self-evident, nor is there any proof for it apart from the example of the [notions] “near” and “far”. Why does he say though that all relations behave in the same way as “near” and “far”? Even if we admit this, among relations there are some that entail the multiplicity of accidents (*al-a'rād*) and some that entail the multiplicity of conceptions (*al-i'tibārāt*). Isn't the situation where a man becomes father, when he has a son, and uncle, when his brother has a son, and agent, when an act arises from him, different from the situation of “near” and “far”? The same holds of negation, since the negation of cutting by the sword is different from the negation of cutting of the wool. Thus, there are different sorts of negations and relations. How then can one and the same judgment hold true for all of them? Rather the very distinction between relational and negational meanings entails a multiplicity of conceptions in the essence. For you say that this relational meaning of the [Necessary Existent] is not [40] negative, and this negative is not relational, and you say that this relational has to do with this aspect and that relational has to do with that aspect. All this is an intellectually grasped multiplicity of conceptions, and one understands from each of them something different from what one understands from another, and each notion refers to something different from the other, so that your saying that there is no multiplicity in the Necessary Existent by Himself through the negations and relations fails.<sup>18</sup>

[T19] Al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāra'a*, 41.1–10 [trans. Mayer, mod.]

[*defense of pure equivocity*]

These inconsistencies and problems only faced Avicenna and his associates in philosophy (*al-ḥikma*) because they made existence general, with the generality of genus or the generality of concomitants, and assumed that since they placed it among the analogical (*al-mushakkika*) and removed it from the univocal they escaped safely from these absurd consequences. However, nothing will rescue them except treating existence and every attribute and expression that they apply to Him, may He be exalted and sanctified, such as “unity,” “one,” “truth,” “good,” “intellect, intellecting, and intellected,” and so on, by way of equivocity (*bi-al-ishtirāk*), not univocity nor analogy. They

18 Cf. al-Sāwī, *Muṣāra'at al-Muṣāra'a*, fol. 101r6–103r6.

agreed indeed that the application of “unity” and “one” to Him, may He be exalted, and to things other than Him is by way of pure equivocity. The same goes for “truth” and “good,” for He is truth in the sense that He makes the truth true and He makes the false false, and is necessary in His existence in the sense that He necessitates the existence of things other than Himself, and renders them non-existent; and He is living in the sense that He gives life and death.

Contraries are litigants and variant things are legal appellants, and their judge is not numbered amongst either of his two appellants, the two litigants before him. Instead, the truth is applied to the judge in the sense that he manifests the truth and establishes it, not in the sense that he disputes with one of the two litigants such that [the judge] would sometimes be equal to him and at others at variance with him. So existence and non-existence, necessity and contingency, unity and multiplicity, knowledge and ignorance, life and death, right and wrong, good and bad, power and impotence, are contraries. Exalted be God above contraries and rivals!

[T20] Al-Sāwī, *Muṣāraʿat al-Muṣāraʿa*, fol. 119v2–121r2

[*defense of Avicenna's view that divine attributes are relational or negative*]

Those many attributes, some of which I singled out among those that he [i.e. al-Shahrastānī] uses in reference to [God],<sup>19</sup> are either relative or negative (*iḍāfiyya aw salbiyya*). None of them refers to an entity (*ma'nā*) in existence that would be additional to the essence. [...] [199v8] If he [i.e. al-Shahrastānī] accepts that these attributes are relative or negative and that essence is not rendered multiple by relation or negation, he must give up on resisting [120r] the claim established by [Avicenna's] argument in light of these attributes. For [Avicenna's] claim consisted in denying any existing multiplicity (*al-kathra al-wujūdiyya*), and there is no existing multiplicity in these attributes. Unless, that is, [al-Shahrastānī] denies one of the two premises: on the one hand that these attributes are indeed relative or negative—but there is no way for him to do this, given the convincing explanation that the proponent of this claim [i.e. Avicenna] provided in his books—or he denies the premise that relations and negations do not indicate multiplicity in existence. The proof for this,

19 MS. Kazan is corrupted in this sentence. MS. Revan Köşkü, fol. 183r.8 reads: *allatī afradtu ba'dan mim mā yaṭluquhā huwa*, and we follow this reading.

which I have promised him, is that the question is clear in the case of negation, and needs only a reminder (*tanbīh*), namely that one thing's failing to exist in another does not by itself establish anything existing (*amran wujūdīyyan*), since it is just the non-existence of that thing, for example matter's being negated from something: [120v] its failing to exist for that thing is not in itself anything that occurs as existing. This item and [supposed] "existent" is the non-existence of matter for that thing. Otherwise non-existence would be identical to existence, which is absurd. As for the case of relation, if it were something existing, then an infinite number of relations would accumulate as existing entities for one and the same thing. But it is absurd that there be an ordered infinity in existence, and so the [initial] premise, namely that relation is something existing, is likewise absurd. The proof that an infinite number of entities will arise from making relation something existing is this: if relation is an existing entity, it must be an accident that subsists in a subject. Hence it would have a relation to that subject, so that each relation would have [another] relation. Then the second-order relation would be [121r] existing too and would need subsistence in a subject, and so it too would have a relation and so on to infinity, which is absurd.

[T21] Ibn Ghaylān, *Ḥudūth al-ʿālam*, 76.10–77.21

[*existence is a mere concept, so God cannot be existence; refutation of Avicenna's argument*]

There is no existence for existence except in the mind. If this is correct, then one may refute the philosophers' (*al-falāsifa*) statement that the true reality of the Creator is existence—may He be exalted above their statements! And it becomes clear that [their statement] amounts to a denial of the Creator, not [just] a denial of worldly attributes [from God] (*tanzīh*). For if existence is a merely conceptual entity (*maʿnan iʿtibāriyyan*) that exists only in the mind, then His true reality—may He be exalted—would be existent only in the mind, and there would be no Creator in extramental reality. They claim that this is a denial of worldly attributes from Him (*tanzīh*)—may He be exalted—may God give refuge from that sort of denial of attributes!

On [the same] basis one may deal with a specious argument on which they based this claim, namely that existence is either (a) intrinsic to His true reality or (b) not. If it is intrinsic, than it is either (a<sub>1</sub>) the true reality itself, or (a<sub>2</sub>) its part. (b) It cannot be extrinsic to His true reality. For if He has an existence that is not intrinsic to His true reality, then it is either a concomitant or an acci-

dent of [the true reality]. It cannot be a concomitant, because His true reality would then be the cause of His existence and it would be prior to it in existence (*takūnu mutaqaddimatan 'alayhi bi-al-wujūd*), yet nothing is prior in existence to existence. (a2) Nor can it be a part of His true reality. For it would follow that His essence is compounded (*murakkaban*) out of two or more things. He would then be necessary through both or all of them, and would not be necessarily existent through Himself, but this is absurd. (a1) Thus, the only option remaining is that existence is identical to His true reality.

The response to this specious argument is: existence is neither intrinsic to His true reality nor extrinsic, because, if it is not anything existing (*amran wujūdīyyan*), it is neither intrinsic nor extrinsic. Rather His essence and true reality are existent through themselves and His essence is His existence and [His] existence is His essence. If someone mentally predicates of His essence an existence that is univocal for [all] existents, then this existence exists [only] in the mind and it entails no multiplicity in His essence, nor does it imply that [77] it is an accident or a concomitant of His essence.

The aforementioned argument is one of the difficulties that led the philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) into confusion. And their claim [that God has no essence besides sheer existence] gives rise to some further difficulties which they cannot get out of. Among them is that if His essence, which is existence, is existent, it follows that existence belongs to it as it does to other existents; otherwise it would be existent without existence. But then [the second-order existence] has to be either a concomitant or an accident. And there is no need for us to mention further problems. [...]

[*univocity and equivocity of existence*]

[77.8] *They may say*: the existence that is the true reality of His essence—may He be exalted—is different from univocal existence, and His existence does not exist only in the mind.

*We reply*: is His existence different from univocal existence (a) in meaning and true reality, or (b) through the fact that His existence is necessary and has no cause, His existence being neither contingent nor an effect? (b) If you have in mind a difference apart from meaning and true reality, we say: if His existence, which is His true reality, agrees in meaning with a univocal existence, it does not exist in concrete individuals and it is neither necessary nor contingent, because they are among the attributes that exist in concrete individuals. Furthermore, [even] if it were correct to describe the existence of [God] as neces-

sary, since the meaning of necessary existence is only “existent without having a cause” or “guaranteed (*muta’akkid*) existence, which perishes neither through itself nor through anything else,” neither of these two judgments implies any existence in concrete individuals corresponding to a mental notion, because both of them are negative (*naḥy*). The existence that has no existence in concrete individuals does not become existent in concrete individuals just by lacking a cause or by never perishing. For cause and perishing both belong to that which exists among concrete individuals. (a) If however you mean by saying “His existence is different from univocal existence” that it is different in meaning, we say: if you mean by the word “existence” something other than the commonsense notion (*al-ma’nā al-muta’arīf*), the difficulty is merely verbal. Still, in reality there is no difficulty at all. But we confront you with just the thing you wanted to avoid, asking whether the existence which is His essence is existent through existence or not, and so on as we have mentioned above.

[T22] Al-Mas’ūdī, *Shukūk*, 256.7–258.2

[*rejection of causation problem and univocity problem*]

As for [the fact] that, if something is necessary in itself then one cannot rationally inquire into its cause, since the necessary in itself cannot be caused: why do you say that if the necessity of existence were a necessary concomitant of this concrete individual (*al-mu’ayyin*), then it would be caused? What is impossible in the concrete individual’s essence being existent, with existence being additional to its true reality as its necessary concomitant? There would be no cause for this existence and concomitance, so that this essence would be the Necessary Existent, that is, its existence would be one that was not acquired (*musta-fād*) from any cause or reason, and there would be no cause of its existence nor for its not having a cause of its existence.

If this is rejected and the essence of the Necessary Existent is nothing more than the true reality of uncaused existence, then there would be just this true reality alone [in the Necessary Existent] and it would subsist by itself without residing in anything. However, it is evident that the true reality of existence is an accident that is not self-subsistent, like the true reality of black or white. Yet the meaning (*mafhūm*) of existence is one true reality and one true reality cannot be divided into [a case where it is] substance and [another case where it is] accident, I mean, into that which subsists [257] by itself and cannot subsist through another, and that which subsists through another and cannot subsist by itself.

*If they say:* necessary existence is different from contingent existence. Contingent existence is an accident that does not subsist by itself, whereas necessary existence is not an accident, but subsists by itself. *We say:* we have already mentioned that necessary existence has no meaning other than uncaused existence (*wujūd lā 'illa lahu*). And the expression “without a cause” is nothing really present (*amran muḥaṣṣilan thābitan*) to [necessary] existence so as to render it different from the existence which does have a cause. Furthermore, existence is a single nature, and the meaning of its true reality remains the same, namely just “being in concrete individuals.” In its essence, this [sc. “being in concrete individuals”] does not vary, whether it does or does not have a cause. Thus, you have to decide between two options. (a) Either you say that the meaning of the true reality of existence of the Necessary Existent is different from the meaning of the true reality of the existence of other existent things. (b) Or [you say] that it is not different. By this, I do not mean the difference (*al-mughāyara*) in terms of whether one requires a cause whereas the other does not, because this difference comes down not to the meaning of existence itself, but rather to something extrinsic to the true reality of its meaning. So if you say (a) that the meaning of the true reality of the existence of the Necessary Existent is different from the meaning of the true reality of the existence of other things, you have thereby denied the true reality of existence in His case, namely being among concrete individuals. You are thus forced to say that He is non-existent. For when being in concrete individuals is eliminated, non-existence comes in its place. But if you say (b) that there is no difference between the two meanings, but His existence shares the true reality of existence with the existence of other things, then you have admitted that one and the same nature is divided into what cannot subsist through another and what cannot subsist by itself. This is like saying that color [258] is divided into what subsists by itself without a subject of inherence in which it resides, and into what cannot subsist by itself. The falsehood of this statement is obvious.<sup>20</sup>

[T23] Al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-'uqūl*, vol. 1, 437.16–440.1

[*three options*]

It was already mentioned that the existence of the Necessary Existent is either equivalent (*musāwīyan*) to the existence of the contingent existent in respect

20 For the denial of causal dependency between essence and its *lāzim* cf. al-Mas'ūdī, *Shukūk*, 259.6–261.7 and Ibn Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 66.7–67.6.



of the meaning “existence” (*mafhūm al-wujūd*), or not. In the first case such an existence is either attached (*muqārinan*) to another quiddity in what holds true (*ḥaqq*) of the Necessary Existent, or not. There is no further option beyond these three.

[438] The *first option* is that existence is predicated of the necessary and contingent equivocally (*bi-ishtirāk al-ism*). This is the doctrine of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī and Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and their followers. The *second option* is that existence is predicated of the necessary and contingent univocally (*bi-al-ishtirāk al-maʿnawī*), this univocal [existence] being attached to the quiddity and distinct from it in the case of the Necessary Existent. This is the doctrine of Abū Hāshim [al-Jubbāʾī] and his followers. The *third option* is that univocal [existence] is not attached to another quiddity in what holds true of the Necessary Existent. Rather the true reality of the Necessary Existent is existence itself, and that existence is distinguished from every other existence through a negative condition (*bi-qayd salbī*), namely its being separate (*mujarradan*) from any quiddity and not attached to any of them. This is the doctrine of the philosophers (*al-falāsifa*).

### [*univocity problem*]

You should know that among the three options, the most obviously wrong is this third one. This is proven by the fact that, if existence is a single true reality in the necessary and the contingent, then existence as such (*li-mā huwa huwa*) either (a) entails that it is an accident of quiddity, or (b) entails that it is not, or (c) entails neither of these two options: neither that it is an accident nor that it is not.

(a) If the first is the case, then every existence must be an accident of quiddity, since whatever is entailed by a quiddity occurs whenever this quiddity is realized. Hence the existence of the Creator, may He be Exalted, is attached to a quiddity which is other than it. This however is different from what was supposed. [439] (b) If the second is the case, then no existence<sup>21</sup> attaches to any quiddity. Hence contingent objects are either not existent or exist through an existence that is identical to their quiddities, so that the predication of existence of contingent quiddities would be equivocal. Again, this renders the doctrine invalid. (c) If the third is the case, then existence is sometimes an accident and at other times not. [Accidentality and non-accidentality] would be among

21 We correct *al-mawjūdāt* to *al-wujūdāt*.

the concepts (*al-i'tibārāt*) that are different from the quiddity of existence, and could be realized only through a distinct reason (*li-sabab munfaṣil*). Thus the fact that existence is not an accident of any quiddity in what holds true of the Necessary Existent would have to obtain through a distinct cause, so that the existence of the Necessary Existent would be caused by a distinct cause, which is absurd.

Since these three sub-options are wrong, it is wrong to say as they did that the existence of God the exalted and the existence of contingent things share (*mushārik*) being existence, though His existence is necessarily separate from any quiddity whereas the existence of the contingent has to be attached to a quiddity.

Since then this option appears to be wrong, the first two options remain. The first was that existence is predicated of the necessary and contingent equivocally, as in the doctrine of al-Ash'arī; [440] the second that the existence of the exalted is attached to a quiddity distinct [from it], as in the doctrine of Abū Hāshim.

[T24] Al-Rāzī, *al-Risāla al-kamāliyya*, 45,10–24

[*Avicenna's indecision*]

Some people, including the Second Teacher [al-Fārābī], they say, came to the idea that the true reality of the necessary and contingent are different, and the existence of the necessary being [insofar as it is] necessary differs from the existence of the contingent insofar as it is contingent, so that the term “existence” applies to the necessary and the contingent only equivocally. This statement is in error, for several reasons. [...] [45.23] The Shaykh [Avicenna] said in the *Ishārāt* that [God's] existence is identical to His true reality, but in the *Mubāḥathāt* he hesitates. According to us, the correct [view] is that the existence of the necessary is distinct from its true reality, and we have clear demonstrative proofs for this.

[T25] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 145.6–20

[*principle problem*]

If the quiddity and true reality of the Creator, may He be Exalted, were nothing but existence with the negative condition (*bi-qayd salbī*) that it is not an acci-

dent of any quiddity, then the principle of the existence of contingent things would be this existence, either without including this negation, or including it. If the principle were this existence without including the negation, then even the vilest of existents would need to share the status of being a principle with the essence of the True—may He be praised and exalted! If however “being a principle” does include the negation, then a negation would be a part of the principle of affirmation (*al-thubūt*), which is absurd. [...]

[145.16] *If it is said*: why couldn’t this separate (*al-mujarrad*) existence entail some attribute, the principle of the contingent being existence together with this attribute? *We say*: the abovementioned dilemma would arise again [when we ask] how existence entails this attribute: the originator (*al-mu’aththir*) of the entailment would be existence, either including that negation or not.<sup>22</sup>

[T26] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 145.21–146.8

[*epistemic problem*]

The philosophers (*al-ḥukamāʾ*) agreed that the core quiddity (*kunh al-māhiyya*) of the True—may He be praised—is beyond the intellectual grasp of humans. There are intellectual demonstrations for this. If however existence is conceptually known (*maʿlūm al-taṣawwur*), whereas the true reality of the True [146]—may He be praised and exalted—is not conceptually known, then the true reality of the True—may He be praised—must be distinct from existence.

*If it is said*: why can’t that which is unknown about the true reality of the True be His negative conditions (*quyūduhu al-salbiyya*)? *We say*: this is wrong, because the negative conditions are known. That is why we can intellectually grasp that His existence is not an accident for any quiddity at all. Moreover the philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) agreed that what is known about the true reality of the True—may He be praised—are negations and relations.

[T27] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 146.9–19

[*two-place predication problem*]

It was established in the science of logic that necessity, impossibility, and contingency are modalities (*kayfiyyāt*) of the relation between predicates and sub-

<sup>22</sup> Cf. al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 298.19–300.4.

jects. For instance when we say “Human must be animal,” “human” is the subject and “animal” the predicate, while affirming “animal” of “human” is a relation which is called the copula (*al-rābiṭa*). Furthermore, necessity is ascribed to this relation, necessity being a modality (*kayfiyya*) for this relation. This is true and intelligible.

*Now that you know this, we say:* when we say “The Creator, may He be exalted, must be existent,” “The Creator” is the subject and “existent” is the predicate, while the predication (*isnād*) of “existent” of this true reality is the copula and necessity is the modality of this relation and copula. This being the case, it makes no sense to affirm the necessity of existence of God, may He be exalted, unless we say that His true reality is distinct from His existence.

[T28] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 300.5–20

[*conceivability problem*]

The sound intellect testifies that positing something which has no true reality other than pure presence in concrete individuals (*mujarrad al-ḥuṣūl fī al-a'yān*) is absurd. Rather the intellect must posit some quiddity and true reality, and then judge that it is present in concrete individuals. But the intellect can on no account accept an existent that has no quiddity or true reality apart from pure presence in concrete individuals.

A further point confirms this better. On the topic of existence the philosophers (*al-ḥukamā'*) raised the following issue: existence is being in concrete individuals itself, not that *through which* being in concrete individuals occurs. They went on at length trying to confirm and clarify this idea. Hence, if it is affirmed that existence has no true reality apart from pure presence in concrete individuals, whereas presence in concrete individuals can be realized in intellect only once the intellect has posited some quiddity, which it judges to be present in concrete individuals—if this is so, then we have our admission that existence cannot be realized without quiddity. [...] [300.17] What gives this [argument] even more strength is the fact that the philosophers (*al-ḥukamā'*) agreed that the nature of existence cannot be grasped intellectually on its own. Rather intellect cannot perceive the meaning of presence in concrete individuals until it posits something that it can judge to be present in concrete individuals.

[T29] Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 67.2–13

[*priority problem and qua-itself-solution*]

The existence of the Necessary Existent is not additional to His quiddity. For if that existence is independent from that quiddity, it is not its attribute. If however it is not independent, than it is contingent in itself requiring what affects [it] (*mu'aththir*). If the affecting is other than that quiddity, the necessary in itself is necessary through another. If however it is that quiddity, than when necessitating that existence<sup>23</sup> it is either existent or non-existent. (a) The first is absurd, because if it is existent through this existence, than one and the same existence is a condition for itself. If however it is existent thorough another [existence], than the quiddity is existent twice. Moreover, the inquiry about this existence is the same as the one about the former, which yields infinite regress. (b) If however it is not existent, that is also absurd, because if we allow that the non-existent can affect the existent, than we cannot infer from the activity (*fā'ilīyya*) of God the exalted that He exists, and also because the non-existence's affecting the existent is clearly wrong.

*Response:* Why is it impossible that the affecting is the quiddity without the condition of existence (*lā bi-sharṭ al-wujūd*)? Omitting existence on the level of the concept (*'an darajat al-i'tibār*) does not entail the occurrence of non-existence in it, since quiddity as such is neither existent, nor non-existent (*al-māhīyya min ḥaythu hīya hīya lā mawjūda wa-lā ma'dūma*). This is precisely as they say concerning the contingent, that its quiddity is receptive (*qābila*) of existence without the condition of other existence, otherwise infinite regress would obtain. It does not follow either that the object which receives existence is non-existent, otherwise it would follow that one and the same thing is both existent and non-existent at the same time.

What further indicates that the existence of the Necessary Existent is additional to His quiddity, is the fact that His existence is known, yet His quiddity is unknown, whereas the known is different from the unknown.

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23 Correcting *al-wujūb* to *al-wujūd*.

[T30] Al-Rāzī, *al-Ishāra fī 'ilm al-kalām*, 75.11–77.2

[*Avicenna's arguments in support of the Ash'arite position*]

*We say:* the existence of the Creator, the exalted, cannot be different from His true reality. Otherwise [76] a second-order [existence] that occurs to that true reality would render it [sc. the first-order existence] subsistent. Yet everything which subsists through something else is contingent in itself. Hence the existence of the Creator, the exalted, would be contingent with regard to what it is (*li-mā huwa huwa*). But everything contingent has a cause, so there would be a cause for the existence of God the exalted, and this cause would be His true reality, which is absurd. Therefore, the existence of God and His true reality are one and the same. For we have already shown that all contingents go back to it. But nothing can make anything else necessary without existing: so [if God's essence caused His existence] the existence of [His] true reality would precede His necessitation of His own existence, and then His existence would be prior to His existence.

In fact His true reality is distinct from the true reality of the contingent. For, if He shared [His true reality with the contingent], it would be contingent. Similarly, His existence is distinct from the existence of the created in all respects. When one says that the Creator shares existence with the contingent, you should know that He shares only the *name* [of existence]. [77] This is the teaching of our master Abū Ḥasan [al-Ash'arī], which arises from the rejection of [the theory of] states (*aḥwāl*). The fact that the exalted can be seen arises, in turn, from the fact that He is existent.

[T31] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 1, 307.22–309.3

[*solutions to the causation problem*]

Why can't one say that this existence [sc. God's] is independent from that quiddity? [308] [Avicenna's] answer is, "if it were independent from it, it would subsist in itself and would not be an attribute of that quiddity." *We say:* don't you claim that the form is the cause for the existence of matter, even though form inheres in matter? That which is a cause for the existence of something is independent from the effect in its existence. Hence form is independent in its existence from matter, even though form inheres in matter. So why can't one say that that existence is independent from that quiddity, and that, despite being independent from it, it inheres in it?

This idea can be confirmed in two ways. *First*, one might say that even if existence in itself is independent from that quiddity, nonetheless it [i.e. the existence] is still the cause for its being inherent in that quiddity. On this assumption, existence would inhere in quiddity despite being independent from it. Or one might say that that quiddity renders it necessary that that existence is inherent in that quiddity. Both options are possible. Neither undermines existence's being inherent in the quiddity while also being independent from it. In these two ways we allowed that the form is the cause for the existence of matter, even though the form is inherent in matter. A *second* possible response would be to concede that, on the assumption that the occurrence of that existence in that quiddity is necessary, existence would have to be dependent on that quiddity. And it would follow from existence's being dependent on the quiddity that the existence is contingent.

*We say*, however, that there is a proof against attributing contingency to existence. It amounts to saying: the contingent existent is that whose true reality is not prevented from occurring together with existence sometimes, and with non-existence at other times. But the intellect cannot apply this idea to what holds true of existence. For if we said that the quiddity of existence sometimes occurs with existence and sometimes with non-existence, it would follow that on one assumption a further existence would be attributed to [existence], and on the other assumption that non-existence would be attributed to it. All this is absurd, in the first case because it would imply the gathering of two existences for one and the same thing—and also, neither of them [309] would be more apt to be the subject of attribution while the other is the attribute, instead of the other way around. The second case entails a combination of existence and non-existence, and this is absurd. Thus it is established that it is absurd to describe existence as being contingently either existent or non-existent.

[T32] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 79v19–80r4

[*rejection of increase and diminution in existence*]

That existence does not admit of intensification and diminution (*al-ishtidād wa-al-tanaqquṣ*) in [its] true reality: for after intensification either something originates or not. If the first is the case, the one that originates now is other than the one that was present [80r] before, so it is not the intensification of one and the same existence. Rather what results from this is that another thing alongside [the first one] has originated. If the second is the case, then it does not intensify either, but rather remains as it was. The same goes for diminution.

Nonetheless someone might still imagine intensification and diminution, the reason for which will be mentioned—if God wills—in the chapter on motion.

[T33] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 118.13–16

[*analogy of existence accepted*]

Existence is unequally predicated of what falls under it, since the necessary is more appropriate in terms of existence than the contingent, and among contingent things substance is more appropriate in terms of existence than accident. Yet nothing that is predicated of what falls under it unequally is a genus for what falls under it, because there cannot be any disparity (*al-tafāwut*) in the quiddity or its constituents.

[T34] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 130.4–10

[*the problem of two aspects*]

*One might say on their behalf* that, if His existence were an effect of His quiddity and His quiddity were the agent cause for that existence, it would follow that something simple is both passive and active (*qābilan wa-fā'ilan*), but this is absurd.

*Response:* all this is shown to be false by the [case] of the necessary concomitants of quiddity. For quiddities entail them and are the subjects described by them. Moreover, their proof is invalid on their own principles, [since they hold] that God the exalted knows the objects of knowledge. For according to them, knowledge comes down to the presence of the form of that which is intellectually grasped in the one who does the grasping. Hence, the intellectual grasp of [the objects of knowledge] entails the presence of their forms in His essence. Therefore, His essence both receives such forms and is their agent [cause]. In any case, we will demonstrate later that one and the same thing can be both receptive and efficient.

[T35] Al-Suhrawardī, *Lamaḥāt*, 220.18–221.3

[*Avicenna's argument accepted*]

Nor is [existence] among the accidents that are necessitated by the quiddity itself, like the angles of triangle. For cause precedes effect in existence, and



if the quiddity were in itself the cause of existence, then it would have an existence before existence, [221] which is absurd. Hence, the existence of the necessary existent is always identical to its quiddity. As for the bodies and their accidents, their existence is distinct from their quiddity, so that they are contingent and require a preponderator (*murajjih*). Furthermore, if the Necessary Existent is pure existence, then there is nothing necessary other than Him, given that one of them would have to be existence plus something additional in order that they might be distinguished, but then it would be the effect of the distinguishing feature.<sup>24</sup>

[T36] Al-Suhrawardī, *Talwihāt*, 204.14–206.9

[*Avicenna's argument rejected*]

In other books [cf. T35], we pursued the path of certain great [thinkers], holding that the existence of the Necessary Existent cannot be other than His quiddity. For the quiddity can be the cause of some of its own attributes just as triangle is for its angles. However, it cannot be the cause of its own existence [205] such that it would exist before existence, and the existence that would be the attribute of the quiddity would not be necessary, since it is clear that everything accidental is contingent. Thus anything whose existence is distinct from its quiddity is contingent.

*Criticism:* this is sheer dialectic (*iqnā'ī*). For one can say that in the same way, the existence that is predicated of quiddities is accidental. The existence of everything accidental is posterior to the existence of quiddity, and likewise the attribute (*al-ṣifa*). Hence, the quiddity has to be existent before existence, but this is absurd. The adjudication (*al-qusṭās*) has established that existence is not additional to the existent in concrete individuals, so that both foundations of the argument are destroyed.

[*contingency of individuation argument*]

*I say, as from the throne:* if one distinguishes His existence from His quiddity in the mind, then nothing of the quiddity will ever exist, so long as its existence is impossible in virtue of itself (*li-'aynihi*). But if something of it does come to exist, then [the following problem will arise:] any universal has other particular instances that are grasped in the mind, and that are not ruled out as impossible

24 Cf. *Mashārī'*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, 389.15–390.15, rejected by al-Suhrawardī afterwards.

by their quiddity but only by some hindrance (*li-māni'*), and they will be contingent and form an infinite set. You have learned that whenever there arise particulars that belong to a universal, there still remains some contingency. Hence, if what arises is the Necessary Existent, and it has an existence beyond [its] quiddity, and if [the quiddity] is taken as a universal, then the existence of other particular instances for it would be intrinsically (*li-dhātihā*) possible. For if [their] existence were excluded due to the quiddity, then what was posited as necessary would be impossible, which is absurd. The height of absurdity (*ghāya mā*) would be the case where they are excluded by something other than the quiddity itself, so that [the Necessary Existent] would become contingent in itself.

*Question:* Or perhaps it is necessary [that He be this particular]? *Response:* The particular instances of a universal quiddity, in addition to those that have occurred, are contingent, as stated before. Hence they are not necessary. If something is contingent with respect to its quiddity, then the Necessary Existent becomes contingent too in respect of His quiddity, which is absurd. Thus, if there is something necessary in existence, then it possesses no quiddity [206] apart from existence such that the mind could distinguish between two items [i.e. quiddity and existence]. It is pure, unadulterated existence (*al-wujūd al-ṣarf al-baḥt*), with no admixture of specificity or commonality. Everything other than it is its shining (*lam'a*) or the shining of its shining. [The Necessary Existent] is distinguished only by Its perfection (*bi-kamālihi*), since all of it is existence and it is all existence (*kullahu al-wujūd wa-kull al-wujūd*).

*Question:* Universal existence [also] includes contingent particulars; doesn't it [also] need to be completed in the way just described? *Answer:* Whenever you postulate pure existence, than which nothing is more complete, you see upon reflection that it is just itself (*fa-huwa huwa*), since there is no distinguishing feature in a pure thing. What has an admixture to [pure existence] is not necessary in the aforementioned way, since that which the mind can analyze into existence and quiddity is not among the things that rules out anything accidental, and that excludes any participation (*al-sharika*). How else given that [the composite of essence and existence] necessarily fall under one of the categories (*al-maqūlāt*)? These are inspired teachings of the throne. Thus the Necessary Existent is not rendered multiple in any way, and there are not two necessary existents.

[T37] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 390.16–392.15

[*Avicenna's argument rejected and the contingency of individuation argument*]

This [Avicenna's argument] goes through only if it is established that existence is additional to quiddities and has a form in concrete individuals (*ṣūra fī al-ʿāyān*), in order that [Avicenna's] argument may be based on [this premise]: "If [existence] is additional, it is not necessary [391] in itself. Otherwise, it would not subsist through another. But quiddity cannot entail its own existence." However, if one takes existence as something merely conceptual (*amran i'tibārīyyan*), then it has no concrete being (*huwīyya*) in concrete individuals, nor any cause among them. Then this way of arguing will not stand. Furthermore, concerning his statement that if an accidental (*ʿaraḍī*) existence were necessary in itself, it would not come to (*ʿaraḍa*) the quiddity, one may ask "why did you say that it would not come to the quiddity?" He will respond, "because if it comes to it, it will subsist through (*bi-*) the quiddity," and what he would mean by "it will subsist through the quiddity" is that existence would exist in the quiddity. And we would even acknowledge that the existence would be subsistent, that is, would exist, which would lead to an impossible infinite regress.

But if someone wants to make it more plausible that this way of arguing stands, maybe they ought to say that if existence is additional to the quiddity, then the quiddity would fall under a category, according to the classification given above. [...] [391.12] All the accidental categories have subsistence through another, while substances require specifying factors (*al-mukhaṣṣāt*), or at least some of them do.<sup>25</sup> But if contingency is rightly applied to what falls under a given genus, it applies to that genus in its nature. For if the nature of the genus excluded contingency, then given that whatever is impossible for the nature of genus is impossible for the nature of the species [that falls under the genus], it could not be conceived as applying contingently to that species. This is so even if one takes the nature of genus to be merely conceptual. For [392] insofar as "being a stone" is impossible for animality—even for someone who takes the latter to be merely conceptual—it is impossible for the species that fall under it. So what is impossible for the genus is also considered so for the species, and likewise for the necessary, if [the necessity] is by the nature [of the genus] and

25 In other words, both accidents and substances depend on something else and are thus contingent.

does not occur [to the genus] because it is in the mind. If the accidental categories and the species that fall under the category of substance depend on other things, then contingency must belong to at least some [species] that fall under substance and to all the remaining categories. Hence, if the Necessary Existent fell under any category, some sort of contingency in respect of genus would befall Him, so that He would not be necessary but would rather be contingent, which is absurd. Given however that He does not fall under any category, He cannot have both a quiddity and existence. Rather His existence must be His quiddity. This is not so for any bodies or forms of bodies (*hayātuhā*). For their existence is additional to the quiddity, even if it is taken as merely conceptual. Therefore, these quiddities, which are additional to existence (whether or not existence is merely conceptual), are contingent due to the contingency that applies to the genus of any category, at least according to the classification mentioned above, so that they require a preponderator (*murajjih*). As for the quiddity of the Necessary Existent, according to the approach famously adopted by the Peripatetics, it is existence. What is an attribute (whether conceptual or not) in other things is in His case His quiddity in Himself. In no other case apart from Him is existence identical to concrete being (*wujūd 'ayn al-huwiyya*), no matter whether existence is merely conceptual or not. According to the people who have a theory of merely conceptual attributes (*aṣḥāb al-ʿtibārāt*), however, there is no existence in concrete individuals other than Him.<sup>26</sup>

[T38] Al-Suhrawardī, *Alwāḥ*, 59.15–60.4

[*all attributes are relational or negational; the problem of two aspects*]

The Necessary Existent is described by no attribute. For no attribute can be necessarily existent, since it subsists in its subject of inherence. Furthermore, how could the attribute and its possessor both be necessarily existent, given that as we have shown, there are no two necessary beings in existence. Nor can He possess an attribute that is contingent, since it would require a preponderator. If His essence were its preponderator, than it would in itself be both active and passive (*yafʿalu wa-yaqbalu*), and would thus have two aspects, activity and passivity. Yet the aspect of being active is distinct from the aspect

26 Cf. al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 251.14. Al-Shahrazūrī introduces this new argument by accepting al-Rāzī's priority solution to Avicenna's argument.

of [60] being passive. [For instance] if one of us washes his head, then he performs an act by virtue of himself and the motion of his hand, while his head is passive. However, from what has preceded it is ruled out that the Necessary Existent is composed out of two aspects, passive and active. Hence He possesses no attribute, apart from negations like holiness, unity and being peace. For these attributes come down to the negation of the attributes of deficiency and incompleteness and to the negation of division. He also possesses relative attributes like being a principle and being Creator.<sup>27</sup>

[T39] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 393.16–394.8

[*analysis of Avicenna's position in Mubāḥathāt*]

We have to explain the statement of the one among the recent thinkers (*mutaʾakhhirīn*) that the quiddity of the First is transcendent above (*aʿlā*) the necessity of existence. Rather it is a quiddity with no name (*lā ism lahā*). If [that quiddity] is grasped intellectually, then the fact that it is necessarily existent necessarily follows it in the intellect. The meaning of his statement that “it is transcendent above the necessity of existence [394] but this follows it necessarily in the intellect” is that we cannot conceptualize the necessity of existence without composition (*tarkīb*), so that existence would have one meaning (*mafḥūm*) and necessity another. As for existence, whose necessity is the perfection of its existence, it is simple and we have no name to refer to anything that might suit its perfection and simplicity. This composition that arises in respect of the meaning of this composite notion [sc. “necessary existent”] is just one of its necessary concomitants. If the interpretation [of what he said] is not like this, he will have no argument for the unity of the necessary existent, neither the one based on the fact that if something’s being (*annīyya*) is identical to its quiddity, then it cannot be enumerated; nor this other argument that has just been mentioned. For if one makes necessity of existence a necessary concomitant, and there can be participation in it, while it is an intellectually grasped necessary concomitant, then one and the same necessary concomitant can belong to different objects, as explained above, especially if it is an intellectually grasped concomitant.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 399–401.

[T40] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 393.3–7

[*perfection pertains to God without a cause*]

One should not posit, between two necessary existents that agree in quiddity, a difference in respect of perfection and deficiency (*li-kamāliyya wa-naqṣ*), in the way mentioned above. For if perfection belongs to a common quiddity without any cause, still the occurrence of deficiency must require a cause, which would be classified as efficient, receptive, or individuating. Hence there is no necessary existent other than the perfect, and everything else is contingent.

[T41] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 396.11–397.10

[*God's existence is distinct from other kinds of existence in terms of perfection*]

The doubt whose solution led them into confusion is this: the Necessary Existent shares the meaning of existence with the existence of [contingent] quiddities. Hence there must be something which distinguishes Him from the existence [of these quiddities], but then His essence is an effect of the distinguishing factor. The issue here is simple, once one understands the guidelines set out above. But they give an incorrect response, saying that His necessity is only a negation (*salb*) of His having a cause, so that His being necessary existent just means that He has no cause. For one thing, the fact that He has no cause is in fact consequent (*tābiʿ*) upon the necessity of existence rather than being the same as the necessity of existence. Furthermore, one can ask: insofar as the existence of the Necessary Existent shares the meaning of existence with the existence of quiddities, is the fact that He has no cause due to the meaning of existence in itself, or due to something additional [397] to it? If it is due to the meaning of existence in itself, then no existence should have a cause! If however it is due to something additional to it (no matter whether this additional feature is “necessity” or anything else), then multiplicity necessarily arises in His essence, which is absurd.

The only answer here, and the only way to solve the doubt at all, is to acknowledge that there can be a distinction between two things in respect of perfection and deficiency (*al-kamāliyya wa-al-naqṣ*), as mentioned above. In concrete individuals, perfection is nothing additional to the thing. The meaning of the necessity of existence is nothing but the perfection of existence. Even someone who says that existence does not differ in terms of strength

and weakness (*bi-al-shadda wa-al-duf*), but only in one of three ways—in terms of necessity and contingency, priority and posteriority, or being cause and being effect—still cannot deny what we have mentioned, namely the inevitability of a difference (*ikhtilāf*) in respect of perfection, through which we established the distinction between things. Indeed, if he investigates the meaning of necessity in the Necessary Existent this is precisely what he will find.<sup>28</sup>

[T42] Al-Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, 187.9–15

[*God is the “living”; rejection of Avicenna’s position based on the doubt argument*]

*Question:* did not you say that He is the pure existence itself?

*Answer:* by this we meant only “the existent for itself” (*mawjūd ‘inda nafsihi*), which is “the living” (*al-ḥayy*), since this is among the proper characteristics of the “living.” Nothing exists for the “non-living,” whether it is itself or something else. Unless something is “living” there is no realization of the meaning of “existence itself.”

As for existence being a concrete quiddity (*māhiyyatan ‘ayniyyatan*), this is not so. When you understand what a concrete quiddity of existence (*‘ayn māhiyyat al-wujūd*) is, you remain in doubt whether it is realized as concrete and exists; hence, an additional existence belongs to it, and this yields an infinite regress. To know that something is a necessary existent does not amount to the same thing as knowing that it is existence itself.<sup>29</sup>

28 Cf. al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 65–66. Just like al-Suhrawardī, al-Rāzī says that the negational character of necessity is not a good solution to the univocity problem.

29 Cf. al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 46 (T38 in the Essence-Existence Distinction Chapter). Al-Shahrazūrī, *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 182–183 and al-Shūrāzī in [T69] in the present chapter apparently interpret that passage as saying the same as [T42]. The expression “existent for itself” might be connected to al-Suhrawardī’s understanding of self-awareness and its connection to the ontology of light; see further [T27] from the chapter on Self-Knowledge in the Logic and Epistemology volume. Al-Shahrazūrī draws this connection in [T65] in the present chapter.

[T43] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 256.4–257.19

[*causation problem and the problem of two aspects*]

This argument [sc. Avicenna's argument for the identity of God's essence and existence] is weak, because one can ask: what is there to prevent the existence which is additional to the quiddity to be necessary in itself?

*You say:* because [existence] would stand in need of the quiddity, and that which stands in need of something else is not necessary in itself. We however do not concede that the necessary in itself stands in need of nothing else. Rather it is that which stands in no need of a productive efficient cause (*mu'aththir fā'il*). Nothing is to prevent its necessitating itself (*mūjiban li-nafsihi*), even if it does stand in need of something receptive (*al-qābil*). For in the case of that which is an efficient cause and necessitates through itself, its productivity (*ta'thīr*) may depend on something receptive—regardless of whether it is to entail itself or something extrinsic to it through itself. This is like what the philosopher (*al-faylasūf*) says about the Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fay'āl*): through itself it necessitates substantial forms and humans souls, even though what it entails through itself depends on the existence of receptive matter.

Even if we concede that it must be contingent, we have not yet conceded that the true reality of the contingent is standing in need of something productive. Rather the contingent is that which stands in need of something else. Needing something else is more general than needing something productive, since the former might obtain in the case of needing a receptive essence (*al-dhāt al-qābila*).

Even if we concede that there must be something productive, how do you rule out that it is [God's] essence itself that produces [His existence]? *They say* that it would be both receptive and active. True, but why do you rule this out in the case of something that is simple and one? For “reception” and “act” fall under relations or associations, and nothing prevents various relations being ascribed to something simple and one. For instance one may describe unity (*al-waḥda*), which is the principle of the number, as half of two, as a third of three, as a fourth of four, etc.

[257] *One could ask the philosopher (al-faylasūf) in particular:* why can't being receptive and being active be understood as two attributes (*bi-i'tibār ṣifāt*) that would imply neither numerical plurality or multiplicity in the essence of the



simple and one, nor any infinite regress? Just as you say about the coming forth (*ṣudūr*) of multiplicity from the first effect of the essence of the Necessary Existent. For you say that what comes forth from it is an intellect, a soul, and a body, namely the body of the outmost sphere. [These come forth] only through the numerically plural conceptual features (*bi-ītibārāt*), since according to you only one can come forth from one. If however these conceptual features are existing attributes and truly real, then you have abandoned your doctrine that only one comes forth from one. If on the other hand these conceptual features are not existing attributes, they will imply neither multiplicity nor an infinite regress. Why then cannot one and the same essence be both receptive and active, as with these conceptual features?

**[priority problem]**

As for the second aspect of the proof that essence cannot be productive, there is no way out of it. Otherwise, one would allow that a [causal] chain of temporally originated things goes back to something that is neither existent nor non-existent (*laysa bi-mawjūd wa-lā ma'dūm*). Hence the statement that the Necessary Existent is existent<sup>30</sup> would be invalid.

The only way to deal with this argument is to limit the discussion to the aforementioned difficulties.

*If someone says:* just as you denied that essence can produce existence, because of the problem that existence would stand in need of another existence, so you [must] deny that essence receives existence, because that which receives existence must be existent, so here too another existence would be needed for its existence. *We say:* we do not concede the inference from “the efficient cause of existence must exist” to “that which receives existence exists.” Rather, the condition is that it be metaphysically real (*thābit*), where “metaphysically real” is more general than “existent.”<sup>31</sup>

30 Reading *bi-wujūd* instead of *bi-wujūb* with MS Berlin, Petermann 1.133, fol. 26r26.

31 Afterwards al-Āmidī rejects the Rāzian arguments against Avicenna’s theory by arguing that they all fail if one accepts the equivocity of existence. For al-Āmidī’s rare endorsement of the equivocity of existence see previous chapters.

[T44] Bābā Afḍal, *Arḍ nāma*, 225.20–21

[*The Knower is identical to His existence*]

By the notion “the knower through himself” we mean something whose being knowledgeable, essence, and its existence are all one and the same.<sup>32</sup>

[T45] Bābā Afḍal, *Letter to Shams al-Dīn*, 705.5–18 [trans. Chittick, mod.]

[*all intellect is one*]

However, the soul that has an intellect in act (*‘āqil bi-fi‘l*) is one, and there is no plurality and multiplicity within it. If we posit a hundred or more particular, human individuals, all of whom are called “knowing”—in the sense that each of them can be considered to have a complete portion of the intelligibles of certainty (*yaqīnī*), not the objects of imagination and estimation—then these individuals will all be one through intellect, no matter how many they may be. No difference or distinction can enter into that which is certain.

Since we are no longer in any doubt that the intellect’s unity is not nullified by the existence of a multiplicity of individuals, surely the nullification of the individuals’ multiplicity cannot necessitate the nullification of the intellect’s unity. The fact that the intellect is one, even though those with intellect can be many, has been explained in the treatise *The Rungs (Madārij)*.

[*intellect is existence*]

The intellect has no essence distinct from its existence, such that we might say, “the intellect is an existent.” Rather, the intellect is itself existence. When we say that the intellect is an existent, this is like saying “existence is an existent.” In addition, intellect’s existence is its knowing and awareness. This is not like the existence of human individuals, for the existence of human individuals is not the individuals’ knowing. Rather, human individuals may exist without knowing, but intellect’s existence is knowing itself.

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32 For the context of this passage see [8T50].

[T46] Babā Afḍal, *Taqrīrat*, 645.10–14, [trans. Chittick, mod.]

[*God as universal essence*]

The “universal meaning (*ma’nā-yi kullī*)” encompasses all meanings, the “universal essence (*dhāt-i kullī*)” encompasses all essences, and the “universal reality (*ḥaqīqat-i kullī*)” encompasses all realities. So the meanings, essences, and realities are the meaning, essence, and reality of existence, and this is existence through self (*wujūd bi-khūd*). The knower of this existence is none other than the universal meaning, essence, and reality. It knows through itself, its existence is from its own existence, and its existence is its knowledge of self.

[T47] Al-Abharī, *Tanzīl al-afkār*, fol. 34r12–fol. 35v9

[*an original argument against equating God with existence*]

The existence of the Necessary in itself is additional to Its quiddity too. For otherwise, the Necessary in itself would be either (a) a concrete existence (*al-wujūd al-mu’ayyin*), that is, a species and a specificity (*al-khāṣṣiyya*), or (b) existence *qua* existence. (a) The first is wrong. For concrete existence is compounded out of univocal existence and concretization (*al-ta’ayyun*). Hence it would be composite (*murakkab*) and would require parts that are not identical to it; but that which requires something else is contingent in itself. (b) The second is wrong too. For if existence were necessary in itself, it would not in itself require anything else. If this were the case, then it would not inhere in the quiddity of blackness and whiteness. [...]

[*accepting al-Rāzī’s solution to the priority problem*]

[34r24] *If someone says*: if existence were additional to the quiddity, then existence would somehow require something else, otherwise it would not inhere in it. Yet in this case it would be contingent in itself and there would be a cause for it. If this cause is identical to the quiddity, it follows that it is prior to existence in existence, but if the cause is not identical to it, then the Necessary in itself would require something else in its existence, which is absurd. *We say*: we do not concede the implication that [God’s quiddity] has to be prior in existence (*bi-al-wujūd*). Why can’t it be prior in its essence (*bi-dhātihā*), but not in existence? Existence would then be necessary through [that] essence. *If someone says*: the cause that produces (*mu’aththira*) existence must be prior in existence, *we say*: we do not admit this. Rather, the cause that produces the existence of something that does not exist in itself but rather through another, has to be prior to it in existence. But as for the quiddity the existence of which pertains

to it in itself, and which entails existence, why cannot it be prior to existence, [34v] but not [prior] in existence?

[*solution to al-Rāzī's arguments against the equivalence of God and existence*]

The famous doctrine of the philosophers (*al-ḥukamā'*) is that the existence of the Necessary in itself is identical to His quiddity (despite the participation of all existents in existence), and is different from other [cases of existence] by a negative condition (*bi-qayd salbī*), namely "not belonging (*'arīḍ*) to any quiddity." The Imām [al-Rāzī]—may God have mercy upon him—disproved this in several ways. [...]

[34v.32] *As for the first* [the univocity problem, see T23], we do not concede that if existence entails neither feature [that is, in itself needs neither to be separate from quiddity nor to be together with quiddity], then one of the two features is attached to it through a cause. This would follow only if "being separate" (*al-tajarrud*) required a cause. For being separate just means not belonging (*'adam al-'urūḍ*) to quiddity, [35r] and this happens in His case simply because there is no cause for belonging. [...]

[35r.2] *As for the third* [the two-place prediction problem, see T27] *we say*: we do not concede that the necessity of existence is the modality (*kayfiyya*) of the relation between existence and His essence. Rather the necessity of existence is identical to His essence in our theory.

*As for the fourth* [the principle problem, see T25], *we say*: why could the productive [principle] not be existence under the condition that it does not belong to quiddity (*bi-sharṭ 'adam 'urūḍihi li-al-māhiyya*), so that this "not [belonging]" would be a part of the complete cause (*al-'illa al-tāmma*)? There is nothing to prevent this.

*As for the fifth* [another version of the univocity problem], *we say*: we do not concede that if the existence [of the Necessary] were self-sufficient in itself, then each existence would share with the Necessary Existent the fact that it is self-sufficient. For it is possible that existence is self-sufficient in itself, even though a concrete existence is in need of something, where this need arises due to the concrete insofar as it is concrete, not due to the nature of existence.

What invalidates their doctrine is the argument that we mentioned: that if the Necessary in itself were concrete, then given that the concrete is compoun-

ded out of what is shared and what is different, It would be compounded and [therefore] contingent in itself.

[*against modulation of existence*]

Some of them claimed that existence is subject to intensification and diminution (*al-ishtidād wa-al-tanaqquṣ*) and that the Necessary in itself is the utmost (*aqwā*) among existents. This is wrong, since [in that case] the Necessary in itself would be compounded out of a univocal measure (*al-qadr al-mushtarak*) along with some addition (*al-ziyāda*), so that He would be compounded out of two things and would therefore be contingent in Himself ...

[*against the Suhrawardian theory that God is existence*]

[35r.32] As for [al-Suhrawardī's] claim that the existence shared in common is among the merely intellectually grasped concepts, whereas the existence of the Necessary in itself is identical to His quiddity [see T37], this entails that common existence does not belong to that one existent which is necessary in itself. It follows then [35v] that there is an instance of existence that is not included within the nature of existence, which is absurd. [...]

[35v.4] [As for his argument from the contingency of particular instances, see T37], *we say*: we do not concede to this, because the relation [of the divine quiddity] to [one] extramental [particular] can be more appropriate (*awlā*) [than to imaginable particulars]. Even if we accept that [God's essence] cannot be analyzed in the mind into quiddity and existence, still, why does it follow from this that His existence is identical to His quiddity? For His existence might be additional to His quiddity, even though the mind cannot analyze it into quiddity and existence, because [God's] quiddity cannot be grasped intellectually at all. On what basis do you deny this?<sup>33</sup>

33 The same argument can be found in al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*, 249.17–250.2. Al-Shahrazūrī mentions this argument in *Shajara*, vol. 3, 253–254 with the wording closer to the *Kashf*. Still, in the *Kashf*, al-Abharī accepts Avicenna's doctrine that God's essence is identical to His existence, albeit he goes through the same arguments and counter arguments as in the *Tanzīl*. Unlike in the *Tanzīl* and in the *Kashf*, in the *Bayān al-asrār*, fol. 41v1–10, al-Abharī accepts both the Suhrawardian and Avicenna's argument. Avicenna's argument is also accepted in *Zubdat al-asrār*, fol. 106v1–15 and *Maṭālīʿ*, fol. 131r7–15.

[T48] Al-Abharī, *Bayān al-asrār*, fol. 41v10–42r1

[*analogy of existence as a solution to the univocity problem*]

Existence applies to the necessary and contingent analogically (*bi-al-tashkīk*). For it is predicated of both of them in the sense that it is opposed to non-existence, and non-existence always means the same thing, so that what opposes it always means the same thing too. Otherwise it would be a false dichotomy when we say that a thing is either existent or non-existent. Hence, if [existence] is predicated with this single meaning, yet belongs above all (*awlā*) to the necessary, it applies analogically.

*If you say:* if existence were predicated of both of them with one and the same meaning, then if common existence (*al-wujūd al-āmm*) needs to be specified as necessary existence, all existence would be like this; if on the other hand it does not need to be thus specified, the necessity of existence would be due to a cause. *We say:* common existence does not obtain in concrete individuals, only in the mind.

*If you say:* if being separate (*al-tajarrud*) [from any quiddity] is necessary for the nature of existence, then every existence is separate. Otherwise, the fact that the necessary existent is separate is due to an extrinsic cause, which is absurd. *We say:* no, rather it is separate due to the specificity of the essence of existence (*khuṣūṣiyyat dhāt al-wujūd*) through which it differs from other existences. Besides, existence is a concept (*i'tibār*) different from the concept [42r] of the existent, precisely as the concept of non-existence is different from the concept of the non-existent.

[T49] Al-Abharī, *Zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq*, fol. 151r11–152r11

[*Does God's quiddity have a concrete being distinct from existence?*]

The existence of everything that is necessary in itself is identical to its quiddity. For if its existence were distinct from its quiddity, the existence either must either be (a) realized through the quiddity, or (b) through something else. (a) If it is realized through the quiddity, then a distinct concrete being (*ḥuwiyya*) would belong to the quiddity, through which the existence would be necessitated. But every concrete being through which something else is necessitated possesses a distinct existence. Hence the quiddity would possess an existence distinct from its own existence, which is a contradiction. (b) If however [existence] is realized through something other than [the quiddity], than the neces-

sary in itself would require something else for its existence, which is absurd. Hence, the existence of what is necessary in itself is identical to its quiddity. [...]

*[solving the univocity problem [T23] with the difference between two kinds of existence]*

[151v.4] *We say:* we do not concede that if both options [i.e. being separate from any quiddity or not being separate] were through a cause, then the separation of the Necessary Existent would be through something else. Rather it is the separation of existence [from any quiddity] that is through something else, so that existence as such requires something else in order to be separated [from any quiddity]. However, the fact that existence requires something else in order to be separated does not imply that the Necessary Existent requires something else in order to be separated. For that which is necessary in itself is not just existence [as such]. Rather it is just a concrete individual existence (*wujūd muʿayyin shakhṣī*), which is distinct from existence itself. Thus, [in the case of God] the separation of the existence itself [from any quiddity] would be due to this concrete existence; there is nothing to prevent this.

*If it is said:* if the existence of what is necessary in itself were identical to the quiddity, but existence is connected to contingent quiddities, then the quiddity of what is necessary in itself would be connected to the contingent, which is a contradiction. *We say:* we do not concede that the quiddity of what is necessary in itself would be connected to the contingent, because its quiddity is the separate existence (*al-wujūd al-mujarrad*), and that existence by itself (*wujūd bi-ʿaynihi*) is not connected to the contingent quiddities. Rather the existence that is connected to the contingent quiddities is specific existences (*wujūdāt khāṣṣiyya*). They are distinct from separate existence while sharing existence itself (*nafs al-wujūd*) with it, in the sense that whenever you take the quiddity [of existence] as such [from] whichever individual instance of existence, the result in the mind will be one and the same thing.

*[God's perfect existence; cf. T41]*

*If it is said:* if the existence of what is necessary in itself were identical to its quiddity, then the necessary in itself would share its quiddity with other existences and differ from them through a specifying feature (*bi-khuṣūṣiyya*). But that which gives rise to sharing is distinct from that which gives rise to differentiation, so that a composition in its quiddity would necessarily follow. Hence, the necessary in itself would be necessary through another. *We say:*

we do not concede that any composition in its essence follows. It would follow only if existence did not accept [152r] perfection and weakness (*qābīlan li-al-kamāl wa-al-ḍuʿf*). If it does accept perfection and weakness, then [the necessary existence] differs from another through the fact that it is the most perfect existence. The most perfect existence does not include any specific feature whose quiddity would be different from the quiddity of existence. Hence, existence is predicated of a more perfect and a weaker, even though, when the intellect grasps existence as such, the result in the intellect is just one thing.

*If it is said:* the fact that the necessary in itself is distinct from another cannot obtain due to perfection of existence, for if it were distinct from another through the perfection of existence, the perfection of existence would be either through existence itself or through something else. If it were through existence itself, then every existence would be perfect. If it were through something else, then the necessary in itself would require something else for the perfection of existence. *We say:* we do not concede that if [the perfection] were through something else, then the Necessary in itself would require something else for the perfection of existence. Rather existence itself (*naḥs al-wujūd*) requires something else for its perfection, namely the non-existence of any reason for weakness (*ʿadam sabab al-ḍuʿf*). For a weaker existence arises through some reason, whereas the existence that has no reason is the most perfect of existences.<sup>34</sup>

[T50] Al-Abharī, *Muntahā al-afkār*, 282.3–20

[*rejection of Rāzī's solution to the priority problem*]

If [the cause of God's existence] were that quiddity itself, then it would be prior in existence to existence, since a cause that produces something (*al-ʿilla al-muʾaththira fī al-shayʿ*) must be prior to it in existence. [...] [282.5] *If it is said:* we do not concede that a cause that produces something must be prior in existence to [its] product (*athar*). Why can't that quiddity produce existence insofar as it is quiddity (*min ḥaythu ḥiya hiya*)? [...] [282.19] *We say:* because existence comes forth (*yaṣḍīru*) from that which makes existence (*al-mūjid li-al-wujūd*), and that from which existence comes forth is doubtless existent before its existence [sc. the existence it produces].

34 See al-Abharī, *Talkhīṣ al-ḥaqāʾiq*, fol. 90r1–90v10 for the same theory.



[T51] Al-Abharī, *Muntahā al-afkār*, 283.5–11

[*another solution to the univocity problem*]

We do not concede that there must be some [further] reason (*sabab*) for that through which there is a distinction [between the existence of God and other cases of existence]. This would only be so if it were something existing (*amran wujūdiyyan*). But in fact necessary existence differs from any other existence through a negative condition (*bi-qayd salbī*), namely “its not being accidental to any quiddity.” [...]

[283.9] [The univocity problem would only follow] if [God] were “existence itself.” But in fact the necessary in itself is an individual existence, with the condition (*al-wujūd al-shakhṣī al-muqayyad*) that it is not accidental for any quiddity.<sup>35</sup>

[T52] Al-Ṭūsī, *Maṣārī‘ al-muṣārī‘*, 63.12–16

[*analogy as a solution to the composition problem in al-Shahrastānī*]

The upshot of [al-Shahrastānī’s] argument is that existence entails a composition of its divisions, [even] on the assumption that it is analogical (*mush-akkikan*). [...] [63.14] The truth is that, if he understood the meaning of analogy, he would realize that the referents of analogical [predication] fall under the class of accidents. Hence, when an [analogical term] includes divisions, it does not imply the composition of [its] divisions, because simple things need not be composed just on the basis that they share accidents.

[T53] Al-Ṭūsī, *Maṣārī‘ al-muṣārī‘*, 70.11–71.2

[*two kinds of existence*]

According to Avicenna, the shared existence that is divided into necessary and contingent is not identical to the existence of the necessary in itself. Yet the

35 In *Risāla fī ‘ilm al-kalām*, 66–70, al-Abharī defends an Ash‘arite position that God’s essence is identical to his existence based on Avicenna’s arguments, and solves the univocity problem through a general rejection of extramental existence and univocity of existence. Thus, he manages to conflate the Ash‘arite and the Avicennian positions, just like al-Rāzī in [T30].

former [i.e. shared existence] is an accident of the latter [i.e. necessary existence] and of other existents as well. The shared [existence] that applies to the necessary does differ from that which applies to other things, because unlike in other cases, it is not accidental for [His] quiddity. In saying that “the common existence and the specific are one and the same in the reality of God,” Avicenna intends that the portion (*ḥiṣṣa*) of shared [existence] that is specific to Him differs from the nature of existence only through the privation (*‘adam*) of being accidental to another. Its common [aspect], that is, the nature of existence as such insofar as the notion of commonality can apply<sup>36</sup> to it, and the portion specific to the necessary, are one and the same in reality, because what is added to that nature is something non-existent (*amr ‘adamī*).

[T54] Al-Ṭūsī, *Maṣāri‘ al-muṣāri‘*, 71.15–72.2

[*against multiplicity in relational attributes*]

He [sc. al-Shahrastānī] thinks that if different respects (*ḥaythiyyāt*) pertain to a single thing due to its relation to different things that are distinct from it, then this thing is comprised from many [items]. This is wrong. [72] For a point has aspects (*jihāt*) in relation to the whole infinite number of points that are other than it in existence. Yet it does not follow from this that it contains an infinite number of items.

[T55] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 97.19–98.6

[*response to T29: receiving and producing existence are not parallel*]

This objection [i.e. that there is a parallel between two kinds of priority of essence over existence: as producing and as receiving] is a teaching of [al-Rāzī’s] which he also proclaims in his other books. [Indeed] there is no doubt that quiddity as such (*min ḥaythu hiya hiya*) is neither existent nor non-existent. Indeed, it as such can even be the cause of an attribute intellectually ascribed to it, as the quiddity of two is the cause of being even. Yet, as for the notion that it as such is the cause of existence or of an existent, this is absurd. For the intellect clearly judges [98] that the cause of existence has to be exist-

36 We read *yalhaqqahu* with the ms “B” from the apparatus instead of *yatahaqqqa* printed in the edition.

ent. But it is not like this in the case of receiving existence (*qubūl al-wujūd*). For what receives existence cannot be existent. Otherwise that which is [already] arising for it would arise for it [again].<sup>37</sup>

[*against knowability argument*]

As for his argument to the effect that [God's] existence is additional to His quiddity on the basis that His existence is known, whereas His quiddity is unknown, this is incorrect. For the existence that is known is the one that He shares with other things. It is something grasped intellectually that applies to Him and to other things analogically. By contrast, that which is unknown is His extramental existence which is specific for Him, subsists by itself, and cannot be predicated of anything else.

[T56] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 3, 572.2–575.11

[*the modulation theory*]

The origin of this mistake is [al-Rāzī's] ignorance of what it means to apply analogically. Applying to different things analogically is not applying to them equivocally (*bi-al-ishtirāk al-lafẓī*), the way the word 'ayn applies to the different things it can mean. Rather it applies to all with a single meaning. Nor however does it apply in an equal way, as "human" to its individual instances. Rather it applies differently, either in terms of priority and posteriority, as "continuous" is applied to magnitude and to body possessing magnitude; or in terms of appropriateness (*awlāwīyya*) and the lack thereof, as "one" is applied to what cannot be divided at all, and to that which can be divided in some respect apart from the respect in which it is one; or in terms of intensity and weakness (*al-shadda wa-al-ḍu'f*), as "whiteness" applies to snow and ivory.

Existence encompasses all these kinds of difference. For it applies to cause and effect in terms of priority and posteriority; to substance and accident in terms of appropriateness and the lack thereof; and to that which is stable (*qārr*) and that which is not (for instance blackness or motion) in terms of intensity and weakness. Furthermore it applies to the necessary and the contingent in all three ways.

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37 Note that here al-Ṭūsī at least accepts that the essence as such can receive existence. In [T50] from the Essence-Existence chapter, al-Ṭūsī denies even that.

When one and the same meaning is unequally predicated of different things, it cannot be the quiddity or a part of the quiddity of these things. For the quiddity cannot be different, nor can its parts. Rather [a analogical term] is an extrinsic accident, but may be either concomitant or separable. For instance, whiteness is unequally predicated of white snow and white ivory. Yet it is neither quiddity for them nor a part of their quiddities. Rather it is an extrinsic necessary concomitant. For there are a potentially infinite number of species of a color between its two opposed extremes, which have no [573] distinct name, though to each group [of shades] applies one name analogically, like whiteness, redness, and blackness. This meaning applies to that group not as a constituent (*muqawwim*) but as a necessary concomitant (*lāzim*).

In the same way existence applies to the existence of the necessary and to the existence of contingent things which differ in their concrete being (*al-huwiyyāt*), and for which no distinct names obtain. I do not say [that existence applies analogically] to the contingent quiddities, but rather to the existences of those quiddities, that is, it applies to them too as an extrinsic necessary concomitant and not as a constituent.

Once this is ascertained (*taqarrara*), all of the difficulties of that excellent man [i.e. al-Rāzī] are already solved. For existence applies to what falls under it with the same meaning, as the philosophers taught. This does not however imply the equality the subjects of concomitance, namely the existence of the Necessary and the existences of the contingent, in their true reality. For different true realities can share the same necessary concomitant.

*[solving al-Rāzī's arguments against the identification of God with existence]*

Now, I will present the various problems he posed, and indicate the ways of solving them. [...]

[574.1] [On the univocity problem; see [T23] above] the answer is what you have learned above. Consider light, which is shared and applies unequally to different lights, given that sunlight enables a [formerly] unseeing person to see, unlike other lights; or similarly heat, which is common yet in some cases entails aptness for life or aptness for a change of specific form, unlike other cases of heat. This is because the subjects that have fire and heat as concomitants are different in quiddity.

Moreover even if existence were [predicated] equally, as he thinks, then [the existence] that is in need of a cause to entail its accidental occurrence would be contingent. The necessary would need no [cause] because the non-existence

of its accidental occurrence (*‘adam al-‘urūd*) does not require the existence of a cause. Rather it is enough that no cause exists for its being accidental, even though the [response] that we mentioned first is the right one. [...]

[574.15] [On the knowability argument; see [T26] above] the answer is that the true reality that is not perceived by the intellect is His specific existence (*wujūd-duhu al-khāṣṣ*), which is different in concrete being (*huwiyya*) from other existences, and is the first principle for everything. The perceived existence is [575] absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), which is the necessary concomitant of that existence as well as of other contingent beings, and which is conceptualized primarily. Perceiving the necessary concomitant does not entail that one perceives the true reality of the subject of concomitance. Otherwise, [just] from the perception of existence there would follow perception of all specific existences. The fact that His true reality, may He be exalted, is not perceived, whereas His existence is perceived, simply entails that the true reality of Him, the exalted, is different from the absolute existence which is perceived, not different from His specific existence. [...]

[575.10] [On the principle argument; see T25] the answer is the true reality of the necessary is not general existence. Rather, it is solely His specific existence that is different from other existences, by subsisting in itself.<sup>38</sup>

[T57] Al-Ṭūsī, *Murāsala bayna al-Ṭūsī wa-al-Qūnawī*, 99.8–15

[*only existence as a mental concept is applicable to both God and contingents*]

There is a great mystery here: the existence whose concept (*mafhūm*) applies to the necessary and the contingent in an analogous way is [merely] something intellectual (*amr ‘aqli*). For existence in concrete individuals cannot be applied

38 Al-Ḥillī follows this analysis everywhere in his treatises almost literally, although he keeps insisting additionally that *wujūd muṭlaq* is merely conceptual. The latter idea is equally in line with al-Ṭūsī’s position, as we saw in the chapter on Essence and Existence, even though al-Ṭūsī does not mention it in this context. Al-Kātibī, *Munaṣṣaṣ fī sharḥ al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 94v offers an account of *tashkīk* which is more or less a quotation from al-Ṭūsī. Ibid., fol. 94v15 and al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 47.9 mention that the theory of *tashkīk* goes back to Bahmanyār. Although Bahmanyār never speaks of *tashkīk* in this context, it is true that he is the one who explicates the idea that *wujūd muṭlaq* exists only in the mind (and hence must be clearly distinguished from *wujūd khāṣṣ*) and develops the notion of *tashkīk* quite clearly (see [2T6] and [3T5]).

to things that share it. This [notion in the intellect] is said of both necessary existence, which subsists through itself and is not an accident of any quiddity, and of other existents. If its existence is considered in the intellect, it is contingent, not necessary. The “name” existence applies to it and to the necessary in the same way as “Zayd” applies to [Zayd’s] concrete existence and his name. This existence is a notion grasped by the intellect (*amr ma‘qūl*), whereas necessary existence is unknowable in its core (*al-kunh*) and true reality. The only thing that one can intellectually grasp concerning it is intelligible existence, negatively qualified [as not belonging to any quiddity].

[T58] Al-Kātibī, *Ḥikmat al-‘ayn*, 4.16–5.2

[*against Rāzī’s priority solution*]

To whoever says it cannot be that [God’s quiddity] must be prior [to God’s existence] in existence, because the quiddity as such (*min haythu hiya hiya*) can be the cause [of existence], regardless of [the quiddity’s] existence or non-existence, just like that which receives [existence], *we say*: one necessarily knows the premise just mentioned, [5] because that which renders (*al-mufid*) existence cannot help possessing existence, unlike that which receives [existence], because it acquires existence, and that which acquires (*al-mustafid*) existence cannot [already] be existent.

[T59] Al-Urmawī, *Maṭālī‘*, fol. 3r8–12

[*on the univocity problem*]

*Reminder*: whoever claims that existence is univocal for the necessary and contingent is committed either to accept that the separation (*tajarrud*) of the existence of the Necessary [from any quiddity] is due to a distinct cause, or to accept that not every cause is prior to its effect in existence. The Shaykh avoided this in the *Metaphysics* of the *Shifā’* [by claiming] that existence is not univocal. Hence it would not follow that separation [from any quiddity] would be due to a distinct cause. Rather this existence [i.e. of God] would rule out any attachment [to a quiddity] due to its quiddity.<sup>39</sup>

39 Otherwise, al-Urmawī accepts al-Rāzī’s solution that an essence as such can be prior to its existence.

[T60] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Tabwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 169.21–175.4

[*rejection of Avicenna's argument, with huwiyya terminology*]

[Al-Suhrawardī] mentions in the book [*al-Tabwīḥāt*] that there is some criticism of [Avicenna's] method of arguing [that God's essence is existence only] and that it is sheer dialectic. He declares it false in two ways, first by way of refutation, showing that [Avicenna] himself accepts the conclusion (*mu'āraḍa*), then by way of solution.

*Refutation:* What you mentioned regarding the impossibility of the priority of quiddity over existence [170] in existence is inescapable, regardless whether the existence of the Necessary is the same as His quiddity or not. For the existence of contingent things, like bodies, is additional to their quiddities, so their existence is predicated of their quiddities. The existence predicated of quiddities is accidental for them, as you know, and the existence of everything accidental is posterior to the existence of the quiddity for which this existence is accidental. The same goes for every attribute, whether it is predicated or not, since either way its existence is posterior to the existence of the subject of attribution. Hence, if the attribute were existence itself, it would follow that another existence should belong to the subject of attribution. For insofar as the extramental quiddity is the subject of inherence for existence in concrete individuals, there are two [different] concrete beings (*huwiyyatāni*) for existence and quiddity, with one inhering in the other. Thus one concrete being would need the other, and the needed concrete being would have to be prior in existence to the concrete being that inheres [in it], so that the quiddity would have an existence other than the existence inhering [in it]. On this basis it is clear that one was right in refuting [Avicenna] with the contingent quiddity that is receptive of existence. For quiddity must be existent before its existence in each case. But if this does not follow in the case of the contingent, neither does it in the case of the necessary.

*Solution:* It has been already established in the treatment of mental concepts that existence is not additional to existent quiddity in concrete individuals. Rather it is added to it in the mind alone, and is only a mental concept. If it has no concrete being (*huwiyya 'ayniyya*), it has neither a cause, nor a quiddity, nor anything else. Rather, that which is from a cause is the quiddities themselves. Nor is any other existence prior to it in the case of the contingent quiddities which receive it. Thus are destroyed both of the foundations that were laid down concerning the necessary and contingent, since neither of the arguments about them succeed, assuming, that is, that existence is merely conceptual, as has been shown. [...]

*[al-Suhrawardī's argument from the contingency of the instantiation of a universal]*

[171.19] After [al-Suhrawardī] declared this method false he mentioned a further approach, which he himself devised, to establish that the mind cannot analyze (*yufaṣṣiluhu*) the Necessary Existent into quiddity and existence, as it can do with contingent quiddities. For when they occur in the intellect, the intellect can analyze them into quiddity and general existence (*wujūd 'āmm*), whereas the quiddity of the Necessary in the intellect is nothing but [172] individualized existence (*al-wujūd al-mushakkhkaṣ*). Thereby he proves that He is not rendered multiple in any way, and that there is no second for Him in existence.

The upshot of this approach is, in brief, that if the Necessary Existent were divided in the mind into quiddity and existence, then He would have a universal quiddity. Yet no universal quiddity in itself excludes that an infinite number of particulars might belong to it. So the existence of none of these particulars would be necessary due to the quiddity itself, since preponderation without preponderator is impossible. If however none of them were necessarily existent due to the quiddity itself, the Necessary in itself would not be necessary due to His quiddity itself, and this is wrong. [...]

*[God's existence is distinct through its perfection]*

[173.21] In saying "He is distinguished only through His perfection" [al-Suhrawardī] means that the necessary existence is distinguished from the existences [174] of contingent things through perfection and deficiency. For [His existence] needs no quiddity through which it might subsist, due to its perfection, whereas [contingent existence] cannot do without this, due to its deficiency. Furthermore [His existence] is not merely conceptual, due to its perfection, whereas [the contingent] is merely conceptual, due to its deficiency. Hence the only existence that is not merely conceptual is His existence. [...]

[174.17] He answered this objection [that a universal quiddity of existence can have indefinitely many particulars] by saying that one cannot conceptualize in the mind [many] particulars for necessary existence, whereas one can do this with the quiddity which is accidentally joined to existence in the mind. As for the first point, this is because the particulars of a certain quiddity become multiple only due to the addition of accidental features, which entail multiplicity (*takaththur*) in [those particulars], or due to their differing in respect of



perfection and deficiency. But no distinguishing factor (*mumayyiz*) that might entail a multiplicity of particulars can be added to necessary existence, which is pure existence, unmixed with anything else. Nor is there anything more complete (*atamm*) than it, so that one of them could be distinguished from the other in respect of perfection and deficiency. For [the Necessary Existent] is at the highest rank of perfection, whereas what is more deficient than it is [175] contingent, not necessary, existence (the same goes for whatever is mixed with something else). Hence, if one supposes that there is another particular falling under the species of necessary existence and investigates this supposed particular, one will discover that it is not a second alongside the first. Rather it is the same as the first, given the lack of any distinguishing factor in pure existence, than which nothing is more perfect. The same holds for everything pure in which there is no differentiation in respect of strength and weakness.

[T61] Bar Hebraeus, *Hēwath hekhmthā*, *Met*, 124.4–125.8

[*analogy of existence as a solution to the univocity problem*]

Existence (*ītūtā*) is the same as the quiddity of the Necessary Existent (*manyūth ālšāy ithūthā*) ...

[124.17] [Against the univocity argument] *we say*: the fact that the existence of the exalted is not conjoined (*lā naqqīpūt ithūtheh*) to a quiddity that is different from it is something privative (*laytūthnīthā*, cf. Arabic ‘*adamī*’), and it requires no cause.

[125.2] Existence is predicated of the Necessary Existent and of other existents, which are contingent, not univocally (*‘amm shmāhā’īth*) like a genus, but rather in the “ambiguous” way of an analogical name (*ba-znnā purrāthākhāyā da-shqīqāth šmmā*). For [existence] applies to the Necessary in a primary and more appropriate way, but to the contingent in a posterior and borrowed way. [...]

[125.7] [Al-Rāzī’s priority theory is false], because neither of the two [i.e. neither necessary nor contingent existents] receive the meaning (*sukkālā*) of [existence] as such (*hū kadh hū*), but rather only in respect of actual existence (*ba-znnā d-shkhīhūtā su’rnāyāthā*), as we said.

[T62] Bar Hebraeus, *Mnārath qudhshē*, vol. 3, 114.13–116.8

[*establishing the Christian Trinity in Avicennian terms*]

*We say:* the demonstration that has established the unity of the Creator for us does not suffice to establish that He is wise and living. Otherwise, we would have needed no other demonstrations to establish that He is wise and living. From this it is known that the consideration (*sukhleḥ*, cf. Arabic *i'tibār*) of the nature (*kyāna*) of the Necessary Existent (*ālṣāy ithūthā*) is different from [His] consideration as the wise and the living. [...]

[114.19] We say that the wisdom and the life of the Creator are either substances (*ūsīyā*) or accidents (*gedhshā*). They cannot be accidents. Otherwise the Creator would be a subject for accidents, and changes and passions would apply to Him, which is absurd. So it remains only that they are substances. Nor can they be universal substances. Otherwise wisdom would be predicated of the Creator in the same way as it is predicated of creatures, and life likewise. So it remains only that they are particular substances. From this it is clear that they are nothing else but hypostases (*qnūmā*). Therefore, the Wisdom of the Creator is a subsistent hypostasis, and His Life likewise. As the consideration of the one who is wise and living is different from wisdom and life, as we said, also He is a subsistent hypostasis. Wisdom and Life belong to Him. Hence we are luminously illuminated by the shining of the Trinity of hypostases of one divine nature. [...]

[116.5] We say that there are among divine names the essential (*ūsīyāyē*), the relational (*aḥyānyāyē*), and the negative (*apūfāṭikhāyē*). The essential ones are Wisdom and Life, since they are not said in relation to anything else, nor do they signify the negation of anything. That is why they are truly declared as subsistent hypostases by Christians, and they [really] are.

[T63] Bar Hebraeus, *Mnārath qudhshē*, vol. 3, 134.26–136.9; 140.6–8

[*compatibility of the Necessary Existent with the Trinity*]

*They say:* if more than one hypostasis belonged to the nature of the Necessary Existent, then these hypostases would be either (a) necessary or (b) contingent. (a) The first option is incorrect, for two reasons. (a1) First, it has been established by way of a demonstration that there is only one Necessary Existent. (a2) Second, these hypostases are subsistent in virtue of the [divine] nature, and everything that is made subsistent by something else is contingent, not neces-

sary. (b) But neither is the second option correct, since contingent hypostases need a cause. There is no other cause than the nature of the Necessary Existent itself. It is however impossible that it be the cause of the existence of the hypostases by itself, since it would simultaneously be productive (*ma'bdhānā*) in itself and receptive (*mqabhlānā*) in itself, which is absurd. For that which receives must be different from that which produces it. Therefore, as those hypostases of which you speak are neither necessary nor contingent, they do not exist at all, since whatever exists is either necessary or contingent. [...]

[140.6] *We say*: it would only be impossible for one and the same thing to be both productive and receptive if two effects could not be from one and the same cause. But this is not impossible.

[T64] Al-Shahrazūri, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 254.10–255.6

[*statement of Illuminationist position*]

The Necessary Existent is pure existence, without any admixture, whether specific or common. Anything other than Him has its existence from Him, whether this be through an intermediary or not. Everything that is rendered multiple in the ranks (*marātib*) of existents by descending (*bi-al-nuzūl*) grows weaker in their existence. It is like the sun, from which a powerful light falls upon what receives it, and then [the light] grows weaker with the multiplication of ranks of things that resist it, until ending at a rank that lacks light entirely. In the same way the ranks of existence descending from the Necessary end at a rank from which no existence can arise. The Necessary Existent differs from the other, contingent existents in terms of perfection and deficiency (*bi-al-kamāl wa-al-naqṣ*) due to His utter perfection and the power of His luminosity and splendor. Perfection belongs to His essence, whereas deficiency belongs to things other than Him. Due to His perfection, His existence needs no quiddity in which it might subsist. By contrast, the existence of the contingent quiddities cannot do without quiddities in which they subsist, due to their deficiency. Since Necessary Existence in the power of its perfection is identical to its essence (*ayn dhātihi*), it cannot be something merely conceptual. By contrast, the existence of the contingent quiddities is something merely conceptual, which does not exist in concrete individuals, due to their deficiency and weakness. That is why the [255] Necessary Existent is wholly existence (*kull al-wujūd*), by contrast to the contingent quiddities, which the intellect can analyze into quiddity and existence, so that they are not wholly existence. Rather they are distinct from existence. The existence that is brought into relation with them is not the same as their essence as it was in the case of the Necessary, nor is it intrinsic for them.

Rather it is something that accidentally occurs to them from the perspective of the mind (*bi-ḥasab i'tibār al-dhihn*). There is no perfect existence other than Him—may His affairs be exalted and His names sanctified! Other contingent existents that exist through the emanation of His existence and perfection are deficient in their rank of existence.<sup>40</sup>

[T65] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 257.15–259.1

[*God as the "living"; commentary on T42*]

A subtle point, which the divine master [i.e. al-Suhrawardī]—may God sanctify his soul—mentioned in the treatise *al-Muqāwwamāt* and which is among [his] gems of insight (*naḥā'is*) is the following. Since a proof has been given that existence is something conceptual, one cannot say that the Necessary Existence is existence itself, because it would be conceptual. But how can one conceive that the Essence of essences and the Principle of existence is a merely conceptual thing?

*Then he said:* by “existence” we mean “the existent for itself (*‘inda naḥsihi*),” which is the “living.” For the fact that something is existent for itself can be grounded only in life. “The existent for itself” is [258] proper only to the “living.” For nothing—neither it itself nor anything else—can exist for anything that is not “living.” If He were not “living” the meaning of “existence itself” would not be realized. The meaning of “living” is different from the meaning of “existence” which is merely conceptual. The substance of the perceiving (*jawhar al-mudrik*) must be none other than life. For what is not living need not be noticed, even when there is perception of “I-ness” (*idrāk al-anāniyya*). From this perspective we see that existence cannot be a concrete quiddity. If the Necessary in itself were the same as existence, then, since we would understand existence to be the concrete instantiation of its quiddity, but might still doubt whether it has any realized existence among concrete individuals, there would have to be a further existence added to it, and in the same way a [third order] existence for the [second order] one, and so on without limit, which is absurd.

*Let it not be said:* if the Necessary in itself possessed any meaning other than existence [like “living”], then it would fall under the category of substance,

<sup>40</sup> See also Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 173.9–20.

and then it would have to have particulars, which would imply its contingency, as you learned [above]. *For we say*: substancehood just means the perfection of the quiddity's subsistence, and it too is merely conceptual. Participation in merely conceptual things does not undermine the meaning of oneness (*mafḥūm al-wahda*), since participation in such things is inevitable. Just as “not being a stone” is necessary for animality, but not the same as its meaning, so “not having matter” is necessary for the living being that has perception of itself (*al-ḥayy al-mudrik li-dhātihī*), without being the same as its meaning. The living being that has perception is manifest to itself (*al-ẓāhir li-naḥsihī*) and is the separate, holy luminosity (*al-nūriyya al-mujarrada al-muqaddisa*). Furthermore, it necessarily follows for it that it does not subsist in another, unlike the luminosity of bodies. For they are not manifest to themselves, but to something else. The light that subsists in bodies is an image (*mithāl*) of the Light which subsists through itself and is its shadow (*ẓill*): the weak belongs to the weak, whereas the powerful and belongs to the powerful. The light of the sun, which overpowers (*al-qāhir*) sight, albeit it is the strongest among the bodily lights and [259] the most powerful, still is the image of the highest Necessary Light which overpowers all the intellectual lights, and is its shadow.

[T66] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 252.6–254.6

[*argument from the contingency of particulars; reply to the final argument of T47*]

None of the infinite number of particulars can be necessitated to exist by the universal quiddity itself, because all of them relate (*nisba*) to it in the same way. [...]

[253.22] [Al-Abharī, arguing against al-Suhrawardī] *said*: we deny that the relation you have mentioned is the same. This would only follow if [254] the relation of the quiddity to the extramental individual were the same as its relation to intellectually grasped particulars. On what basis do you say this? It should be proved.<sup>41</sup>

[Al-Shahrazūrī:] the proof is that if a definition, a description, a name, or any other notion is true of a universal true reality, regardless whether it is a species

41 The argument is derived from al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, 249.17–250.2.

or something else, than it is true of each of its particular instances, regardless whether they are extramental or grasped intellectually. If the true reality were not one and the same, this would not be true.

[T67] Al-Tustarī, *Muḥākamāt*, fol. 66v2–8

[*the continuous motion of existence; commentary on T56*]

In the case of colors, a name applies with varying intensity in meaning between two opposite extremities (*ṭarafay*)—like blackness and whiteness which share a generic meaning, namely color, in this example—by way of a continuous extension (*imtidādan ittiṣāliyyan*). For one can move from the extremity (*ḡāya*) of whiteness towards the final extremity of blackness with a continuous motion (*ḥarakatan muttaṣilatan*), just like being at [various] locations while walking. Within this range one can find a potentially infinite number of species of color, because there are an infinite number of places to stop (*maqāṭi'*) along this continuous distance.

Being existent is such a generic meaning. One can find an infinite number of other species [of existence] between the two extremes, though they do not have distinct names at each stop, and each of them would be subsumed under that genus [of existence]. Hence, every species among them bears a relation of being closer to, or more remote from, each of the extremities, while to each group applies a motion [directed] from it in terms of this meaning, whose name applies in analogical way, relative to its proximity or distance from each of the limits (*al-ḥaddayn*).

[T68] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥā'if*, 81.13–82.6

[*being is extrinsic to God's essence*]

The truth is that His existence, may He be exalted, is additional [to His essence], since His existence is either “being” (*kawn*) as it is in other existents, or something else. If it were “being” and if separateness were understood to be together with [being] in the true reality of the Necessary, then the Necessary would be composite—otherwise [being] would be multiplied and attached to all existents, standing in need of them. If on the other hand [82] it is something else, then being must either occur (*ḥāṣilan*) here [in God], or not. If it does not occur, then neither will existence occur, because existence without being is absurd. If however [being] does occur [in God], it will not be intrinsic,

due to the impossibility of composition. Thus it is an attribute additional to the quiddity of the Necessary.<sup>42</sup>

[T69] Al-Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ Hikmat al-ishrāq*, 183.11–18

[*discussing T38 from the chapter on Essence and Existence*]

Thereby [al-Suhrawardī] proves that there is nothing in existence such that its existence and quiddity is identical, like the Necessary in itself according to the teaching of the Peripatetics. For once we have understood His meaning as “that in which existence and quiddity are identical”, we may still doubt whether or not it has existence, that is, extramental occurrence. Given that, *we say*: the existence that is put in doubt must be either identical to the known concept or distinct from it. Both options fail. If it is identical to it, then what is doubted is identical to what is known, which is obviously wrong, hence [al-Suhrawardī] does not [bother to] object to it. If however it is distinct from it, then there is an existence additional to the existence of the First, which is [His] quiddity itself, and this yields an infinite regress, as was explained at another occasion, and this is absurd. Precisely this follows from positing something whose existence is identical to its quiddity. Hence there is nothing like this in existence.

[T70] Al-Ḥillī, *Nihāyat al-marām*, vol. 1, 36.13–21

[*doubts about analogical terms*]

*I say that this calls for further inquiry*: if the name “whiteness” designates the meaning of most [white], or least [white], or middling [white], then it can only refer to the other two in a metaphorical way. If however it belongs to the meaning that is shared by [all three], then it is univocal, and the difference between these particular cases is no greater than the difference between the species that fall under a single genus.

*Let it not be said*: “heat” is a name designating a quality from which proceed certain sensible effects; so when that quality has a stronger effect in certain particular cases, then it is more appropriately called by the name “heat.” The

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42 On al-Samarqandī’s understanding of *wujūd* (existence) as *kawn* (being) see the Univocity and Equivocity of Existence chapter, [T33].

same goes for whiteness and the like. This is just what it means to be an analogical term. *For we say*: the same would also apply to "substance."

In general, I have arguments against analogical terms, but this is not the place to go into it in detail.



## God's Knowledge

In this sourcebook we are seeing many points of disagreement between Avicenna and later thinkers, especially those affiliated with Ash'arite *kalām*. This chapter by contrast deals with a point of agreement, over the claim that God is “knowing” or “knowledgeable,” as stated in the Qur’ān.<sup>1</sup> Notoriously, Avicenna took an unusual stance on the *manner* of God’s knowledge, holding that He knows things other than Himself “only in a universal way,” setting off a debate we will document in the next chapter. But it was not at all contentious for him to say that God is in some sense a knower. Instead, the controversy charted in this chapter concerns the question of how to *prove* the agreed conclusion that God does, indeed, know about the things that He causes to exist. For some critics, this was something that Avicenna had failed to establish properly; for others, it was something not even consistent with other principles of his philosophy.

It was alleged that if, as Avicenna held, all other things proceed from God automatically or necessarily, rather than by a gratuitous act of will, then God would not know about other things, any more than the fire or the sun know about the heat and light that they radiate [T2, T4]. Avicenna would reply that since He knows Himself, God should know all the necessary “concomitants (*lawāzīm*)” of His essence, and since He necessitates all things, all things will be such concomitants.<sup>2</sup> Al-Āmidī and al-Shahrazūrī reject that line of thought. In general, knowledge of an essence does not automatically imply knowledge of the concomitants of that essence. These are a matter for further discovery [T31] and would constitute separate acts of knowledge rather than being subsumed within God’s self-knowledge [T46]. But if one accepts, against Avicenna, that God does voluntarily form intentions concerning the things He makes, this could give us an immediate argument for God’s having knowledge [T2, T18]. After all, how can He form an intention to create something if He has no knowledge of it? Al-Abharī brings all this together at [T34], affirming God’s knowledgeable and voluntary creation and denying that He exerts causation in a necessary or unknowing way.

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1 He is called *‘alīm*, as at 10:65, 24:59, 76:30, and there are many verses that use the corresponding verb, like 6:3.

2 See further the discussion on whether knowing something involves knowing all its necessary concomitants in the next chapter, on God’s Knowledge of Particulars.

The argument from intention would work for anything God chooses to create, but it was further added that God chose wisely, that His productions are “precise (*muḥkam*).” The mere observation that things in the world are perfectly designed is proof that their Maker is knowing [T3]. Al-Shahrastānī thinks this inference will go through for the *mutakallimūn*, with their commitment to God’s voluntary causation, and not for the necessitarian Avicenna [T9], but al-Ṭūsī responds that it will work for Avicenna just as well [T40]. Of course it is no surprise to see the design argument showing up in our period, in this case used to prove God’s knowledge, not His existence.<sup>3</sup> More interesting is the range of possible objections to this argument, five of which are catalogued by al-Rāzī [T13–17]. It is worth lingering over a couple of these. One worry is that the Maker could have gotten just as good results by having true belief or an “opinion” (*ẓann*), as by having knowledge [T16], distantly echoing a point made long before by Plato with his example of having mere true belief about the right way to Larissa (*Meno* 97a–b). Ibn al-Malāḥimī already raises this problem and responds that “opinions” mean that something *seems* to us to be the case. In other words, they presuppose some basic acquaintance with the thing itself in order that it can seem to us to be this or that. Therefore, creation cannot be a product of an opinion because there is nothing out there yet about which we can have that opinion [T5]. A second interesting worry is that animals produce apparently “precise” things without having knowledge. Examples involving insects are chosen, presumably because they so obviously lack knowledge [T13]. This objection can be defeated by saying that it is in fact God who makes the things apparently produced by animals [T33, T36], giving us a zoological version of the occasionalism we more usually see in *kalām* discussions of human action.

We have yet to consider Avicenna’s most striking argument for God’s possession of knowledge. This might even be called the signature Avicennian argument on this topic, though it was prefigured in al-Fārābī.<sup>4</sup> The reasoning goes like this. God, as a Necessary Existent, is completely separate from matter: He cannot have a material cause, since a necessarily existing thing has no causes. But an immaterial entity will inevitably engage in intellection, and the result of intellection is knowledge [T1]. Remarkably, Avicenna seems to think that intellectual activity is a kind of default, in the sense that it will belong to any essence that is not “hindered” from thinking intellectually, the hindrance in

3 For design arguments for His existence, see our chapter on Proofs of God’s Existence.

4 See further P. Adamson, “Avicenna and his Commentators on Self-Intellective Substances,” in D.N. Hasse and A. Bertolacci (eds), *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna’s Metaphysics* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 97–122.

question being matter. Already al-Ghazālī questions the cogency of this reasoning [T2], as do a number of later authors [T30]. One objection is that there could be other hindrances apart from matter, which have not yet been ruled out [T2, T11]. Another is that “immaterial” is surely not just interchangeable with “intellective,” since the two terms differ in meaning, as shown by the fact that you can realize that something is immaterial without realizing it is an intellect [T12, T24]. This seems a weak response to Avicenna, since he claimed not that intellectivity is part of the meaning of immateriality, but a distinct notion *implied* by it.

A more persuasive criticism is that immateriality is a negative notion, so it cannot be the basis for so positive a characterization as “knowledgeable” or “intellective.” To establish knowledge, one needs to show not just that an essence is “not hindered” from knowing (or that things are “not hidden” from it) but that it actually does bear the relation of knowing to objects of knowledge [T27]. As al-Suhrawardī nicely notes, we can find other cases of things that have the negative trait of lacking matter, without also having the positive trait of knowledge, for instance matter itself, since matter has no further matter [T28]. Presumably the response to this counterexample would be that matter has no essence, so that Avicenna’s argument would not apply to it [T41].

But there is more to be said here, because Avicenna’s argument was also developed into a kind of “modal” proof for God’s knowledge. This might be compared to the proof of God’s existence proposed by the contemporary philosopher of religion Alvin Plantinga.<sup>5</sup> In the proof for God’s knowledge, al-Sāwī first specified Avicenna’s point that an immaterial being is “not hindered” from intellectually grasping things, by saying that such a being has a “possible connection” to other things [T9, T12]. If God however *may* know other things, and nothing hinders Him from doing so, then He in fact *will* know those other things. As al-Rāzī puts it, “everything that is possible for the essence of God, exalted, belongs to Him necessarily” [T22], a premise also identified explicitly by al-Ṭūsī at [T39]. Therefore God has the relevant connection to objects of knowledge actually, not only possibly; therefore He knows them. To this we can add that He must know *all* possible objects of knowledge, since none of the objects is more fitting to be known by Him than any other [T19].

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5 Roughly, this argument involves moving from the possible existence of God to His actual existence. If God is possible, argues Plantinga, then He exists in some possible world. But God is a necessary being, which is to say that if He exists at all, He exists in every possible world, including this one. See on this A. Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: 1974).

This is a fascinating argument, which receives the attention it deserved from al-Rāzī and subsequent thinkers. A problem frequently raised against it is that the possible connection is only mental, not real, so the argument makes an unjustified transition from the mere conceivability of God's intellection of other forms to its real possibility [T23, T26, T35, T43–44]. Another is that God, despite being necessary of existence, does have contingent *relations* [T32]. Here we might recall that for anyone but an Avicennian necessitarian, God's creating a given thing is supposed to be contingently willed by Him. On this view it does seem to make sense that God's being related to a thing as its creator, and its knower, is not necessary for Him. Then too, if God is ultimately unknowable for us, how can we conceive of Him as standing in a relation or connection to possible objects of His knowledge [T10, T11, T22]? Al-Ṭūsī replies that we do know God, not as form in our intellect, but the concrete being in reality [T38]. Bar Hebraeus adds a point that we saw in the discussion of God's essence: there is actually nothing more to God's essence than His existence. And we know His existence through the proofs for God's existence [T42].

A final question is whether God's maximal perfection points us in the direction of seeing Him as a knower, or rather towards thinking that He transcends knowledge. The former inference is often drawn: being perfect, God must have the perfect-making trait of knowledge [T25]. A version of the argument from perfection found in al-Shahrazūrī combines it with Avicenna's argument from immateriality: since God is *most* free of matter, He must be *most* knowing [T47]. Notice that al-Shahrazūrī version works with a conception of knowledge in terms of presence, something we can already find in al-Suhrawardī [T29] and, in another context, in al-Ṭūsī [T41].<sup>6</sup> Against the argument from perfection, though, it is objected that God is already perfect without having to know the things He creates [T6]. To put it another way, nothing would be lacking in God if He did not know about them. Neither knowledge, nor any other attribute in fact, "makes" Him perfect. To this Abū al-Barakāt, al-Rāzī, and al-Ṭūsī concede that God is already perfect in Himself, so does not need knowledge to be perfect. Still knowledge is a perfection in Him. Inverting the logic of "perfect-making" attributes, it is God's essence that makes His knowledge perfect, not the other way around [T7, T29, T37].

So, this reversal is used to solve the worry that God is, so to speak, too perfect to have knowledge, at least, knowledge of things other than Himself. If He engaged in intellection as Avicenna claimed, this would make Him just like us,

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6 On the divine knowledge by presence, see further the chapter on God's Knowledge of Particulars.

or at least like the philosophers among us, which seems problematic at best. Aristotle was blamed for envisioning a God who knew only Himself, since He could enjoy only this most perfect form of cognition [T2]. Furthermore—in a line of argument that intriguingly is found ascribed to Aristotle’s student Theophrastus—God cannot have an additional trait like knowledge since this would render Him multiple, or make Him a second necessary existent [T8]. One way to preserve divine knowledge was to resist the idea that this could be in terms of having a form “inscribed” in His mind [T45].<sup>7</sup> Alternatively, one can argue that the distinction between God and His knowledge does not actually introduce a problematic sort of multiplicity, solving the worry about simplicity ascribed to Theophrastus [T20]. For these more optimistic thinkers, God is indeed knowing, and we can know that He is.

Texts from Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, al-Īlāqī, al-Shahrastānī, al-Sāwī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Suhrawardī, al-Āmidī, al-Abharī, al-Ṭūsī, Bar Hebraeus, Ibn Kammūna, al-Shahrazūrī.

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7 For this as the motivation behind al-Suhrawardī’s celebrated notion of “knowledge by presence” see J. Kaukua, “Suhrawardī’s Knowledge as Presence in Context,” in: S. Akar, J. Hämeen-Antilla, and I. Nokso-Koivisto (eds), *Travelling Through Time: Essays in Honour of Kaj Öhrnberg*, *Studia Orientalia* 114, Helsinki 2013, 309–324 and F. Benevich, “God’s Knowledge of Particulars: Avicenna, Kalām, and The Post-Avicennian Synthesis.” *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 76:1 (2019), 1–47.

## God's Knowledge

[T1] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* VIII.6, 284.17–285.3 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*argument from immateriality*]

The Necessary Existent is pure intellect, because He is an essence (*dhāt*) separate from matter in every respect. You already know that the reason a thing does not engage in intellection is matter and its attachments, not [the thing's] existence. As for formal existence, this is intellectual existence: namely the existence such that, when it is realized in a thing, the thing thereby becomes intellect. [285] That which bears the possibility of attaining [intellectual existence] is potential intellect, while that which has attained it after being potential is actual intellect, in the sense that it has been perfected. But that which has [intellectual existence] as its essence is essentially an intellect. Likewise, He is a pure object of intellection, because that which prevents a thing from being an object of intellection is being in matter, and its attachments.

[T2] Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 125.2–11; 126.10–20; 127.15–128.9; 129.16–130.3 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*argument from intention*]

[125.2] For the Muslims, existence is confined to the temporally originated and the eternal, there being for them nothing eternal other than God and His attributes, whatever is other than Him having been originated from His direction through His will (*irāda*). Thus they arrived at a necessary premise regarding His knowledge: that which is willed must necessarily be known to the one who willed it. On this basis they inferred that everything is known to Him, because all things are willed by Him and originated by His will. Hence, there is no being that is not originated by His will, with the sole exception of Himself. And as long as it is established that He is one who wills, and knows what He wills, He is necessarily alive. But whatever is alive and knows another, even more (*awlā*) knows itself. Hence, for [the Muslims] everything is known to God; they came to this result in this way, once it was clear to them that He willed the temporal origination of the world. But as for you [philosophers], if you claim that the world is eternal, not originated through His will, how then do you know that He knows anything other than Himself? [...]

[*against the argument from immateriality*]

[126.10] If your statement that the First does not exist in matter means that He is neither a body nor impressed in a body, but is instead self-subsistent, without occupying space or being specified with any position, then we agree. There remains your statement that whatever is like this is a pure intellect. But what do you mean by “intellect”? If you mean by it “that which intellectually grasps all other things,” this is just the sought conclusion, and the point at dispute. So how can you include it in the premises of the argument for [establishing] the sought conclusion? But if you mean by it something else—namely, that it intellectually grasps itself—then perhaps some of your philosopher (*al-falāsifa*) brethren will agree to this. But the gist of this just comes down to saying that whatever intellectually grasps itself grasps another [also]. In which case one might ask, “what leads you to make this claim, when it is not necessary?” This is something that distinguished Avicenna from the rest of the philosophers. So how do you claim it to be necessary? If you do so on the basis of inquiry, what demonstration is there for it? *If it is said*, “this is because what impedes the intellectual grasp of things is matter, but there is no matter [in God],” *we reply*: we concede that it is an impediment, but we do not concede that it is the *only* impediment.

[*against argument from causation*]

[127.15] The second sort of argument is [Avicenna’s] statement: “even though we did not say that the First wills origination, nor that the universe is temporally originated, we nonetheless say that it is His act, and has come to existence through Him. However He continues to have the attribute of those who are agents, so He never stops being active. We differ from others only thus far, and not over the basic issue of there being an act. But if the agent’s having knowledge of His act is necessary, as all agree, then the universe is, according to us, due to His act.”

*The response* has two aspects. [128] *First*, there are two kinds of action: voluntary, like the action of an animal or human, and natural, like the action of the sun in illuminating, of fire in heating, and of water in cooling. Knowledge of the act is only necessary in the voluntary act, like in the human arts. But not when it comes to natural action. Now, according to you [philosophers], God makes the world as a concomitant from His essence, by nature and compulsion, not by way of will and choice. Indeed, the universe proceeds from His essence in just the way that light proceeds from the sun. And just as the sun has no power to refraining from [making] light, or fire to refraining from heating, so the First

has no power to refrain from His acts, may He be greatly exalted above what they say! This mode [of causation], even if may be called "action," does not at all imply that the agent has knowledge.

[*Aristotle's argument from perfection*]

[129.16] *Moreover, one may say:* on what basis would you refute those among the philosophers who say that [the effect's having more knowledge than the cause] does not constitute greater nobility? For others [i.e. those who are not God] need knowledge only in order to acquire perfection, since in themselves they are deficient. The human is ennobled by the intelligibles, either in order to acquire knowledge of what benefits him in terms of consequences in this world or the next, or to perfect his dark and deficient essence. The same applies [130] to all other creatures. But God's essence has no need to be perfected. On the contrary, if one were to suppose for Him knowledge through which He is perfected, then His essence, insofar as it His essence, would be deficient.

[T3] Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtisād*, 99.11–100.2 [trans. Yaqub, mod.]

[*design argument*]

It is acknowledged that He knows that which is other than Himself, since that which is called "other" is his well-designed (*al-mutqan*) handiwork and His exquisite and well-ordered act; and this [100] proves the knowledge of the Maker as well as it proves His power, as previously explained. For if one saw well-arranged lines precisely set down by a scribe, and then doubted whether the scribe is knowledgeable concerning the art of writing, one would be foolish to have such doubts.

[T4] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 69.16–21

[*if God emanates necessarily He does not need knowledge*]

Know that [the philosophers (*falāsifa*)] have no way to understand how God could be knowledgeable about anything. This is clear, because the way to show this is that He, the exalted, has power and choice (*mukhtār*), and is the bestower of proper existence upon His acts. His acts may be arranged as He wishes, in a way fitting for the benefit of [His] servants. He makes some things prior and others posterior. He produces that which is fitting and corresponding to the benefit; and He leaves aside that which neither corresponds to nor suits wisdom and being beneficial. His precise acts indicate that He is knowledge-



able about what must be prior and what posterior, and this is to be taken in the way we established earlier. But they say none of this. Instead, they say that His essence necessitates a single act, which is only the First Intellect, and then comes what originates after the Intellect, which is thus originated from something other [than God]. *One may say to them:* on what grounds do you deny that He necessitates the First Intellect without any knowledge, so that He would not be knowledgeable about it, nor about His own essence—may He exalted—just as happens with other [agents] of natural necessitation, according to you? For [those agents] necessitate their acts without any knowledge or life.

[T5] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 181.14–182.1

[*knowledge vs. opinion in the design argument*]

*If someone says:* why would you deny that one who has power could bring distinct acts into existence due to opinion (*ẓann*), so that bestowal of existence would not indicate being knowledgeable? *One may respond to him:* opinion has no purchase on the true realities of things, as one can have opinion neither about substance, black, motion, or any other true reality. Opinion has a purchase only on something's having a certain attribute and feature, or not having them.<sup>8</sup> That is why humans fail to connect their opinions to the very true realities of things.

But if someone is asked about the quiddity of something, and says “It seems to me (*aẓunnuhu*) that it is blackness, or such-and-such,” in truth this comes down to him having an opinion that something he already knows has a feature or an attribute. Like if one sees a person, for instance, and knows it is a person, and is asked then about him, then one might say, “It seems to me that it is Zayd,” in other words, “It seems to me that he has the shape of Zayd, his form, and other attributes of this sort.” Or one might see a color and knows it is a color, but not know [which color] exactly. Then when one is asked about it, one might say, “It seems to me that it is black.” All this is possible only *after* one knows what one sees, even if one does not know what exact [color it is], and subsequent to knowledge of that which seems to have a certain attribute or feature. So it is correct that opinion occurs only after [182] knowing the true reality of things.

8 In the terminology of *kalām*, if I have an opinion (*ẓann*) that p, I assent to the proposition “It seems to me that p.” In other words, I acknowledge that it might be not p. For the definition of *ẓann* see *Mu'tamad*, 26.16–27.13.

[T6] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 71.11–72.6

[*refutation of Aristotle's argument from perfection*]

Aristotle said that the True One, the exalted, knows only Himself. What he means by this, as far as it has come down to us, is the following: if God the exalted were an intellect and did not intellectually grasp anything, He would be ignorant. But if He grasps intellectually, then His intellection must perpetually be either about one thing, or about many, so that the object of His intellection would be something distinct from Him, and His perfection would thus consist not in His self-intellection, but in intellection of something else, whatever this might be. Yet it is an absurdity that His perfection should be due to intellection of something else. Hence, one needs to abandon this view. It should be argued that He, the exalted, knows Himself alone. [...] [71.19] This is an invalid argument, since it based on the [assumption] that this [other] object of knowledge makes His essence perfect by necessitating that His essence becomes knowledgeable of it. But this is false. For His essence, may He be exalted, is that which necessitates His being knowledgeable about this object of knowledge. The object of knowledge functions merely as a condition for the fact that His essence necessitates His being knowledgeable. For knowledge can be conceptualized only with reference to the object of knowledge being just as it is. [...] [72.3] His essence's necessitating His being knowledgeable concerning objects of knowledge is an act belonging to His essence, but the agent is not rendered perfect by his act. For clearly, the perfection of His essence must precede His being active, in order that He can act. Don't you see that on your view, the First Intellect is among the acts of the Creator, the exalted, yet He is not made more perfect by it, instead being perfect in His essence? And His essence is prior to the Intellect in terms of perfection.

[T7] Abū al-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 74.21–75.16

[*response to Aristotle's argument from perfection*]

*Theoretical and demonstrative response:* we say that it is not the case that His perfection is through His act [of intellection]. Rather His act [of intellection] is through His perfection, and due to His perfection. And His intellect is due to His act. Thus His intellect is due to His essential perfection, which can in no sense be conceived as involving a deficiency. [...]

[75.8] *If it is said:* there is a deficiency conceptualized in relation to His essence, namely that He does not intellectually grasp such-and-such if there is no such-

and-such object of intellection, or in other words “He does not intellectually grasp if there is nothing to grasp.” *Then we say*: the perfection that belongs to Him is not that He should intellectually grasp every existent. Rather it is His being such as to (*bi-ḥaythu*) intellectually grasp every existent. So if the object of intellection is existent, then He grasps it. But if it is posited not to exist, then it should be posited that He does not intellectually grasp it. Not because He [just] does not grasp it, that is, because He has no power to do so; rather the deficiency is on the side of the posited non-existence. Thus perfection and power belong to Him in Himself, and from both [the perfection and power] there follows whatever belongs to Him in relation to His existents. Not that He is perfected by bestowing existence upon His creations. Rather, they are brought into existence due to His perfection. This argument applies to us as well, not only to the First Principle. For we are not made perfect by each object of intellection. Rather our perfection is due precisely to our power to grasp it intellectually. We are perfected by actual (*bi-al-fiʿl*) grasping, only when we actually grasp objects of intellection that are nobler than we are.

[T8] Al-Īlāqī, *ʿIlm-i wājib al-wujūd*, 165.3–166.8

[report of Theophrastus’ argument against God’s knowledge]

Then Theophrastus said, after laying down this foundation: the True—may He be far exalted beyond what the seekers say—is not described with any attribute which would be other than His essence in existence, regardless whether it is knowledge or whatever you might suppose. Otherwise, He would have it as an attribute, and this attribute would not be necessary in itself, given that there cannot be more than one necessary existent (this is one of his premises). So [the attribute] would be contingent, and when it is eliminated from the essence, the essence would no longer described with it in actuality. Hence, an aspect (*jīha*) belongs to that essence due to which it is considered (*bi-ʾtibārīhā*) as contingent—this also is something implied by one of his premises. This aspect is distinct from the aspect in which that essence is necessary, since a single thing that is the same in all aspects cannot be described with the opposites: here, the opposites are the necessary existent in itself and the contingently existent in itself. There is, therefore, some multiplicity in the essence of the First. This multiplicity is either (a) negative, which need not imply any multiplicity in the essence, such as being not-a-stone [166] or not-a-horse, and the like, (b) or it is not<sup>9</sup> negative. But we have already shown that when we say,

<sup>9</sup> We add *lā* before *yakūna*.

“such-and-such is contingent,” this is not negative in meaning. So it belongs to it existentially (*wujūdi*), as we have already shown. This, however, is impossible for anybody who agrees that there is no multiplicity in the essence of the Necessary Existent. (c) Alternatively [one could hold] that the [multiplicity] is merely conceptual. Though even this implies existential multiplicity, too, since the aspect which the intellect judges to be described with intelligible contingency must be different from the aspect which the intellect judges not to be so described.

[T9] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 223.16–225.9

[*the philosophers cannot use the design argument*]

We demand from you a proof that the Creator, the exalted, is knowledgeable. How do you know this? No proof leads you to this, nor does any demonstration show it. For the *mutakallimūn* prove on the basis of the occurrence [224] of wisely chosen features and perfection (*al-aḥkām wa-al-itqān*) in acts that the Maker is knowledgeable. You, however, do not adopt this approach, nor could it rest upon your foundations. For according to you, knowledge does not connect with particulars, or it does connect but [only] in a universal way, so that it connects to universals [alone]. The wisely chosen features, however, are established only among sensible particulars, whereas intelligible universals, are supposed in the mind. [...]

[“connection” version of the argument from immateriality]

[224.20] *Avicenna said*: the demonstration that everything separate from matter is [225] essentially an intellect, is on the basis of the proof that a quiddity that is separate from matter is, in respect of its essence, not hindered from being connected to another separate quiddity. Thus it can be grasped intellectually, that is, inscribed (*murtasima*) in another separate quiddity. Its being inscribed is its being connected. “Intellect” means simply that one separate quiddity is connected to another separate quiddity. If, therefore, a quiddity is inscribed in our intellectual faculty, then its being inscribed in it is just the same as our awareness of [that quiddity], and its perception. This is intellect and intellection, since, if it required a disposition and form other than the inscribed form, then the argument would apply to this [second] form in just the same way it applies to that [first] form, leading to an infinite regress. If, however, that connection is nothing other than the intellect, then it follows that every separate quiddity is in itself not hindered from intellection.

[T10] Al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāraʿa*, 74.2–5 [trans. Mayer, mod.]

[*God transcends intellection*]

Those companions deny that He is both subject and object of intellection. For intellection is the inscribing (*irtisām*) of intellect with the form of the object of intellection. But the True is exalted above having form and being the object of intellection, regardless whether the form is corporeal or an incorporeal quiddity. Also He is exalted above being the subject of intellection, such that there would be Him, and also a form. Rather, He is above knowing and being known!

[T11] Al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāraʿa*, 75.7–76.6 [trans. Mayer, mod.]

[*against the argument from immateriality*]

*And another thing:* you undertook to establish that He engages in intellection, and you applied yourself to showing that it is not impossible for Him to be the object of intellection. But its being *not impossible* does not make it *necessary* for Him to be the object of intellection, in the absence of further proof. And even if it is necessary that He is the object of intellection, it would not follow from this that He is a subject of intellection. So another argument is needed. Yet we have heard no argument from you apart from your saying, “it happens only accidentally that something fails to be an object of intellection, whenever it is in matter.”

*To this one may say:* presence in matter isn’t the only thing that hinders this. Sometimes there may be another hindrance. For just as the sensible object is not inscribed in the intellect, insofar as [76] it is sensible, that is, insofar as it is in matter, so likewise the intelligible object is not inscribed in sense perception insofar as it is intelligible, that is, insofar as it is *not* in matter. Yet He Whose majesty is exalted above being inscribed in anything is also exalted above anything’s being inscribed *in Him*. And just as something may be unavailable to sensation because it is especially hidden, likewise it may be unavailable to sensation because it is especially manifest. So the hindrance is not matter, or the attachments of matter, and his statement proves false: “the nature of existence insofar as it is existent is not hindered from being an object of intellection.”

[T12] Al-Sāwī, *Muṣāraʿat al-Muṣāraʿa*, fol. 117v1–4; 125r1–126r9

[response to T11 on the argument from immateriality; self-thinking]

As for [al-Shahrastānī's] objection to the claim that intellect is that which is separate from matter, namely: how can you explain "intellect" in terms of separation from matter, given that there is no linguistic evidence for this, nor any intellectual proof? For not everyone who understands that he is separate from matter, understands that he is knowledgeable; nor does everyone who understands that he is knowledgeable understand that matter is removed from him.

[125r1] As for the demonstration that everything that is essentially separate from matter is essentially an intellect, it is as follows. Every quiddity that is separate from matter is not hindered, in respect of its essence, from being connected to another quiddity that is separate from matter. *Proof*: every separate quiddity can be an object of intellection, that is, inscribed in another separate quiddity. Its being inscribed is the same as its being connected. Then, "intellect" is just the connection between one separate quiddity and another, and means nothing else than this. Likewise, that connection just is the intellect. For, if a separate quiddity is inscribed in our intellectual faculty, then the inscribing of that quiddity in it is just the same its awareness, its perception, its intellection, its encompassing [125v], or however you want to classify it. It needs no further state for the intellectual faculty apart from the inscription of that quiddity in it. For, if it did need a further disposition, or any form other than that inscribed form, then the argument concerning this second form would be the same as it was for first, yielding an infinite regress. But if that connection is just the same as the intellect, and the separate quiddity is not hindered in its essence from this connection, then it necessarily follows that no separate quiddity is hindered from intellection in its essence, that is, that it can grasp intellectually, insofar as one inquires into its essence.

Whatever intellectually grasps something grasps itself intellectually, through a connected capacity. *Proof*: if it can intellectually grasp something, it can intellectually grasp itself, and in this [126r1] lies its self-intellection. From this it follows that if something can think itself, and if it is such as (*min sha'nihi*) to have something necessarily and essentially whenever it is such as to have it [at all], and it is such as to intellectually grasp itself, then it must intellectually grasp itself necessarily and essentially. The Creator, the exalted, must essentially have whatever He is such as to have, and whatever ought to belong to Him. [...]

[126r7] From all these premises it follows that the Creator, the exalted, necessarily grasps Himself intellectually. This is the demonstration for His being knowledgeable, intellectual, and encompassing, whichever of these expressions you prefer.

[T13] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 189.8–14

[*first problem for the design argument: animal design*]

We do not concede that the precise (*muḥkam*) act indicates that the agent is knowledgeable. There are several ways to show this. First, humans are incapable of [building] beehives, which bees build without ruler or compass. Nor are humans capable of the webs which spiders spin out along those lines without instruments and tools. If this were an indication of the agent's knowledge, then it would follow that these animals are more knowledgeable than humans, but this is known to be false.

[T14] Al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, vol. 2, 167.6–11

[*second problem for the design argument: formative faculty*]

The philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) and the doctors commonly hold that the coming-to-be of animal organs and their arrangement depends on a corporeal power which lacks awareness and perception. They called it the “formative faculty (*al-quwwa al-muṣawwira*).” If the falsity of this were just obvious, then they could not have agreed on this. So the claim that [precise arrangement implies knowledge] is invalid.

[*third problem for the design argument: unconscious action*]

If someone who is proficient in writing started, while writing, to think about how every letter should be written, he'd get muddled up and would be incapable of writing well. But if he leaves off thinking and just lets his nature take the lead, then he can write as he ought to. [...]

[T15] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 3, 114.1–7

[*fourth problem for the design argument: problem of evil*]

Just as we see in this world precise, proficient, ordered, and arranged acts, which lead one to imagine that the governor of this world is knowledgeable

and wise, so we also see that this world is full of disasters, dangers, and ugliness in the nature, as well as such loathsome states as deafness, chronic diseases, and acute poverty. We do see people who are perfect in both knowledge and deed, and reject worldly goods as despicable and worthless, being free from ignorance and vices. Yet we also see the worst among the people, such as the most vicious among youths and women, which wind up overcoming people who are interested in worldly issues, and gain supremacy over people. Such cases are not fitting for the Merciful, the Knowing, the Wise.

[T16] Al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, vol. 2, 169.1–5

[*fifth problem for the design argument: design could be due to mere opinion*]

*Let it not be said:* the acts of someone who has mere opinion (*al-zānn*) are not always precise, but rather sometimes wrong and sometimes right. The acts of God the exalted, by contrast, are always precise. *For we say:* we do not concede that the acts of someone who has mere opinion cannot always be precise. For insofar as a mere opinion suffices for an act to be precise once, it should suffice for this in every case, since the judgment about one case will be the same as in another, similar case.

[T17] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 3, 113.17–22

[*more on the fifth problem*]

*If they say* [to avoid ascribing mere belief to God] that whoever possesses mere belief may be wrong and make mistakes, and may not even have control over the outcome of his intentions, *we say:* there is no disputing that it is as you say. Yet we also see many sorts of deficiency, disaster, and great ugliness in the nature, which occur in the composed things of this world. Perhaps these cases arise precisely because their agent composed them on the basis of mere opinion and guess.

[T18] Al-Rāzī, *Maʿālim*, 59.3–7

[*argument from intention*]

[God] acts voluntarily (*bi-al-ikhtiyār*). Whoever [acts] voluntarily intends to bestow existence on a certain type of thing (*al-nawʿ al-muʿayyan*). And the



intention to bestow existence on a certain type of thing has as a condition that this quiddity has been conceptualized. So it is established that He, the exalted, conceptualizes certain quiddities. There can be no doubt that quiddities in themselves have as a concomitant the reality of some features, and the non-existence of others. And anyone who conceptualizes what has a concomitant conceptualizes a concomitant. So from the fact that He, the exalted, knows these quiddities, there follows His knowledge of their concomitants and effects. It is established, therefore, that He, the exalted, is knowledgeable.

[T19] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 192.17–22

[*preponderation argument*]

*Demonstration* [*that God knows all objects of knowledge*]: He, praised and exalted, is alive, and everything that is alive may know any given object of knowledge. Also, what necessitates this being knowledgeable (*al-ʿālimiyya*) is His essence. The relation of His essence to each [object] is equivalent, so it is not more fitting that His essence necessitates His being knowledgeable of certain things rather than His being knowledgeable about the rest. So, given that it necessitates His being knowledgeable about some of them, it necessitates His being knowledgeable about the rest. So, it has been established that He—may He be exalted—is knowledgeable about every object of knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

[T20] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 190.12–191.14; 192.1–7

[*multiplicity argument and solution*]

*They say*: if [God] were knowledgeable, then His knowledge would be either (a) identical to His essence or (b) additional to it. Both options are false.

(a) His knowledge cannot be identical to His essence, for several reasons. (a<sub>1</sub>) Firstly, we perceive a difference between our saying “His essence is His essence” and our saying “His essence is His knowledge,” so this shows the two are distinct. (a<sub>2</sub>) Second, even once one knows that He is existent, and is the Necessary Existent in itself, we still require a separate proof to understand that He, the exalted, is knowledgeable. And what is known is distinct from what is

10 Cf. al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 124.4–11. Al-Ṭūsī objects to al-Shahrastānī that this is the most salient *kalām* argument for God’s knowledge.

unknown. (a<sub>3</sub>) Third, the true reality of knowledge is distinct from the true reality of power and the true reality of life. If they were expressions of the true reality of His essence, one would have to say that three true realities [191] are just one true reality, which is obviously false.

(b) Nor can His knowledge be additional to His essence, since if it were, then given that it would be an attribute subsistent in that essence, this knowledge would require that essence for its realization, since every attribute requires its subject of attribution. But whatever requires something else is in itself contingent, and requires a producer. And its producer could only be that essence. So, that essence would both have [knowledge] as an attribute and produce [knowledge], even though that essence is simple and free from composition in all respects. So the simple would be both receiving and acting (*qābilan wa-fā'ilan*), which is absurd. [...]

[192.1] *Answer to the first doubt*: why can't something simple indeed be both receiving and acting? *They say*: the distinction between two meanings indicates multiplicity in the essence. *But we say*: this is overthrown by [the idea of] unity. For it is half of two, and one third of three, and one fourth of four, and so on indefinitely, even though unity is the furthest of things from multiplicity. Likewise, a [center] point faces all the parts of a circle, despite receiving no division.

[T<sub>21</sub>] Al-Rāzī, *Arba'ūn*, vol. 1, 192.8–11

[*perfection implies knowledge*]

*Why can't one say*: it is this essence's being perfect that necessitates, as a concomitant, the occurrence of this knowledge. We do not say that the essence is deficient in itself and perfected through something else, but that its being perfect in itself has, as a concomitant, the occurrence of the attributes of perfection.

[T<sub>22</sub>] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 3, 127.4–128.6; 129.9–13

[*argument from possibility; development of T<sub>9</sub> and T<sub>12</sub>*]

*We say*: God knows things other than Himself.

*Proof*: it is not impossible for us to know God's essence together with any given object of knowledge. It has been established that the knowledge of something

occurs only through the impression (*intibā'*) of a form of object of knowledge in the knower. If the knowledge of the essence of God the exalted occurs together with knowledge of about something else, then the two quiddities are present to the mind together. Furthermore, it is not impossible that there occurs a connection between the two quiddities. Now, the possibility of this connection either has as a condition that this form be present in the mind, or not. But the first is false. For the presence of this form in the mind is a connection between this quiddity and the mind. So, if the presence of this form in the mind were a condition for the possibility of this connection, then (since we have already proven that its presence to the mind is the connection between it and the mind), the possibility of this connection would have as a condition the occurrence of this connection. But the condition comes before that which has the condition. It follows that the occurrence (*wuqū'*) of something would come before the possibility of its own occurrence. But the possibility is prior to the occurrence, so that a vicious circle would follow, which is absurd. With this proof it is established that the possibility of that connection does not have as a condition the presence of this form in the mind.

This being so, regardless whether that quiddity is present in the mind or outside the mind, this connection must be possible for it. So, as we can connect the intelligible form of the essence of God the exalted to the forms [128] of all other intelligibles, it must be possible for the essence of God the exalted to be connected to the forms of all intelligibles while existing concretely. But we have already shown that “intellection” and “perception” mean nothing other than such a connection. So, given that the proof shows that this connection is possible for the essence of God the exalted it is necessarily certain that the essence of God the exalted may be knowledgeable concerning things. And having established this, we say that everything that is possible for the essence of God the exalted belongs to Him necessarily. [...]

*[problem that we have no conception of God's essence]*

[129.9] We do not concede that we can intellectually grasp the essence of God the exalted, never mind saying that we can intellectually grasp His essence together with all other essences. *Determination of this claim:* the doctrine of the philosophers (*al-ḥukamā'*) is that God in His core (*kunh*) is inconceivable for man. All that humans may know about God the exalted are negative and relational attributes. But the essence, specified insofar it is what it is, is not an object of human knowledge.

[T23] Al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, vol. 2, 189.1–8

[*problem for the argument from possibility*]

However, the fact that one can make a judgment about a quiddity when it is in the mind does not imply that this same judgment about it is possible when it is extramental. For “human” in the mind inheres in a subject and so requires a substrate, whereas the extramental human cannot be like this. The extramental human is self-subsisting, has sense-perception, moves by will, and is perceptible to the five senses, whereas “human” in the mind is not like this. So we know that not everything which is possible for a quiddity when it is in the mind must be possible for it when it is extramentally. Therefore, from the possibility of connection between a mental quiddity and intelligible objects, there follows no possibility of connection between an *extramental* quiddity and those objects.

[T24] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 445.8–17

[*against the argument from immateriality*]

*The first and most plausible* among [the points against this argument] is that separation from matter is not specifically about one thing as opposed to another. One cannot say that a given thing is separate from matter “in relation to (*bi-al-nisba*)” this, rather than to that. By contrast one can say that a given thing intellectually grasps this rather than that. Therefore, separation from matter is not specified as being about one thing as opposed to another, whereas intellection is. Hence, being separate [from matter] is not intellection.

*Second:* our knowledge that something is separate from position and being indicated is not the same as our knowledge that this same thing is knowledgeable about things. Nor is the former included within the latter, as a constituent for it. Rather, after we learn that something is separate from matter, it still remains doubtful whether that separate thing is knowledgeable or not. Yet it is impossible that one and the same true realities should be both known and not known at the same time. Thus it is established that intellection is different from being separate.

[T25] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 3, 136.16–23; 137.7–9

[*report of Avicenna's a fortiori argument*]

[Avicenna] said in *The Procession and Return* that the substance of the soul is engaged in intellection [only] potentially, until a separate form occurs in it. Once the separate form occurs in it, the soul thereby becomes actually engaged in intellection. But, since the substance of the soul becomes actually<sup>11</sup> engaged in intellection through the inherence of this form, if we were to suppose that this form is a self-subsistent substance, then it would be all the more plausible to say that it is actually engaged in intellection. It's just like heat inhering in the substance of fire, so that the substance of fire becomes hot through heat's inhering in it. If we were to suppose that heat itself was self-subsistent, then it would even more follow that it is hot. [...]

[*argument from perfection*]

[137.7] The Creator, the exalted, is the most perfect among existents. The attribute of knowledge is an attribute of perfection, and its lack would be a deficiency. So one must conclude that He, the exalted, is described with this attribute. In this way one may show that God knows all objects of knowledge, in order to free Him from any ignorance.

[T26] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 476.11–477.7

[*arguments against the argument from possibility*]

This is not the right approach. Firstly, because the middle term in [the conclusion] “whatever can be intellectually grasped, does grasp intellectually” is “connection to a form.” Yet there can be no connection to a form for the Necessary Existent at all, as has been demonstrated. Hence, one cannot establish knowledge for the Necessary Existent in this way.

Secondly, the connection of two forms in the soul is nothing but their occurrence and impression in a single substance, or [it occurs] insofar as they are impressed in a single substance. In general, it doesn't follow that whatever holds for the form in the mind also holds for the form outside the mind. Thus, while it does hold for the form impressed in the mind that it is impressed in

11 Emending *bi-al-quwwa* to *bi-al-fīl*.

a subject (in fact this holds necessarily), still that whose form it is, namely the substance outside the mind, is not impressed in anything in any way. Nor is it of any avail [477] when they give as an excuse by mentioning the “disposition” [for being connected to another form]. For one cannot say: “the form of the extramental substance, occurring in the mind after not having done so, has a disposition for occurrence in the mind. It has the disposition to be impressed not after it occurs [in the mind], but before it does so. So the disposition belongs to the quiddity taken absolutely.” [If this were correct], then an extramental, substantial essence that subsists by itself could be impressed in a subject of inherence, and so would become an accident. But it is an absurdity that substance could ever become an accident. Thus we have shown above that this approach is wrong. What applies to a nature insofar as it is in the mind should not just be transferred to the extramental.

[T27] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārīʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 479.4–10

[*against the argument from immateriality*]

Furthermore, they should consider that if His knowledge [just] means His essence along with His being separate from matter, and His not being hidden from Himself, but no more than this, then this negation cannot be knowledge about many different things other than Himself. For His knowledge of things necessarily requires relations to them, whereas neither the negation of matter from Him, nor the His not being hidden from Himself, imply relations to many things. The meaning (*mafḥūm*) of “something’s being separate from matter” is not the same as the meaning of “being knowledgeable about many different things, which are concomitants of its essence.” Nor is the meaning of “not being hidden from Himself” the same as the meaning of “His being knowledgeable about many different things.” His being knowledgeable about many different things necessarily implies relations, whereas neither of the two negations does this.

[T28] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 82.8–12 [trans. Walbridge and Ziai, mod.]

[*against the argument from immateriality*]

If something’s being separate from matter (*ḥayūlā*) and barriers were sufficient to make it aware of itself, as is the teaching of the Peripatetics, then that matter whose existence they affirm would also be aware of itself. For it is not a state

in something else but has its own quiddity and is separate from any further matter—there being no matter of matter.

[T29] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 486.18–487.5

[*argument from perfection in terms of knowledge by presence*]

It has already been shown that every absolute perfection that belongs to the existent as such is not impossible for the Necessary Existent. Therefore, it is necessary for Him. By saying “absolute perfection (*kamāl muṭlaq*)” we mean that it is not [489] perfection in one respect, deficiency in another, such that it would imply multiplicity, composition, corporeality, and so on. So, if illuminationist knowledge, with no form or trace, but simply the specific relation which is the illuminationist presence of something like the soul has, is true, then it is even more appropriate and complete in the Necessary Existent. He perceives Himself with nothing additional to Himself, as was true of soul, and He knows things through illuminationist, presential knowledge.

[T30] Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, 75.8–15

[*against the argument from immateriality*]

He claimed that existence, insofar as it is the nature of existence,<sup>12</sup> does not hinder being known and intellectually grasped. It winds up not being known and grasped only on account of something preventing and hindering this, namely its being in matter and connected to the attachments of matter. But every existence that is separate from matter and its attachments is not hindered from being known.

This is not correct, even if one might imagine otherwise. Regarding their statement that the nature of existence is not hindered from being grasped intellectually: [we respond] that the expression “existence” may be applied to the Necessary Existent and to everything else in an equivocal way only, not univocally. Otherwise He would participate in their nature, and it would follow that the Necessary Existent is contingent and requires an extrinsic preponderator, which is absurd.

<sup>12</sup> Correcting *al-mawjūd* to *al-wujūd*.

[T31] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 327.6–9

[*against the appeal to divine causation*]

From the fact that he knows His essence, it does not follow that He knows whatever belongs to [His essence] in terms of attributes. Otherwise, everyone who knew something would also know whatever is concomitant to it. And from this it would follow that, when we know God the exalted, we would know everything that proceeds from Him and is concomitant to Him. Likewise, our knowledge about various created things would be tantamount to knowledge of all their attributes and principles, which is absurd.

[T32] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 328.12–14

[*against the argument from possibility*]

Even if we conceded this, we would still not concede that necessity follows from the privation of impossibility; it could instead be [merely] possible. This is not excluded for God, the exalted. For the [supposed] connection [between God and an object of knowledge] is an association (*nisba*), and a relation (*iḍāfa*) between two entities. And associations and relations are [merely] possible for God the exalted, without necessity.

[T33] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 342.4–7

[*solution to the animal counterexample against the design argument at T13*]

As for the objection based on the acts of animals, it may be refuted as follows. Those who concede that animals are agents do not deny that they are knowledgeable. But if one says that the acts of animals are not created by them, but by God the exalted, they must be known to God the exalted, without being known to animals, since the precise features and proficiency are not due to them.

[T34] Al-Abharī, *Risāla fī 'ilm al-kalām*, 80.3–10

[*argument from intention*]

As for His being knowledgeable about both universals and particulars, this is because, if He were not knowledgeable about all existents, then one of two things would follow. Either He would [cause other existents] by essentially



necessitating them, or He would intend to bestow existence on something that is unknown to Him. Both options are unacceptable. So it follows that He is knowledgeable. The reason we say that one of these two would follow, is that He must either essentially necessitate them, or be a voluntary agent. If He essentially necessitates them, this is [the first] of the two options. But if He is a voluntary agent, then He must intend to bestow existence on something unknown to Him, and this is the second option. We said that both options are unacceptable, in the first case because of what has been said before [namely that God does not act of necessity], and in the case where he bestows existence on something unknown to Him, because this is just obviously false.<sup>13</sup>

[T35] Al-Abharī, *Talkhīṣ al-ḥaqāʾiq*, fol. 92r17–92v1

[*response to the argument from possibility*]

We do not concede that the Necessary in Itself can be connected to the forms of the intelligibles. Rather, a mental form can be connected to the forms of intelligibles in the sense of a connection between two features in one subject. Why do you say that whatever is possible for a mental form is possible for the extramental quiddity? For the quiddity [in the mind] can inhere in a subject, whereas the extramental quiddity cannot. [92v] So not everything that is possible for the mental form is possible for the extramental.<sup>14</sup>

[T36] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 280.3–5

[*solutions to the animal counterexample at T13*]

As for the acts of intermediaries and of animals, they are [in fact] the acts of God the exalted, according to those who say that God alone is efficacious (*muʾaththir*). Those who think otherwise hold that God creates such animals, and that bestowing of existence upon them and giving them inspiration is wiser than the bestowal of existence upon such acts without their serving as an intermediary.

13 This argument is rejected in al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*, 361.15–18, for using unjustified premisses.

14 This counter-argument appears consistently in al-Abharī's treatises. Still, al-Abharī believes that God's knowledge is provable on the theory of knowledge by presence, since every separate from matter is present to itself. See further the next chapter.

[T37] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 280.20–23

[*God's essence makes His knowledge perfect, not vice-versa*]

*Response* [to the problem that God would be perfected by having knowledge]: deficient essences acquire perfection from the attributes of perfection. But in the case of perfect essences, it is rather that their attributes are perfect due to being the attributes of these essences. The perfection of knowledge is of this kind: the reason it is perfect is that it is among the attributes of God the exalted.

[T38] Al-Ṭūsī, *Maṣāriʿ al-Muṣāriʿ*, 134.16–135.3

[*rejection of al-Shahrastānī's ineffability objection at T10*]

As for his statement on their behalf that intellection is the inscription of an intelligible form in the intellect, [135] and the True is exalted above having any form such that He could be intellectually grasped: it is nothing. For “form” means concrete being (*al-huwiyya*) and true reality. If the True had no concrete being, then one could not apply the word “He” (or “it”: *huwa*) to Him anymore. And if He had no true reality, one could not apply “the True” to Him.

[T39] Al-Ṭūsī, *Maṣāriʿ al-Muṣāriʿ*, 137.8–12

[*on the argument from possibility*]

For [this inference] it suffices to add another premise, namely that everything which is possible for the Necessary Existent is necessary. For the actualization of something possible is never absurd. But it is always some external influence that actualizes a potentiality, since nothing can come into actuality from potentiality by itself. But it is absurd that there be an influence on the Necessary from anything else.

[T40] Al-Ṭūsī, *Maṣāriʿ al-Muṣāriʿ*, 151.5–152.2

[*why the falāsifa can use the design argument, against T9*]

[Al-Shahrastānī's objection] shows that he has not understood Avicenna's idea that [God] knows particulars universally in the way that I have indicated. Do you suppose that everything Aristotle discovered about precise features and proficiency that exist among concrete existent individuals, whether separated

[from matter] or material, and the way in which well-directed things reach their goals, and the interpretation of the states of simple and composite bodies, and the specific properties of metals, the acts of plant and animal souls; and what Galen says in his books explaining the usefulness of animal organs; and what Ptolemy posited about the benefits of observing the higher bodies and their various movements; and other things whose explanation would be too involved, [all] indicate that the God and Creator of these things does *not* know them, or rather that He does? Isn't all this an inference from precise features and proficiency to the knowledge of one who judges precisely and perfectly? Didn't the theologians (*al-mutakallimūn*) take from [these examples] whatever they cite when explaining [152] the precise features and proficiency? So how can this man [al-Shahrastānī] think that the methods of the two groups [the *falāsifa* and the *mutakallimūn*] differ? Is it not due to his ignorance of their doctrine?

[T41] Al-Ṭūsī, *Ajwibat mas'āl Ibn Kammūna*, 32.1–11

[*the immaterial must have knowledge by presence*]

Intellection, on the interpretation you have mentioned, can belong only to something that is realized in itself (*mutahaṣṣil fī nafsihi*), which is such as to receive whatever is present to it, or “not absent from it”—however you want to express this. For nothing can occur (*yaḥṣula*) to anything that is not realized in itself. For the occurring would not really (*bi-al-ḥaqīqa*) belong to it, but to that through which it occurs and is realized (*ḥāṣil wa-mutahaṣṣil*). This is why neither corporeal matter, nor the form that inheres in it, nor whatever is composed from these two, nor any accident, is capable of intellection. Also, if something cannot intellectually grasp something else, that which is present to it would not really be present to it. This is why soul is capable of intellection only insofar as it separates from that to which corporeal features attach. From this it is clear that everything simple and independent in existence is absolutely such as to intellectually grasp other things, if it is absolutely separate, or insofar as it is separate if it is [only] separate in certain respects, or with regard to its organs if [for instance] its receptivity of other things occurs only through the sense of touch. This is called “perception.”

[T42] Bar Hebraeus, *Hēwath hekhmthā, Met.*, 185.8–10

[*against the objection that God cannot be shown to be knowledgeable because He is unknowable*]

If someone says that the Necessary Existent is separate and unconnected to matter, and unknowable, we say that nothing else but existence belongs to the quiddity of the Exalted; yet this can be known by demonstration.

[T43] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 386.16–17

[*against the argument from possibility*]

While conceding all this, we do not concede that everything that is possible for something separate [from matter] in respect of its quiddity must be connected to it. For it may be possible in terms of its quiddity, but impossible insofar as it is an extramentally existent individual.

[T44] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 389.11–18

[*on a premise in the argument from possibility, cf. T26*]

[Al-Suhrawardī] argues against this move as follows. If this were correct, then substance could become an accident, but this is not possible, so the move is not legitimate. The hypothetical [syllogism] is shown by applying the same reasoning, in order to infer that this possibility does follow, like this: the form of the extramental substance that occurs in the mind after not doing so, has a disposition to occur in the mind. This disposition cannot be due to its being impressed in the mind; rather the impression is due to the disposition. And [the disposition] was just the same before the impression as it is afterwards. So the disposition to occur in the mind and be impressed in it does belong to the quiddity absolutely, and it holds true for the extramental substantial essence that it can be impressed in a subject, which is the mind, after having been self-subsistent. Thus it would be possible that substantiality become accidentality, [which is absurd]. So the move is invalid.

[T45] Al-Shahrazūri, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 478.6–8

[*against the argument from possibility*]

This argument shows only that the Necessary through itself grasps things intellectually through the occurrence of their forms in Himself. So it follows that He is the subject for intelligible forms that are connected to Him. But no connection to forms at all is possible for the Necessary Existent, as has been already demonstrated.

[T46] Al-Shahrazūri, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 482.5–16

[*God's knowledge of other things is not included within His self-knowledge*]

Among the issues that are mentioned in respect of this argument<sup>15</sup> is their saying that His knowledge about multiple things, which are His concomitants, is included in His knowledge of Himself. But this claim is not true. For His knowledge [of Himself] is negative, according to [Avicenna], since it comes down to His being separate from matter, and a lack of hiddenness. But how can knowledge about multiple things, which require multiple relations, be subsumed under negation, to which no relation is attached at all? Furthermore, the capacity for laughter is something other than being human, and is its concomitant. And knowing it is something other than knowing humanity. In which case knowledge of the capacity for laughter is not included in the knowledge of humanity. For humanity refers to it only by concomitance, yet this is an extrinsic reference. Hence, the knowledge of both requires two distinct forms. This being so, given that the concomitants of the Necessary Existent are multiple, and His knowledge of Himself differs from the knowledge of these concomitants which follow on the essence, then His knowledge of them will follow on His knowledge of Himself. This would imply that there is numbering and multiplicity in His essence on account of the knowledge of multiple concomitants. Which is absurd, since as you have learned, He is one in all respects.

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15 Cf. al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 105.9–18.

[T47] Al-Shahrazūri, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 496.2–7; 498.20–499.5

[*nobility argument in terms of degrees of perfection*]

Whenever something is more complete and more powerful in its separation from matter, its perception is more perfect and more excellent. Therefore, since intellect is more strongly separated than soul, the perception of intellect is more powerful and stronger than the perception of soul. Likewise the perception of souls differs in accordance with the difference in their separation, their inclination towards the corporeal faculties, their preoccupation with them, and the strength of their connection to body—or [on the other hand] their independence from [the body] and its powers, and their inclination upwards. [...]

[498.20] Since self-perception corresponds to the extent of separation, whereas the perception of other things corresponds to the extent of presence and sovereignty, and the Necessary through Himself is stronger in separation than anything else that is separate from matter, and His sovereignty over things and rule over them is greater than any sovereignty, then He, the exalted, is strongest of all in [499] perception of both Himself and other things. Things are present to Him in a greater and stronger way than with any other presence. Since He is the principle of all things, He is sovereign over them with infinite power, which is stronger than all other sovereignty—indeed there is no comparison between His sovereignty and that wielded by any other—thus the principled relation which has sovereignty through an infinitely strong luminous power is what necessitates the presence of things to Him.

## God's Knowledge of Particulars

Avicenna was notorious for several theses put forward in his philosophy: his endorsement of the eternity of the world, his denial of bodily resurrection, his naturalist accounts of prophecy and miracles. But no one thesis was more notorious, or more associated with Avicenna in particular, than his claim that God knows particulars only “in a universal way.”<sup>1</sup> With his other disputed claims, Avicenna was in the good company of other well-known Aristotelian philosophers, such as Aristotle himself in the case of the world's eternity, or al-Fārābī in the case of his account of prophecy. Here however he seemed to stand alone.<sup>2</sup> Why had he gone out of his way to make this provocative, and at the same time rather obscure, claim about God's knowledge?

His rationale for denying that God knows particulars as such is set out in [T<sub>1</sub>], a famous passage from the metaphysical section of his *Shifā'*. It comes down to the idea that there is a mismatch between the way particular things exist and the way God's thought must be. Whereas the particulars are multiple and changing, God's knowledge is simple and cannot change. As a pure, immaterial mind God lacks the organs and faculties by which we humans grasp particulars as such, for instance when we use eyesight to watch them move or memory to recall them after they have ceased to exist. Thus His access

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- 1 There is extensive literature on the topic. See for instance R. Acar, “Reconsidering Avicenna's Position on God's Knowledge of Particulars,” in D.C. Reisman (ed.), *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: 2004), 142–156; M.E. Marmura, “Some Aspects of Avicenna's Theory of God's Knowledge of Particulars,” in his *Probing in Islamic Philosophy: Studies in the Philosophies of Ibn Sīna, al-Ghazālī and Other Major Muslim Thinkers* (New York: 2005), 71–96; P. Adamson, “On Knowledge of Particulars,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 105 (2005), 273–294; S. Nusseibeh, “Avicenna: Providence and God's Knowledge of Particulars,” in T. Langermann (ed.), *Avicenna and His Legacy: A Golden Age of Science and Philosophy* (Turnhout: 2009), 275–288; K. Lim, “God's Knowledge of Particulars: Avicenna, Maimonides, and Gersonides,” *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 5 (2009), 75–98; F. Benevich, “God's Knowledge of Particulars: Avicenna, *Kalām*, and The Post-Avicennian Synthesis,” *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 76 (2019), 1–47; J. Kaukua, “Future Contingency and God's Knowledge of Particulars in Avicenna,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* (2022), published online: DOI: 10.1080/09608788.2022.2088469.
  - 2 Though it should be noted that his view is anticipated in Alexander of Aphrodisias' *On Providence*, which argues that the heavenly gods exercise providence over the sublunary realm only at a universal level.

to them is entirely like the best kind of cognition that humans have, which is to say, knowledge at a universal level.<sup>3</sup>

It is here that the obscurity in his view comes in. Avicenna argues that God's knowledge, despite being universal, does somehow give Him access to particulars. God grasps Himself as the remote cause of all particular things and thereby grasps them as His effects [T1, T4]; this idea is also explained by his student Bahmanyār [T6] on the basis of the Avicennian notion of "productive knowledge," and by al-Khayyām on the grounds that God knows the necessary concomitants of His essence [T16]. In a lengthy passage not quoted below, but which follows directly after [T1], Avicenna gives the famous example of an eclipse. The main idea of this example was helpfully summarized later by al-Abharī [T51]: if God knows all universal truths that apply to the heavenly bodies involved in an eclipse, then He will know the eclipse as a bundle of descriptions that apply to it. And God will indeed know these universal truths, because He is the cause of the eclipse in question. Al-Abharī's presentation of Avicenna's doctrine largely agrees with that of al-Ṭūsī [T59]. This solution makes the most sense if all things—not just heavenly bodies and celestial intellects but non-eternal things down here in the sublunary world—are the inevitable result of God's causation. Even the smallest details of particular events in the world need to be necessitated ultimately by God, if He is to know them as their cause. In other words, as al-Rāzī critically notes [T26], Avicenna would need to be a determinist, as indeed is suggested at [T4].

This may still seem to call for the presence of many objects of thought in God's mind, as he would be thinking about you, me, and every other particular in the world, past present and future, all as His effects. But Avicenna holds that God grasps them all at once, in a single act of understanding that includes all individual objects of knowledge [T2–3]. In what follows, we will call this the "inclusive knowledge theory." It is standardly illustrated with the case of a person who knows ("in a flash" as it were) how to answer a question or rebut an argument, but would still need to spell it out one step at a time if actually explaining this answer, thus dividing up what had been grasped inclusively [T11, T34]. Ibn Kammūna adds another nice example [T66]: one might know a whole poem through a single act of the mind, without going mentally or verbally through each word or verse. (Compare the example of having the contents of a whole book present to oneself [T61].)

3 For the point that even human "knowledge," properly speaking, is also of universals see Adamson, "On Knowledge of Particulars."



Furthermore, God does not need to change to know the things He ultimately causes. This too is illustrated in the *Shifā'* with the eclipse example: if you know about the eclipse's occurrence on the basis of your astronomical expertise, your knowledge will not change simply because the eclipse is at first in the future, then now in the present, and then in the past. If you know something "in a universal way" your knowledge will never change: you can always know that there will be a lunar eclipse on a certain day. If by contrast you know the lunar eclipse by observing it with sense-perception, your knowledge will change as soon as the eclipse is over [T51, T63].

As al-Ghazālī briefly notes [T8] and as is explained in detail elsewhere [T7, T10, T17, T23], there was an ongoing dispute within *kalām* that resonated strongly with the problem Avicenna was raising, even if his own answer to the question was both innovative and problematic. The *kalām* dispute likewise concerned the question of whether God changes as He knows changing things: the standard example is that Zayd will arrive tomorrow. Notorious was the view of the early *mutakallim* Jahm ibn Ṣafwān, who admitted that there is change in God's knowledge so that He would first know that Zayd will be arriving in the future, then that Zayd is arriving, then that He has already arrived; for interesting discussions of this example see [T24, T77]. Even more daring is the view ascribed to al-Fuwaṭī, namely that God cannot know things before they happen, since there is literally "no thing" to know [T10].

It was, then, against both Avicenna and certain *mutakallimūn* that authors of our period exerted themselves to show how God can indeed know particulars. After all the Qur'ān seems to teach that He does (as at verse 34:3, cited by Avicenna himself at [T1] and also mentioned at [T18, T39, T53]), and we find that people spontaneously pray to God for help, which would be pointless if He did not know about them as individuals [T28]. Besides, God wills to create all things that exist, and surely He knows the objects of His own will [T65] (we have seen this kind of argumentation in the previous chapter). A fairly simple explanation of how this is possible is offered by 'Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamadhānī: since created things are not causes for God, but rather vice-versa, God's knowledge cannot be made to change by their changing [T9]. This sounds plausible enough, but does not explain how exactly God can both avoid changing and have His knowledge "track" things that are changing. Perhaps through Avicenna's idea of inclusive knowledge? Ibn al-Malāhimī thinks not, and argues that the example of knowing how to answer a question or give a proof, but without having yet spelled it out, is unpersuasive. It is only once one spells it out in detail that one *actually* knows it as opposed to having an unrealized capacity or potentiality to know it [T11, cf. T34, T35, T37]. Al-Abharī however contends that the example does work [T49]. If we imagine someone who already knows

how to give a three-step proof, going on to articulate the steps independently of one another would involve three further, separate acts of knowledge. A position akin to the inclusive knowledge theory can also be found in Bābā Afḍal, for whom God's perfect self-knowledge encompasses all objects of knowledge, so that He is the "universal of universals" [T47–48].

As this suggests, not all authors of the period shied away from the notion that God's knowledge is indeed universal in nature. As one might expect, al-Ṭūsī defends Avicenna on this score, adding that God can timelessly know things that are in time, in a mode different to that of temporal knowers [T59–61]. Ibn Kammūna and Bar Hebraeus also rehearse the Avicennan position [T70–71]. But a good deal of criticism was aimed at Avicenna's theory, too. Al-Shahrastānī observes that, since there are many universals to know, universal knowledge would still imply multiplicity in the knower and does not rule out temporality [T18–19].

Al-Rāzī continues this sort of "internal critique" of the Avicennan account, arguing that if God knew things as a cause as Avicenna claims, He would have to know the grounds on which they become individuals too.<sup>4</sup> Thus He would know them in a particular, not a universal, way [T27, T29, T31], which should be possible since there is really no good reason to deny that immaterial knowers can know material things [T21]. Conversely, Avicennists would argue that universal knowledge through causes could never provide an understanding of a given particular, since any combination of universals no matter how detailed could at least in theory be instantiated by some other particular [T30, T67, T71]. Avicenna would, however, need to admit that God knows at least one particular as such, namely His first effect among the celestial intellects, since this is something He causes directly [T36]; al-Ṭūsī suggests that this might be unproblematic since the first intellect does not change [T58]. Finally, paradoxes arise if we suppose with Avicenna that knowing a cause implies knowing all of that cause's effects [T32–33]. A solution to the paradoxes was provided by al-Kātībī and al-Ḥillī, by distinguishing different levels of knowledge [T62, T79].

If Avicenna's proposal of inclusive and universal knowledge in God is rejected, how can the original problem be resolved? Other solutions involve accepting that there is something in, or belonging to, God that allows Him to track multiple, changing things without Himself being multiple or changing. Ibn al-Malāḥimī proposes that God may have "acts" of knowledge that are distinct

4 On al-Rāzī's own view see B. Abrahamov, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on God's Knowledge of the Particulars." *Oriens* 33 (1992), 133–155.

from His essence [T12, T14]. This would explain how God knows everything, as indeed He must if He knows anything at all, since there is no principled reason for saying that He knows certain things rather than others [T13]. Bar Hebraeus rejects Avicenna's claim that God's knowledge is "universal," arguing that He need not change to know about changing things because He has already known in advance what will happen [T72], mirroring the Ash'arite position in the aforementioned *kalām* debate [T7, T8].

Another view posits multiple "relations" in God, which again would leave His essence to be one. This position was developed in two steps. First, once again, one position within the aforementioned *kalām* debate was that God's knowledge is in itself an unchanging attribute, which however has changing relations to changing particulars. Al-Ghazālī and his fellow student al-Anṣārī would argue that knowledge of what changes implies no real change in the knower but only what modern-day philosophers sometimes call "Cambridge change," that is, change only in respect of extrinsic accidents [T7 and T8]. A famous example, given by Avicenna in [T5], is that I can stand still while you go around me, so that without really changing I am at first on your right and then on your left.<sup>5</sup> Avicenna himself rejects this as a way of thinking about knowledge, and claims that on the contrary, change in the known does imply real change in the knower. This was generally accepted in our period. Thus al-Sāwī argues: the knowledge that Zayd *will* be born must, at Zayd's birth, vanish and be replaced by knowledge that Zayd *has been* born; otherwise what was knowledge will become a false belief [T20]. (Compare the "dark house" thought experiment discussed by al-Rāzī at [T24].) Al-Kātibī argues that knowledge must change because it corresponds to the known. If the known is subject to change, the corresponding knowledge is so as well [T63]. Al-Ḥillī similarly argues that knowledge of the future must be different from knowledge of the present because it is possible to be in doubt about one but not the other [T78]. The only explicit proponent of al-Ghazālī's and al-Anṣārī's position is al-Āmidī [T44, T46]: the attribute of God's knowledge is unchanging but may be differently related to perishing things through direct observation.

A second step in the development of the "relational" solution was made by Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī [T15] and taken up by al-Rāzī [T22, T25]. It drops al-Ghazālī's claim that God's knowledge never changes, but retains the idea that His knowledge is relational: in fact knowledge is nothing but a relation

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5 For the same example in antiquity see Boethius' *On the Trinity*, in H.F. Stewart E.K. Rand, and S.J. Tester (trans.), *Boethius: Theological Tractates and Consolation of Philosophy* (London: 1973), §5.

between the knower and the known, not a real attribute.<sup>6</sup> But against this and in defense of al-Ghazālī's and al-Anṣārī's position, al-Āmidī argued that eternal knowledge cannot consist in a relation to a temporally bounded thing [T43, T45].

In developing his theory of knowledge as a relation, Abū al-Barakāt states that some items of knowledge may be directly known with no need for a representation of them in the mind or sense-organ [T15] (see also [T72]). This idea becomes central for al-Suhrawardī's analysis of God's knowledge. He starts from the worry that God cannot know things through representations residing in Him, since this would mean that God receives an influence from what He creates, so as to be both passively affected by things and actively productive of them [T38]. (Al-Abharī and al-Ṭūsī sometimes dismiss this problem, as at [T50, T55].) Suhrawardī's solution is to say that God knows everything by "presence." In other words, things just present themselves to God, who knows them in themselves with no need for representations [T39–42]. He avoids change in God in much the way we have found in Abū al-Barakāt and al-Rāzī: if knowledge is by presence, change in knowledge will mean only relational change [T39, T73].<sup>7</sup>

The theory of knowledge by presence was widely accepted in the 13th century: by al-Abharī [T52–53], al-Nakhjawānī [T54] (ascribed to Avicenna himself!), al-Kātibī [T64], al-Ṭūsī [T56–57], and unsurprisingly al-Suhrawardī's faithful adherent al-Shahrazūrī [T73]. There was however a debate within this tradition: does God's knowledge by presence mean that God knows everything, including sublunary individuals, directly? Al-Shahrazūrī argues for this reading of al-Suhrawardī and opposes it to al-Ṭūsī's interpretation [T75], which states that God knows sublunary individuals through the mediation of celestial intellects. Their representations reside in those intellects and God knows them, since celestial intellects are direct effects of God's creation [T56–57] (cf. al-Suhrawardī's remarks in [T39]). Al-Shahrazūrī compares al-Ṭūsī's idea to an otherwise unknown testimony of the early philosopher al-Kindī [T74]. Ibn Kammūna inclines towards the idea of mediation through celestial intel-

6 See further the chapter on Knowledge and Perception in our Epistemology and Logic volume, as well as Griffel, *The Formation of Post-Classical Philosophy in Islam*, Part 3, chapter 1.

7 On al-Suhrawardī's knowledge by presence see Kaukua, "Suhrawardī's Knowledge as Presence in Context," and H. Eichner, "'Knowledge by presence', Apperception and the mind-body relationship: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and al-Suhrawardī as representatives and precursors of a thirteenth-century discussion," in P. Adamson (ed.), *In the age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth / Twelfth Century* (London: 2011), 117–140. On Abū al-Barakāt see M. Shehata, "Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī on Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will." *Nazarīyat* 6 (2020), 99–131.

lects [T68], saying that this is the only way to explain how God can know non-existent things, like future things that do not yet exist [T69]. This meets an objection from al-Tustarī: he does not understand how God can know non-existent things through knowledge by presence, ascribing that view to al-Ṭūsī and Bahmanyār [T76]. Al-Ḥillī also objects that mediation through the celestial spheres would make them like organs for God [T82]. Against al-Ṭūsī's account of God's knowledge of His effects by their presence, al-Ḥillī argues that we may fail to know what proceeds from us [T80]; conversely, sheer existence of the effects cannot be equated with God's knowing them [T81].

Texts from: Avicenna, Bahmanyār, al-Ghazālī, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, 'Umar al-Khayyām, al-Shahrastānī, al-Sāwī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Suhrawardī, al-Āmidī, Bābā Afḍal, al-Abharī, al-Nakhjawānī, al-Ṭūsī, al-Kātibī, al-Samarqandī, Ibn Kammūna, Bar Hebraeus, al-Shahrazūri, al-Tustarī, al-Urmawī, al-Ḥillī.

## God's Knowledge of Particulars

[T1] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* VIII.6, 287.3–290.17 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

*[God knows things only by being their principle]*

The Necessary Existent cannot intellectually grasp things from the things [themselves]. For if He did, either His essence would be constituted by whatever He grasps [of them], and then He would be constituted through the things; or it would accidentally occur to [the essence] that He grasps<sup>8</sup> [them], in which case [the essence] would not be a necessary existent in every respect, which is absurd. Also, He would be such that He would not be in some state if some external items were absent, but then He would have a state that is not implied by His own essence but by another, so that this other thing would have an effect on Him. The foregoing principles rule this out, and rule out any such thing. Because He is the principle of all existence, He intellectually grasps from His essence that of which He is a principle. He is the principle of both those existents that are complete as concrete objects, and of those existents that are subject to generation and corruption, firstly with respect to their species and then, through these as an intermediary, with respect to their individual instances.

*[God cannot change so as to know changing things as such]*

Another point is that He cannot intellectually grasp these changing things while they are changing and insofar as they are changing, in a temporal and individualized way; He can do so only in another way, which we will explain. For it is impossible that He first intellectually grasps in time that they exist, rather than being non-existent, and then grasps in time that they are non-existent, rather than existing. For in that case, there would be a distinct intellectual form for each of these two situations, neither of which would persist together with the other, and then the Necessary Existent would be subject to change in its essence.

*[God cannot know material things as such]*

Moreover, when corruptible things are intellectually grasped through an immaterial quiddity and through something that attaches to it that is not individual-

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<sup>8</sup> Reading *yaʿqila* instead of *tuʿqala*.

ized, they are not intellectually grasped insofar as they are corruptible. If they are perceived insofar as they are connected to matter, and to the accidents of matter, at a [particular] time and with individuation, then they are not grasped intellectually, but are objects of sensation or imagination. We have shown in other books that every sensory and imaginative form is, as such, perceived by an organ that is divisible. And just as [288] affirming a multiplicity of acts for the Necessary Existent is to ascribe deficiency to Him, so too with the affirmation of many intellections.

*[He knows particulars in a universal way]*

Rather, the Necessary Existent intellectually grasps all things in a universal way. Yet, despite this, no individual thing escapes His knowledge; “not even the weight of a speck of dust upon the earth or in the heavens” (Qur’ān 34:3). This is among the wonders whose conception requires ingenious subtlety. As for how this happens, it is because, when He intellectually grasps His own essence and grasps that He is the principle of every existent, He grasps the principles of the existents [that proceed] from Him and whatever is generated by them. Nothing exists that is not somehow necessitated by Him as a cause, as we have shown. The coming together of these causes results in the existence of particular things. The First knows the causes and what corresponds to them. He thus necessarily knows to what these lead, the times between them, and their recurrences. For He cannot know those [the principles] without knowing this. Thus he will perceive particular items insofar as they are universal, I mean, insofar as they have attributes. If these [particulars] become specified with these [attributes] individually, this takes place in relation to an individuated time or circumstance. If this circumstance were also taken along with their attributes, it too would be in the same position as [the particulars]. But insofar as [these attributes] depend on principles all of which are one of a kind, they depend on individual items. We have said that this sort of dependence may give these individuals a description and a characterization, unique to [each of] them. If a given individual is something that is individual for the intellect too, then the intellect will have a way to get at this [individual] so described. This is the case of an individual which is unique in its species and has no comparable instance (*naẓīr*), for example the sphere of the sun or Jupiter. If, however, the species is spread out across individuals, the intellect will have no way to get at that thing’s description, except once this [individual] is directly indicated, as you have learned.

[T2] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* VIII.7, 291.6–11 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*the simplicity of God's knowledge*]

Furthermore, one should know that when the First is called “intellect,” this is said with the simple meaning you learned in the *Psychology*, namely that in Him there is no variety of forms arranged and differing, such as there is in the [human] soul, in the sense previously [discussed] in the *Psychology*. For this reason He intellectually grasps things all at once, without being rendered multiple by them in His substance, or conceiving their forms in the true reality of His essence. Rather, their forms emanate from Him as intelligibles. He has a better claim to being “intellect” than these forms that emanate from His intellectual nature (*ʿan ʿaqliyyatihi*). For He intellectually grasps His own essence, and grasps that He is the principle of all things, so that He intellectually grasps all things from His essence.

[T3] Avicenna, *Dānishnāma, Ilāhiyyāt*, 87.6–88.6

[*inclusive knowledge theory as applied to God*]

When an intelligent person has a debate or discussion with someone, and is confronted with many statements all of which need answering, then a single thought comes to exist in his soul, such that he is sure he can respond to all of them with that one thought, even though the forms of the answers do not arise separately in his soul. Then, once he starts to reflect and express himself, different forms occur in his soul from that one thought in sequential arrangement, the soul observes one form after another, one bit of knowledge after another occurs to him in actuality, and the language conveys each form as it occurs. Both kinds of knowledge arise in actuality, since the person who has the initial thought is already sure of all his responses, but the second [state] is also knowledge in actuality. The first is knowledge because, it is the principle and cause for the discovery of intellectual forms, and so is actual knowledge; while that other [state] is knowledge because it takes on [88] many intellectual forms. This latter knowledge is passive (*infīʿālī*). Here there are many forms in the knower, which implies multiplicity. In the case of the former, by contrast, there is [only] a relation to many forms from one and the same thing, which necessitates no multiplicity. Thus it has become clear how one may know many things without multiplicity; the way the Necessary Existent knows all things is the same as the way that a single thought knew many things.



[T4] Avicenna, *Dānishnāma, Ilāhiyyāt*, 89.1–90.2

[*knowing the contingent through its causes*]

Nevertheless everything that is contingent in itself is necessary in respect of existence and non-existence through a cause. Hence, when one knows it with respect to the cause, one knows it from the perspective of necessity. So the contingent can be known from that perspective from which it is necessary. For instance, when one says that somebody will find treasure tomorrow, you cannot know whether or not he will find treasure tomorrow, since this is contingent in itself. If, however, you know that there happens to be a cause for him resolving to go somewhere, and a cause for him going along a certain path, and a cause for him placing his foot in a certain spot, and you know that his tread is heavy enough to open the storage place [of the treasure], then you thereby know with certainty that he will reach the treasure. Hence one can know the contingent by considering it from the perspective of its necessity. But you have already learned that nothing *is* until it becomes necessary. Hence each thing has a cause, even though the causes of things are not completely known to us, so that their necessity is not known to us either. If we know [only] some causes, then mere belief prevails and there is no certainty, since we know that those causes about which we are knowledgeable do not render it necessary that the contingent exist. For instance, some other cause may occur, or some hindrance may arise. If not for this “it could be,” we ourselves would know with certainty. But given that each thing that exists goes back to the Necessary Existent, from which [90] it must necessarily come to be—so that all things have a necessary relation to the Necessary Existent, since they become necessary through Him—all things are therefore known to Him.

[T5] Avicenna, *Dānishnāma, Ilāhiyyāt*, 90.8–91.6

[*knowledge needs to imply change*]

Whoever knows something possesses an attribute which is in his soul and is distinct from his being related to that thing, and from the fact that that thing is. It's not like when one thing is to the right of another, and there is nothing apart from a relation between it and that thing, so that if that thing which was to its right becomes non-existent and is no longer to its right, it will undergo no change. Rather, its connection and relation to the other thing is no longer there, but its essence remains just as it was. On the contrary, knowledge is something such that, when someone is knowing, at the time when the essence of the known is there, [he knows] that it is there. The moment that it is no

longer there, [he knows] that the essence of the known [91] is not there, and it is not only the essence of the known that is not there. Rather the [prior] fact of being a knower, which was an entity (*ma'nā*) and attribute in the essence of [the knower], is not there either. For one equally knows something when there is something else in addition to himself, and when that thing is absent. [So] there needs to be something specific in his essence, namely that fact of being a knower. Either there is a specific state for every specific object of knowledge, or one and the same specific state in him is connected to all objects of knowledge, such that if even a single object of knowledge were lacking, that specific state would no longer be there.

[T6] Bahmanyār, *Tahṣīl*, 574.3–11

[on productive knowledge]

Since He intellectually grasps Himself (*dhātaḥ*), He also grasps the necessary concomitants of His essence (*dhāt*); otherwise He would not intellectually grasp Himself completely. Although the necessary concomitants that are His intelligibles are accidents existing in Him, He is neither described with them nor is He acted upon by them. For His being the Necessary Existent through Himself is the same as His being the principle for His necessary concomitants—that is, His intelligibles. Rather, whatever proceeds from Him does so only after He already exists completely. Indeed, his essence cannot be a subject of inherence for accidents in virtue of which He is acted upon, perfected, or described. Rather, His perfection lies in their proceeding from Him, not in His being their subject of inherence. The necessary concomitants of His essence are the forms of His intelligibles, not in such a way that these forms proceed from Him and He then intellectually grasps them. Rather these very forms—because they are separate from matter—emanate from Him while they are intelligible to Him. Their very existence from Him is the same as their intelligibility. Hence His intelligibles are active, not passive.

[T7] Al-Anṣārī, *Ghunya*, vol. 1, 545.10–13; 545.20–546.2; 547.4–6; 547.13–17

[Response to Jahm ibn Ṣafwān on change in God as knower]

[545.10] We say to Jahm: if God, may He be praised, is eternally knowing about what will be, He can know it only as it is, so He must [already] do so sufficiently when He creates. For there is no further help from the origination of knowledge about [created things] in addition to eternal knowledge. But He knows about

them by means of supposition (*taqdīr*), and once they come to exist, that which was supposed becomes realized. Supposition and realization (*taḥqīq*) belong to the object of knowledge, not to the eternal attribute [of knowledge]. [...]

[545.20] *If someone says:* the Creator knew in His eternity about the non-existence of the world, not about its existence. But once the world was originated, one of the two must be the case: either He does not know about this, which is absurd, or He does know about it, and then a feature arises newly for Him that was not there [before], so that there is no escape from [accepting] the new arising of knowledge. [546] Moreover, one cannot say that originated knowledge inheres in His essence, nor is there any way to say that He would have known from eternity about [the world's] existence before it existed, since this would be ignorance and not knowledge. [...]

[547.4] Supposing that originated knowledge persists, [let us] imagine the knowledge connected to the [fact] that Zayd will arrive tomorrow, whereupon he arrives. The knowledge that his arrival will occur should persist until the time of his arrival. Then, when he does arrive, there is no need for any new knowledge about the occurrence of his arrival, as one already had the knowledge about his arrival at a certain time.

[547.13] *If someone says:* one still finds in one's soul a difference between knowing that [Zayd] will come and knowing [that he is coming] at the time of his coming. *We say:* knowing that [Zayd] will arrive tomorrow is knowing about his arrival at a certain time. Hence, what corresponds (*muta'allaq*) to [this] knowledge is his arrival at that time. From this knowledge follows knowledge of the non-existence of his arrival before the appointed time. If however one posits that there is a newly arising state or some change in the soul, then this just has to do with the sense-perception of the arrival and observing it to happen. But the one who reports (*mukhbīr*) is not like the one who observes (*mū'āyin*), nor does supposition (*taqdīr*) behave like realization (*taḥqīq*) in the case of originated things.

[T8] Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 138.14–139.8; 140.12–15 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*God's changing knowledge is not real change*]

[138.14] On what basis do you refute someone who says that God the exalted has one knowledge of the existence of, for example, the eclipse at a specific

time, and that this knowledge before [the eclipse] happens is knowledge that it *will* be, but it is identical with the knowledge of its occurrence when it is happening, and with the knowledge of its having passed once it is over; and that these differences reduce to relations that necessitate no change in the essence of knowledge, and hence necessitate no change in the essence of the knower; and that [these differences] have the status of a pure relation? For one individual may first be on your right, then move to be in front of you, then move to your left. The relations thus succeed each other for you, but it is this individual who is undergoing change, not you. This is how [142] one must understand the situation with God's knowledge. For we admit that He knows things by one knowledge in the eternal past and future, [His] state never changing. Their purpose was to deny change [in God], and this is agreed. But as for their claim that there must be change if knowledge is affirmed first for something happening now and then later for its having passed, this is not agreed. How do they know this? For if God creates for us knowledge of the arrival of Zayd tomorrow at sunrise [and] preserves this knowledge, creating neither another knowledge for us nor a lapse in this knowledge, then at the time of the sunrise we would know he is arriving now just by the previous knowledge; and, would know later that he had arrived earlier. This one persisting knowledge would be sufficient to include all three states.

[*comparison between Avicenna and earlier theologians*]

[140.12] According to your principles, what prevents Him from knowing particular items even if [it means that] He undergoes change? Why couldn't you say that this kind of change is not impossible for him, just as Jahm [ibn Ṣafwān], among the Mu'tazilites, did? He claimed that that [God's] cognitions of temporally originated things are [themselves] temporally originated. [Or why couldn't you say that] He is a subject for temporally originated things, just as some of the later Karramiyya believed?

[T9] 'Ayn al-Qudāt, *Zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq*, 22.4–23.3; 25.1–11 [trans. Jah, mod.]

[*God's knowledge need not change with the change of the known*]

Someone who says that God does not know particulars (may God be greatly exalted above what they say!) probably reached this conclusion insofar as he sees these particulars as falling under past or future. So he thought that their change would necessitate that the knowledge of them changes along with them. This is madness, according to those who have undertaken verification,

because time is a part of existent things. For it is just the measure of motion, and motion is among the proper attributes of bodies. It is acknowledged that the bodies are the lowest category that exists from the eternal knowledge. All existent things, whether noble or base, are acquired from it [sc. divine knowledge], whereas the existence of the eternal knowledge is not dependent on the existence of anything. Rather the existence of each thing depends on its existence. If time is a part of the existent things, as already explained, how can one say that a change that occurs to any existent things would imply a change in His knowledge? This would be true only if His knowledge were dependent on the existent things, as is the case with the knowledge of humankind (*al-khulq*). Since His knowledge is not like this, the change of existent things does not imply a change in His knowledge, which comprehends them. [...]

[*sun comparison*]

[22.17] Someone who supposes that a change in the rays [of the sun] due to a veil (like a cloud, for instance) that prevents the Earth from being able to receive them would imply a change in the attribute which is the source of the rays, has fallen into great error. Upon my life! The sun could change, and consequently the rays would change; but our supposition here [23] is that the change in the rays is caused by a veil which prevents the Earth from receiving the light of the sun. I do not mean that it prevents the *emanation* of the sun, since the sun is as it was, with its attributes. Nothing changes in it due to this veil. Rather it is the veil that prevents the Earth from receiving the emanation of the sunlight. [...]

[*the inconceivability of God's knowledge*]

[25.1] May God Almighty increase their understanding of the incapacity of their own intellects to perceive divine matters! Anyone who desires to comprehend by his intellect and knowledge the true reality of a knowledge that already existed before creation (*al-kawn*) and before even [any] “before,” and which is the cause of the existence of all existing things, and which comprehends everything to an extent that no comprehension beyond it can be conceived, has sought the vulture’s egg,<sup>9</sup> desired to reach the stars, and truly divested himself of his inborn intellect. The superior ones (*ahl al-faḍl*) may rightly count

9 The egg of a vulture is an idiomatic example of something extremely rare. There is a wordplay here because “vulture (*anūq*)” is followed by a comparison that speaks specifically of reaching the star Capella (*ʿayyūq*).

such people as insane. Our intellects are many times less capable of perceiving eternal knowledge than an ant, or even an inanimate object, would be of comprehending our knowledge.

[*yet at least disanalogy is clear*]

The relation of His knowledge to ours is like the relation of His power to our power. Just as it is impossible for our power to create (*ikhtirā'*) a thing, that is, make it exist from nothing, but this is not impossible for His eternal power, because He is the originator of the heavens and the Earth (that is, He is the one who made them exist and created them from nothing)—so in the same way, it is also impossible for our knowledge to be such that an object of knowledge changes without implying a change in our knowledge of it, because our knowledge is acquired from the object of knowledge. Yet this is not impossible for the knowledge of God, on which the existence of all existent things is based.

[T10] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 352.2–9

[*doxographical account of Mu'tazilite views*]

The majority of Muslims believed that God the exalted is eternally knowledgeable. Yet the master Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī reports that Jahm b. Ṣafwān argued that knowing about the non-existent is impossible, and said that God the exalted knows things only when they exist (*fi ḥāl wujūdihi*). The same is ascribed to the Rāfiḍīs. It is also reported about Hishām b. al-Ḥakam that he would say: if God had eternal knowledge, then He would know that bodies are in motion and that the heavens are existent [eternally]. The doctrine of Hishām b. al-Ḥakam was apparently that the Exalted does not know things before they exist. It is also reported about Hishām b. 'Amr al-Fuwaṭī that for him, one could not say that God the exalted knows about things eternally, since this would entail that they are “things” despite being non-existent, but on his view the non-existent is not a thing. Yet he did not exclude that God the exalted is eternally knowledgeable, only that one may describe the object of knowledge as a “thing.”

[T11] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 78.22–79.10; 84.15–85.9

[*ascription of inclusive knowledge theory to the philosophers*]

*Then they said*, just as God the exalted knows Himself, He also knows all species and genera of existents. Then they asked themselves: many objects of knowledge call for many items of knowledge, since it is absurd that one and the same

knowledge be about differentiated (*mufaṣṣala*) objects of knowledge. So when you say that He knows the genera of the objects of knowledge, this implies a multiplicity [79] in His knowledge and likewise a multiplicity in His essence. The response to this is that [His knowing genera and species] does not result in multiplicity. For we say that He, may He be exalted, knows genera and individual particulars in a universal way, which results in no multiplicity. This is shown by the fact that humans have three states of knowledge. First, when one distinguishes in one's soul the forms of the objects of knowledge, and mutually arranges them. Second, when one acquires for one's soul a state and disposition, which is the principle for the emanation of an infinite number of forms. For instance one may acquire the science of mathematics, this being a simple state in which nothing is distinguished, but which has a relation to an infinite number of forms. The third is a state in between these two, as when a person hears an objection in a dispute and can work out how to solve it. He knows that his response is present to him, even as he intends to make a detailed and lengthy [account of his response], so that he finds in his soul that he comprehends the response and is ready to proceed with it, so that differentiated forms will keep arising anew in him, and one expression after another, until he exhausts that which is in his soul. This state is the principle of differentiation, and its creator. The knowledge of God the exalted must be of this third kind. [...]

[*critical response*]

[84.15] As for the comparisons he gave to one of us having knowledge, and the way He, may He be exalted, having knowledge in the third way, *the response is as follows*. The second comparison is not a case where someone knowledgeable knows anything at all. For someone who knows the foundations of mathematics and is indeed able to derive [the solutions to] certain problems from them, does not know the derivation [of those solutions] to the given problems at that moment. He knows only the premises for these problems, which he arranges in his soul. Only once he finds an arrangement, does he thereby know the correspondence of this problem to the foundations he has confirmed for himself, which are premises of knowledge of this problem. But being able to know something is not the same as knowing this thing. Rather [actual knowledge of something arises] by arranging knowledge with respect to the thing.

As for the third comparison, where one of us knows the response to an objection, it is along the same lines as knowing about the foundation of mathematics. For someone who is proficient in a science finds the premises of knowledge of a given problem and derives [a solution]. Afterwards, he expresses what he found in his soul in terms of premises, in order to display how that problem

may be derived, in correspondence to the foundations. Likewise someone who knows the response to an objection finds within his soul, upon hearing [the objection], the invalidity of the syllogism on the basis of which the objection was based, or that its premises are false. Then he expresses what he has come to know about the invalidity [of the syllogism] or the falsehood of that premises. This, however, [happens only] once [85] they are realized in his soul. If they are not present, he needs to take up an investigation and syllogistic argument in order to know the response to the objection. So if their statement, “this state is the principle of differentiation in matters of knowledge (*tafṣīl al-‘ulūm*),” means that one arranges the premises of the response to the objection in one’s soul, but without taking up a syllogistic [argument], then this would amount to a co-occurrence of multiple items of knowledge (*‘ulūm*) about things at one and the same moment in the soul, once one responds to the objection. And they ruled out this co-occurrence of different items of knowledge in the soul, saying that it would imply multiplicity in the knower, but they say that the multiplicity of the known is impossible in God the exalted. So they are wrong to say that God is knowledgeable in the third way. Or they might mean by this statement that one is *disposed* to acquiring knowledge about the response to the problem, since it is easy to form a syllogism through which one knows the response in detail (*‘alā al-tafṣīl*). And once one starts to respond to it, at the very moment of intending the premises of the response, one acquires the items of knowledge, insofar as each premise contributes to an exhaustive response to the objection. Yet this state in no way amounts to the knower actually knowing things. Rather, one knows about [the things] potentially. But this is not what they want in the case of God the exalted being knowledgeable.

[T12] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 81.19–22; 89.17–90.2; 90.12–15

[*critical response to Avicenna*]

As for your statement, “He knows that He is the principle of existents, so that His knowledge of Himself encompasses knowledge of them,” *we say to you*: aren’t existing bodies and accidents particular individuals? So if His knowledge of Himself encompasses knowledge of them, then it encompasses particular things. So you [must] say that He knows them in a particular way, since it is in this way that His essence is their principle. [...]

[89.17] As for the example [Avicenna] provided for [God’s] knowing particulars in a universal way, namely that He would know that if the sun and moon



are in a given position, then an eclipse will happen over a given region (*iqḷīm*), and this is true, regardless whether the eclipse is [just now] occurring or not, one may respond to him as follows. Mustn't anyone who knows these states of the sun and the moon and the resulting eclipse know the sun, moon, and positions themselves, in order to know about the occurrence of the eclipse? Or is it that He knows that, if there *were* a sun in a celestial sphere, and a moon in [another] sphere, and if they were to move in position, so that the sun is present at a specific position—if, that is, it were to have any specific position—then the eclipse *would* happen? If [Avicenna] says the first, then he has described [God] as knowing particulars, since the sun and the moon as concrete objects (*bi-'aynihimā*) are parts of the world. But if he says the second, then it may be said to him that these items of knowledge involve no knowledge of the particulars, since each of them is knowledge of something universal. Likewise the knowledge of the quiddity of human [90] is not knowledge about some particular human, but rather knowledge of a universal. Don't you see that these items of knowledge—that is, that if there *were* sun, moon, position, and region, and if there *were* then motions, then there *would* be an eclipse—is like knowing that if there *were* human and horse, then they *would* be distinguished by a specific difference? If knowledge of this sort were knowledge of particulars, then there would be no difference between the universal and the particular. [...]

[90.12] *It may be said to him:* what do you mean by saying that His perception would change as time changes? Do you mean that the essence of the perceiver would change through the changing in His perception of the changing objects of perception? Or do you mean that the acts of the perceiver would change, that is, his perceptions? If the former, then one may say to him that the essence of the agent does not change through the change of his acts. If the latter, then one may ask him what prevents the acts of the agent from being multiple.

[T13] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimūn*, 87.5–17

[*specification argument: if God knows anything, He knows everything*]

*We say:* they [i.e. the *mutakallimūn*] would say that [God]—may He be exalted—knows about all objects of knowledge in all respects, in both a universal and particular way; not even a speck of dust escapes His knowledge, either in the heavens or on the earth. They proved this on the grounds that the Exalted knows some objects of knowledge through Himself, not through anything additional to Himself, so that He must know all that He can pos-

sibly know, in every way He can possibly know it. The proof that the Exalted knows some things through Himself, has already been indicated above, and the philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) admit it. We only need it to be the case that, if He knows some objects of knowledge through Himself, then He knows all of them. For if He knows some of them without any factor to specify Him as knowing some rather than others, and if it is not impossible for every living being that it know all things, then it must know all of them, since none [of the objects of knowledge] is more appropriate in this respect [that is, to be known] than others; then, He either knows everything or knows nothing at all. Since it is false that He knows no object of knowledge, He must know them all. Our saying "it is not impossible for every living being to know all things" is a primarily evident judgment. Therefore, if reasonable people learn that there is a living being who knows in this way, they would not deem it impossible [that it knows every object of knowledge], but would accept this. The only reason it would know some things but not others would be its not knowing what it knows through itself, but instead through something additional to it: a capacity for doing so, an investigation, or a proof. In that case, when it knew certain things this would not imply its knowing everything. It would only imply that knowing everything is not impossible for it due to its being a living thing, but it would [actually] know only those objects it has a means to know, nothing else.

[T14] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimūn*, 88.1–7; 88.23–89.1; 89.3–6

[*his own position: knowledge as God's act*]

We have shown that the true reality of knowledge is not what they suppose it to be. The *mutakallimūn* of Islam posited that God the exalted is knowledgeable only because this is necessitated by His essence, and posited the objects of [His] knowledge as a condition, or as connected to [God's being knowledgeable]. Someone who thinks that the Exalted knows that things will be, but He cannot know them as existent before they exist, so that He knows them as existent only once they exist, argues as follows: His essence, may He be exalted, necessitates that that existent is evident (*tabayyunahu*) to Him, and that He is connected to it. Not that that existent affects His essence; [rather] God is knowledgeable in the same way that the other effects of His essence come about, such as the possibility that action [proceeds] from His essence and has its existence from Him, or the fact that He sees existing things and hears sounds. The fact that His essence necessitates that these features apply [to Him] when conditions for them arise anew implies no change in His essence. [...]

[88.23] The truth, according to those who among them who have engaged in verification, is that God's being knowledgeable is not a state (*ḥāla*) in Him, but rather a feature (*ḥukm*) that proceeds from His essence; and that the connection between knower and known, as well as the latter's being evident to the former, is something between the essence of the knower and the essence of the known. It cannot be grasped intellectually without both of them, just like fatherhood for the father and sonhood for son. Though the features of the essence may be multiple, [89] that which necessitates them is not multiple. [...]

[89.3] Furthermore, he is also wrong to say that [God's] being knowledgeable cannot be an accident of His essence, since He cannot have a state which does not follow from His essence but follows from something else. For we have shown that nothing follows for Him from something else; rather it follows from His essence. One does not thereby affirm any state for His essence. Rather, as they would put it, one affirms His "act," or as we would put it, a "feature" that is necessitated by Him.

[T15] Abū al-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 76.21–77.1; 77.7–12; 81.10–12; 82.12–24; 83.3–5; 88.11–89.3

[*response to Avicenna's multiplicity and change arguments*]

As for the claim that there must be distinction in Him through the perception of distinct objects, and multiplicity through the multiplicity of the perceptions, the verified response is as follows. He is not multiplied through this multiplicity in respect of His essence, but only in respect of His relations and associations. This [multiplicity] entails no multiplicity in His concrete being, His essence, or His unity, which necessarily pertains to Him due to the necessity of His existence in Himself. Yet His being the First Principle, through which we came to know Him, and on account of which we have made certain affirmations and negations regarding Him, [77] is [not]<sup>10</sup> a unity of His perceptions, associations, and relations; rather it is only the unity of His true reality, essence, and concrete being. [...]

[77.7] How can [Avicenna] say that the perception of things that are changing entails change in [God's] essence, given that he himself said in the *Categories*

10 A negation seems to be required here for sense: he wants precisely to accept that the relations and perceptions are multiple, but do not render God multiple.

that one and the same belief is the subject for truth and falsehood, not due to any change in itself, but insofar as the objects of belief change how they are, from corresponding with [the belief] to conflicting with it. For that change does not belong to the belief in itself but rather to the object of belief, insofar as it corresponded with it at first but then changed and conflicted with it. How could it be that in this case belief, conviction, and knowledge do not change, but in that case [i.e. God's case] knowledge does change, leading to a change in the knower? [...]

[81.10] He grasps the eternal eternally, and those things that arise anew as an intellect that is eternal and perpetual, insofar as they are perpetual in species and materially, and also with regard to the efficient and final causes. So He also grasps them intellectually as they change, in correspondence to their change. This change is not in Him, but in them. [...]

*[reply to Avicenna's argument that God's knowledge would be either a constituent or an accident for Him]*

[82.12] Regarding constitution, the response is that the presupposition is false. For someone who intellectually grasps something is not constituted by that which he grasps, since intellection is an act, and acts are posterior to existence precisely in terms of essential posteriority. How could existence be constituted by something that is essentially posterior to existence? As for His intellection being an accident for [his essence], what [Avicenna] infers from this, namely that He would not be necessary existent in all His aspects, is like poetic acclaim, or like a rhetorical speech of praise using images as verbal adornments. Otherwise, what is the meaning of "in all His aspects"? For whatever applies [to His intellection] applies to the fact that He is the first principle, or indeed a principle in general: either He is constituted by being the first principle, or this is an accident for Him. So He is not necessary in all His aspects. For instance, He is not the necessary existent in respect of being the first principle of Zayd, 'Amr, or other existents. What [Avicenna's] demonstration [of God's existence] proved to us is that He is the necessary existent in Himself; as for "all His aspects," if they are aspects of His existence, then this is right [sc. the aspects are necessary]. But when it comes to His relations and associations, then no: given what has been said, this is wrong. Either He is not the first principle, or He is not the necessary existent in all His aspects, that is, with respect to His relations to that whose existence is essentially posterior to His existence. [...]

[83.3] As for [Avicenna's] claim that [God] would possess a state that is not entailed by His essence but by something else, this is wrong. For knowledge is a

relation entailed by His essence in association with created things, and created things are entailed by His essence; but what is entailed by something entailed by His essence, is entailed by His essence, not by anything else. [...]

[*God's knowledge by presence*]

[88.11] We have already said that the objects of perception are of two kinds: those that are real (*wujūdiyya*) and are observed in concrete individuals, and those that are mental and are apprehended by minds. The real ones are, for instance, visible objects: when we perceive them with our senses, our perception of them does not occur through any transfer of their forms into the organs of sense, as supposed by those who speak of an impression of the form of the visible object in the eye, or in the spirit where the two [optic] nerves meet. It has been clearly and sufficiently shown that we perceive them as distant when they are far away, and as near when they are close at hand, and at their position to the right or left, above or below. This is how our perception of existing things grasped by the senses is: we are led to perceive them by means of organs that were created for us. We believe much the same about spiritually existing things that we do not perceive with our sense-organs, but through knowledge and understanding of them by way of inference (*istidlāl*). If our souls were brought to them as they are brought by the eye to things that are seen, so that we could “converse” with them themselves (*dhawātihā*) one by one, there would be the same kind of perceptions of them too. There is no obstacle or proof to prevent our saying that God the exalted perceives other existents like this too, given that no veil hides any of them from Him. Nothing limits His scope for perceiving everything, just as nothing limits His power from bringing them all into existence. His perception of them is the same as our souls’ perception of what we see, in that no object of perception inheres in the perceiver, as opposed to what is claimed by those who say there is such an inherence. Nor is any shape realized in a body, as claimed by the materialists. Rather [God knows] in the [89] same way as our souls perceive things as far away, nearby, small, or big, especially in the case of visible objects of seeing, though I have shown and explained that the same applies to other sense objects.

[T16] Al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī al-wujūd*, 112.11–12

[God’s] knowledge is perhaps something existing (*wujūdī*), namely the occurrence of forms of the intelligibles in His essence; other than that they all are contingently existent and are necessarily concomitant to Him.

[T17] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 215.2–11; 217.2–10; 217.18–218.2; 218.13–219.11; 220.18–221.13

[*history of the problem in previous authors*]

[215.2] *On eternal knowledge specifically: that it is a single eternal [knowledge] connected to all objects of knowledge in a differentiated way, regardless whether they are universal or particular.*

Jahm ibn Ṣafwān and Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam argued that the originated items of knowledge are affirmed for God the exalted, according to the number of the objects of knowledge that newly arise, and none of which are in a subject of inherence. This after having agreed that [God] has always known what will be, and knowledge about that which *will be* is different from knowledge about that which *is*.

The ancient philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) believed that [God] only knows Himself. Also, existents necessarily follow from His self-knowledge, without their being known to Him. In other words, there is no form of them in Him, either in a differentiated or undifferentiated way. Some of them believed that He does know universals, but not particulars.

[217.2] Hishām [ibn al-Ḥakam] said: proof has already been given to show that the Creator, may He be praised and exalted, knows from eternity whatever will be in the world. But once the world comes to exist, does His knowledge remain knowledge of that which *will be*, or not? If it is no longer knowledge about what will be, then some feature or knowledge has newly arisen [in Him]. This newly arisen [knowledge] must originate either in Himself, in a subject of inherence, or neither in Himself nor in a subject of inherence. It cannot originate in Himself, given that, as we have already seen, He cannot possibly be a subject of inherence for originated things. Nor can it be in a subject of inherence, since if an entity subsists in a subject, then the corresponding predicate applies to [this subject, not to God]. It remains only that it has originated, but not in a subject. But if, on the other hand, His knowledge of what will be does remain as it was when first connected [to its object], then it becomes ignorance, not knowledge. [...]

[217.18] We are in no doubt that our knowledge of Zayd's arriving tomorrow is not the same as our knowledge that He is arriving [now]. Rather our knowledge that he *will arrive* is one thing, and our knowledge that he *is arriving* is something else. Every human [218] necessarily distinguishes between these

two states of his knowledge. This difference comes down to the fact that knowledge newly arises once [Zayd] arrives, not having been there before.

[218.13] The master Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (may God have mercy upon Him) said that according to his teaching, no feature arises newly for God the exalted, nor is there any succession of states in Him, nor do any of His attributes newly arise. Rather He, the exalted, is described with one and the same eternal knowledge, which is connected to what has always been and always will be. It encompasses all objects of knowledge in all their differentiation, without any aspect, connection, or state of knowledge newly arising, because it [sc. God's knowledge] is eternal, and the eternal does not change nor does any state newly arise for it. The relation of eternal knowledge to that which comes to be is [itself] eternal, just like the relation of the eternal existence to that which comes to be and occurs at various moments. Just as His essence does not change even as [219] times change, His knowledge does not change even as the objects of knowledge change. For it belongs to the true reality of knowledge that it follows the object of knowledge insofar as it corresponds to it (*ʿalā mā huwa bihi*), but without acquiring any attribute from it, or giving any attribute to it. Even though the objects of knowledge differ and are countably many, they still share in being known. They differ not in being connected to the knowledge, but in themselves. Their being known is nothing other than the fact that knowledge is connected to them, and in this they do not differ. The same goes for the connections of all eternal attributes: we do not say that some state in [the attributes] arises newly when some state newly arises in that which is connected [to them]. Thus we do not say that God the exalted knows existence and non-existence together at the same moment; that would be absurd. Rather He knows non-existence at the moment of non-existence and existence at the moment of existence. [His] knowledge about what will be is one and the same as [His] knowledge that it is at the moment when it is. But necessarily, knowledge of the existence [of something] at the moment it exists, is the same as knowledge of [its] non-existence before it exists, and one refers to it as “knowledge of what *will be*.” [...]

[220.18] The Muʿtazila, following their own approach, said that the Creator—may He be exalted—eternally knows through Himself what will be. [221] The relation between Himself, or the aspect of his being knowledgeable, and the future object of His knowledge is the same as the relation to the presently existing object of knowledge. If one of us knows what will happen in the future, then he knows by way of supposing existence (*ʿalā al-taqdīr al-wujūd*), whereas someone who knows what is happening presently knows by way of confirm-

ing existence (*'alā al-tahqīq al-wujūd*). The objects of knowledge [are known] through one and the same knowledge, whether by supposition or confirmation. They [sc. the Mu'tazila] allowed that knowledge remains, and allowed for the connection of one single knowledge to two objects of knowledge. They ruled this out neither for the evident nor for the hidden. Furthermore, some of them said that the difference between the two states [sc. knowledge of future and present] is just a difference between the connections, not the connected items, whereas al-Ash'arī said that the difference does have to do with the connected but not the connecting [i.e. the object, not the subject, of knowledge], nor the connection [itself]. Some of them, however, said that the difference between both states goes back to both states.

Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī inclined to the doctrine of Hishām, arguing that the states of the Creator—may He be exalted—do newly arise along with the new arising of that which comes to be, even though he was among the opponents of [the theory] of states (*aḥwāl*). Nonetheless He made the aspects of connections “states” that are related to the essence of the knower. In all of his statements, he adopted the methods of the philosophers (*al-falāsifa*), defaming and refuting his own masters among the Mu'tazila as he critically examined their arguments (*bi-taṣaffuḥ adillatihim*).

[T18] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 222.4–14; 231.14–232.9

[*his understanding of Avicenna's position*]

[God] intellectually grasps everything only in a universal way, actively and not passively. Still, no individual thing escapes Him, “Not even the weight of a speck of dust upon the earth or in the heavens” [Q 34:3]. As for how this happens, it is because, when He intellectually grasps His essence and grasps that it is the principle of every existent, He grasps the principles of existents and whatever is engendered from them. Nothing exists without becoming known insofar as it is necessitated through Him as a cause (*bi-sabābihi*). So the causes (*asbāb*), through their productivity, result in particular things existing from them. The First knows the causes and what corresponds to them, and knows their results, the intervening times and the cyclical effects. Thus He perceives particular items insofar as they are universal, in other words insofar as they have attributes, and states through which they are disposed for being universal. If they are specified, this occurs only in relation to time, place, and individual state. [...]



**[objection: universal knowledge still implies multiplicity]**

[231.14] *When one of them says that [God] knows things in a universal way, so that He undergoes no change, we say: every individual existing in this world calls for a universal that is specific to it. For the universality of a human individual, namely his being a human, is not the same as the universality of some other animal individual. Rather, universals are multiplied along with the multiplication of the individuals. Hence, even if He knows particulars only in respect of their universality, so that the universal knowledge does not change due to [their] universality, the way knowledge would change due to [their] particularity, still His knowledge will be multiplied according to their universality, just as it [232] is multiplied according to their particularity. But if all universals (*kullīyyāt*) are brought together as one single universal,<sup>11</sup> then it follows that the only thing known is that one universal. Furthermore, that one universal is His necessary concomitant for Him in His existence, so [His] knowing it is a necessary concomitant to knowing Himself. This, however, amounts simply to the teaching of someone who says that [God] knows Himself alone. So what does then this person [sc. Avicenna] add to this teaching, apart from just the term “universality,” which is known as concomitant, just as particulars are known as concomitant? This adds nothing worthwhile: whoever knows the principles of existents knows what results from them and what arises from them, inquiring from cause to effect. And someone who knows the most specific attribute of existents will know the most general, inquiring from what has a concomitant to the concomitant. But there is a huge gap between the two approaches.*

[T19] Al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāraʿa*, 76.8–77.5; 86.1–87.4; 90.3–91.3 [trans. Mayer, mod.]

**[the manner of God’s knowledge in respect of universality and time]**

Perhaps these people will persist, saying: if He had knowledge, it would have to be either universal or particular. If it were universal, it could not be conceived to [77] function as an efficient cause (*an yakūna fiʿlīyyan*), for whatever is brought about by the universal must be universal, just as whatever is brought about by particular knowledge must be particular. Yet there are no concrete things that are universal. So what is originated by it would not fit the manner (*wajh*) of its origination, and what originates it would not fit the manner in which it ori-

<sup>11</sup> We correct *kull wāhid* to *kullī wāhid* in correspondence to *al-kullī al-wāhid* in the next line.

ginates. If His knowledge were particular, it would have to be changed by the change in the object of knowledge; for the knowledge that Zayd *will* arrive does not remain alongside the knowledge that he *has* arrived. [...]

[86.1] *As for Avicenna's statement*, "It cannot be that He knows things through the things themselves, or else His knowledge would be passive," *I say*: this issue is between them and the theologians (*al-mutakallimūn*), as to whether He knows things before they happen, as they happen, or afterwards; and whether the knowledge follows upon the object of knowledge, so that it discovers the object of knowledge as it is, or whether the object of knowledge instead follows upon the knowledge; and whether the nonexistent must be a thing, so that it may be known and communicated, or rather cannot be a thing? According to that man's teaching, the knowledge of the Necessary of Existence is an active knowledge, meaning that it is the cause of the existence of the object of knowledge. This implies that He does not know the object of knowledge before it comes to be nor after it comes to be; rather His knowing it is His bringing it to be. According to this, it follows that He will not know Himself, since He does not generate Himself! [87] Or alternatively, it follows that His knowledge in relation to [created] things is an active knowledge, whereas His knowledge of Himself is a passive knowledge. In that case His knowledge of Himself is not the same as He Himself, nor is His knowledge of Himself the same as His knowledge of things. What a calamity is this confusion heaped upon confusion! "He for whom God makes no light, is without light" (Qur'ān 24.40). [...]

[90.3] One is not forced to say that He knows things "before" they come to be or "after" they come to be. For "before," "after," and "simultaneous with" are temporal ascriptions (*aḥkām zamāniyya*), but His knowledge—may He be exalted—is not temporal. Rather, [all] times are equal in relation to it. If [Avicenna] supposes it is universal, it does not depart from being *temporal*, as he supposed regarding the eclipse. Instead, temporal knowledge changes as time changes, whereas atemporal knowledge does not change at all as time changes. It is entirely possible that [knowledge] be universal, yet also in time. But instead, the universal cannot conceivably be applied to the way that He truly is, [91] may He be exalted. This goes, for instance, for the categorical and conditional propositions he applied in the case of the eclipse, that is, "*if* it is so and so, *then* it is such and such." The knowledge of the Creator—may He be exalted—is higher than this, so as not to be conditioned by "if it is so and so, then it is such and such."

[T20] Al-Sāwī, *Nahj al-taqdīs*, 123.1–124.2; 125.4–126.12; 133.13, 134.13–135.4  
 [*change in knowledge is real change, with responses to Abū al-Barakāt*]

[God] cannot intellectually grasp temporal things in a temporal way, since temporal knowledge about temporal things happens only at the times of their existence, neither beforehand nor afterwards. So knowledge of the origination of the concrete individual Zayd at this specific time, after not having been, can happen only at this time [sc. when he does originate]. Likewise one knows, in the temporal sense just mentioned, that [Zayd] fails to exist only at the time of his non-existence. For, if it occurred beforehand or afterwards, it would be ignorance. It is absurd to believe, before Zayd as a concrete [individual] is originated, that he is originated even as Zayd has not yet originated, rather than believing that he *will* be originated. Doubtless such a belief would be ignorance. Knowledge [in this case] would consist only in knowing the non-existence [of Zayd], not his existence, since he is non-existent, not existent. But then, once he is originated, knowledge of his non-existence cannot remain, that is, knowledge in the temporal sense just mentioned. Otherwise one would believe that Zayd is non-existent at this time, even though he has become existent. For if it remained, it would be ignorance, not knowledge. If, however, that knowledge does not remain, and another knowledge is originated, which is knowledge of his existence now, then change has occurred. For knowledge is not one of those abstract relations (*idāfāt*) that are not grounded in any attribute or disposition in the essence [of the knower], like being to the right or to the left. Rather it is an attribute or disposition that has a relation to something extramental. If [one] knowledge perishes and another originates, then this is not merely relational change; rather it is a change in an attribute of the knower's essence. It cannot be accepted in the case of the one for whom no change is possible.

[*arguments from Abū al-Barakāt with replies*]

Opponents argue against this in several ways. [124] *The first is to say*: His knowledge is the cause of contingent existence. But causes are not changed through change in their effects, so His knowledge would not be changed through change in the effects. [...]

[125.4] *The response* is that it is in itself true when he says that [God's] knowledge is the cause of contingent existence. But the knowledge that is the cause is nothing but His knowledge of Himself, which is the principle of all existence, and is His knowledge of the principles and causes according to their arrangement in existence. As for temporal knowledge, which we deny of Him, it cannot

be a cause at all, neither in His case nor in ours. For instance, if one of us who is an artisan conceptualizes a shape and then brings it into existence, then the cause of the shape's existence is universal knowledge that originally occurred to him in the first place, like when he forms a shape of a sphere that encloses a dodecahedron with pentagonal sides. [The cause] is not particular temporal knowledge of this concrete shape, since that knowledge occurs only once the shape exists. So we have shown that temporal knowledge about something that is temporal and particular occurs only at the time when its object of knowledge exists, following upon the latter's becoming in itself individual and concrete. The cause is prior to the effect as a condition, and that which occurs only after something else exists is not prior to that thing, so cannot be its cause. [126] It is likewise in the case of the Creator, may His name be exalted. If one did affirm this [temporal] knowledge of Him as a supposition, [this knowledge] would not be a cause, since its occurrence is conceivable only once its effect exists. [Otherwise] it would be ignorance, as we have shown. But if [the knowledge] does not occur before [the effect], then it is not its cause. It is established, then, that the cause is universal knowledge that encompasses all existents, both the principles and originated things among them, temporally and non-temporally.

If knowledge is the cause, then this knowledge does not change through change in the effects or in the objects of knowledge, as would follow from his syllogism. Nor can the primary objects of this sort of knowledge change, insofar as they are objects of knowledge. How can he say that [knowledge] would not change through change in [the objects of knowledge], since the latter are not changing in themselves? For they are universal, insofar as they are objects of this [sort of] knowledge.

The object of universal knowledge is not particular as such. For if one knows that human is an animal, then this knowledge does not extend to Zayd insofar as he is Zayd. Rather [he is included] only insofar as he is human, and is subsumed under the universal judgment. If however the object [of divine knowledge] is known insofar as it is universal, then insofar as it is universal it does not change. So it does not follow from his syllogism that [God] has temporal knowledge of temporal things and yet He does not change through their change. Rather, what follows is that He is the cause of the effects and does not change through their change; this is the truth, as we have shown. [...]

[133.13] [His] *second objection is to say*: if He changed through the change of the effect, He would also be multiplied through their multiplicity. [...]

[134.13] *The response* is that the multiplicity of the objects of knowledge implies multiplicity for that in which [the objects] reside, only if they have different, distinct, and discrete forms that occur simultaneously. But since there is no difference of forms in the knowledge, but instead it occurs including all [of them] without any need for an ordering or distinguishing of the objects of knowledge, or any distinction of one form from another, there is no implication of multiplicity in [the knower]. [135] The knowledge of the Creator—may He be exalted—is like this. Since He is separate from matter He knows Himself, because nothing separate from matter is hidden from itself. He only knows Himself as what He is, and He is the principle of all existents after Him, so that He knows His essence as the principle of existents. Existents are subsumed under His self-knowledge as a necessary implication (*‘alā sabīl al-luzūm*), with no distinct form in His essence.

[T21] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 2, 501.13–17

[*can particulars be perceived without sense organs?*]

*They said:* it has been established in *On the Soul* that corporeal things with shapes are perceived only through a corporeal organ. So if the Creator, the exalted, perceived them, He would be a body or corporeal, which is absurd. *One may reply:* we have already shown in *On the Soul*, on the basis of decisive proofs, that something separate [from matter] can perceive corporeal things with shapes. So what you argue is false.

[T22] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 193.18–194.10

[*multiplicity argument*]

Those who admit that [God] the exalted is knowledgeable with respect to His specific self, nevertheless deny that He is knowledgeable about anything else. They prove this by saying that knowing one object of knowledge is different from knowing another object of knowledge. For somebody could know that Zayd knows about one object of knowledge while doubting whether Zayd knows about some other object of knowledge; and what is known is distinct from what is a matter of doubt. Therefore, [Zayd's] being knowledgeable about one object of knowledge must be distinct from his being knowledgeable about another object of knowledge. [194] *Having established this, we say:* if God the exalted were knowledgeable about multiple objects of knowledge, then for every object of knowledge a distinct knowledge would need to occur

in His essence. On this assumption, infinite multiplicity would occur in His essence, which is absurd.

[*solution: knowledge is a relation*]

*Response:* “knowledge” does not mean that forms equivalent to the quiddities of the objects of knowledge are impressed in the essence of the knower. Rather, “knowledge” means a specific relation and connection between the essence of the knower and the essence of the object of knowledge. This being so, the fact that He is knowledgeable concerning multiple objects of knowledge does require that multiple relations and connections occur to His essence. Yet this does not violate the unity of [His] essence. For one is half of two, a third of three, and a fourth of four, and so on endlessly in terms of the relations that belong to [one]. Yet this does not violate the unity of one; and the same applies regarding this problem [i.e. the case of God].

[T23] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 194.17–195.7; 196.18–197.3; 198.19–199.2

[*historical report on the problem of knowledge of particulars in kalām*]

[194.17] You should know that there have been two parties to this dispute within *kalām*. The first group—consisting of most masters among the people of *sunna* [i.e. the Ashʿarites] and among the Muʿtazila—said that knowledge about the fact that something will exist is the same as the knowledge that it exists once it does exist. In support of this claim they argued that, if we know that Zayd will arrive in town tomorrow, and this knowledge continues up to the next day and the arrival of Zayd in town, then we know with this same knowledge that he is now arriving in town. Thus we know that knowing that something [195] will exist is the same as knowing that it exists once it does exist. Someone would need some further knowledge only if he loses the previous knowledge. Given that God the exalted cannot lose knowledge, His knowledge that a given thing will exist is certainly the same as His knowledge about the existence of this thing once it exists.

But Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī said that this teaching is false. He ruled out saying that the knowledge that something will exist is the same as the knowledge that it exists at the point where it does come to exist. [...] [196.18] You should know that after Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī gave these arguments to disprove the teaching of the masters, he concluded that there must be change in the knowledge that God the exalted has concerning changing particulars. *He said:* what necessitates His knowing the objects of knowledge is His essence, but the presence

of those objects of knowledge is a condition for this necessitation. Once the object of knowledge arises in a particular way, then there is satisfied the condition for the essence's necessitation of the knowledge about that thing's [197] arising in that way, with the result that this knowledge occurs. But so long as the occurrence of that thing in this way is still non-existent, the condition for necessitation is not satisfied, so knowledge is certainly lacking too. But another knowledge arises, concerning the arising of that object of knowledge in a different way [e.g. as a future thing]. [...]

[198.19] There is a fourth group among those who dispute this issue, namely those who say that God the exalted eternally knows the true realities and the quiddities of things. But knowledge about individuals and states occurs only once those individuals originate. This is the teaching of Hishām [199] ibn al-Ḥakam and that of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, since he cannot avoid being forced to accept this teaching.

[T24] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 195.17–196.13

[*knowledge changes with the change of the known: the dark house example*]

*Second argument:* His being knowledgeable about the fact that [something] *will occur* does not have as a condition that [this thing] is occurring just at the moment (*fi al-ḥāl*). It is His being knowledgeable that something *is occurring* that has the condition that it be occurring just at the moment. And when one of two things has some condition, and the other does not have that as a condition, the one cannot be identical with the other.

*Third argument,* this being the argument on which Abū al-Ḥusayn [al-Baṣrī] relied: just knowing that something *will occur* is not the same as knowing that it *is occurring* when it is occurring. For [196] someone might know that Zayd will arrive in town tomorrow. Then this person sits in a dark house, not being able to distinguish between night and day. He continues having this knowledge the whole while until tomorrow comes and Zayd arrives in town. This individual, just with his knowledge that Zayd will arrive in town tomorrow, will not come to know that [Zayd] is arriving in town *now*. Thus it is established that to know something will exist tomorrow is not the same as knowing that it exists, once it exists. Of course, if someone knows that Zayd will arrive in town tomorrow, and then knows that tomorrow has come, in that case a third knowledge is engendered out of those two, namely that Zayd is now arriving to the town.

*Fourth argument:* Knowledge about something is a form corresponding to that thing. Doubtlessly, the true reality that something will occur later but is not occurring now, is different from the true reality that it is occurring and present just at the moment. And if the objects of knowledge differ, so must the instances of knowledge.

[T25] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 198.12–18

[*relational change as a solution to the change argument*]

The proof you have mentioned to prevent change [in God] applies only to real attributes. One cannot rule out change for relational attributes. How could we say otherwise, given that we find God the exalted being together with that which is originated? Once that which is originated disappears, their being together is eliminated, and this implies that some change in relations occurs. Having established this, we say that such connections are among associations and relations. This being so, nothing prevents change from occurring with respect to them [sc. God's relations].

[T26] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 199.4–24

[*God's knowledge and determinism*]

If God the exalted were eternally knowledgeable about all particulars which are to come in endless time, then He would know all that will be done and will not be done by humans. Everything that God the exalted knows will occur, occurs necessarily, whereas everything whose occurrence God the exalted knows to be non-existent cannot occur. Hence, one must say that all creaturely acts are either necessary or impossible. But if this were so then no animal would be capable of acting. [...] [199.12] For there is no power at all over that which occurs necessarily or cannot possibly occur. This leads to the conclusion that God the exalted has no power at all, nor does any creature have power; and that obligations and the sending of prophets are in vain; and that promise, threat, reward, and punishment are all in vain and unfair. This vitiates talk of [divine] lordship, for denying power of God the exalted means denying talk of [His] lordship. And talk of servanthood is vitiated too. For, if the servant has no power over his service, then command and prohibition are in vain. This being so, one must say that God the exalted is eternally knowledgeable of Himself and of His attributes, and of the quiddities, true realities, and attributes of things. As for knowledge of individuals and their changing states,



this occurs only once they come into existence, so that these problems are resolved.<sup>12</sup>

[T27] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 3, 163.12–164.5

[*God knows individuation as being caused by Him*]

The individual particular thing has a quiddity, and also has individuation and concreteness. This individuation and concreteness is either identical to that quiddity or is additional to it. If it is identical to it, then knowing about the quiddity is the same as knowing about it. So the individuation, insofar as it is this concrete individual, will be known. But if the individuation of that individual is different from that quiddity, then that individuation will be among the contingent quiddities too. The philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) admit that knowing the cause necessitates knowing the effect. [164] The knowledge of God the exalted concerning His own essence necessitates, therefore, that He is knowledgeable concerning the means by which that individuation and concreteness occurred. Hence, He must know about that individuation as such. So it is established that, given their claim that the knowledge of the cause necessitates the knowledge of the effect, they must acknowledge that He—may He be exalted—knows individuals as such. [...]

[T28] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 3, 164.10–20

[*argument from instinctive prayer*]

[164.10] We see that when the people of this world face misery and hardship—whether they are believers or unbelievers, monotheists or heretics—they pray to God the exalted and ask Him to free them from that misery. Even if people were strongly convinced that God the exalted does not know particulars, when faced with such situations they would still inevitably turn to invocation, prayer, and obedience. As this shows, innate instinct (*al-fiṭra al-aṣliyya*) is a witness that the divinity of the world has power over whatever can be done, and knows the secret and the hidden. And of course the witness of innate instinct ought to be accepted rather than these obscure distinctions and abstruse inquiries. It

12 At *Mulakkhḥaṣ*, fol. 250v11–12 al-Rāzī instead bites the bullet and accepts determinism (*jabr*) as a response to this argument.

is then settled that the divinity of the world knows particulars and can respond to [our] needs. I suppose that when Abraham—God's blessings be upon him—said to his father, "O my father, why do you worship that which does not hear and does not see and will not benefit you at all?" (Qur'ān 19:42) this was precisely because his father belonged to the creed (*dīn*) of the philosophers (*al-falāsifa*). He denied that God the exalted is powerful and that God the exalted knows particulars.

[T29] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 483.8–15

[*argument that knowledge through causes is universal, with reply*]

The demonstration [that knowledge by causes is universal] is that if we know, for instance, that A necessitates B, and the conceptualization of B (as such) does not prevent other things from sharing in common with it, nor from being caused by A, then nothing about just conceptualizing the meaning of B, which is the effect of A, prevents other things from sharing in common with it. Therefore, if something is known through its cause, it must be known universally.

*But someone might say:* when blackness, for instance, is individuated and concretized, its individuation must be due to a cause. If we understand the cause of its individuation we must understand that individuation, because it was established that knowing the cause is [itself] the cause for knowing the effect. So along these lines, we have come to know something on the basis of its cause not in a universal, but in a particular way.

[T30] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 2, 501.25–502.6

[*knowing causes does not imply knowing individuals*]

As for the second option, which is that His being connected [502] to causes implies His being connected to particulars, this is wrong too. For if something is understood by means of its cause, this must be so universally. If you know that when a given cause is present at such-and-such time in such-and-such a subject of inherence under such-and-such a condition, so that a given effect must be originated under such-and-such a condition, then [all] these qualifications, even though they do yield specificity (*takhṣīṣ*), still do not yield individuality (*shakhsīyya*). For it is entirely plausible that this qualified object, with these qualifications, can be predicated of many. So it is evident that

knowledge by means of causes cannot imply knowledge about effects insofar as they are temporal.

[T31] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 122r19–122v1

[*God knows individuals as such*]

According to you, knowledge of the cause entails knowledge of the effect. So from the fact that the Necessary Existent knows Himself, it necessarily follows that He knows temporal individuals insofar as they are temporal individuals, not insofar as they are universals. This entails [112v] that He, the exalted, is knowledgeable concerning particulars.

[T32] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 3, 124.21–125.10

[*if knowing cause entails knowing effect, then knowing anything would imply knowing everything*]

We know multiple quiddities and multiple true realities. Every true reality [125] that the intellect indicates must, in relation to other true realities, have one of three states: either it implies them, or it is incompatible with them, or it neither implies nor is incompatible with them. Implying something (*kawn mustalzima li-al-amr*) would be among the necessary concomitants (*lawāzim*) of that quiddity, and being incompatible with some other kind of quiddity would be another of its necessary concomitants. Neither implying nor being incompatible with a third kind [of quiddity] would, furthermore, be a third kind of necessary concomitant. If then knowledge of the necessary concomitants of one quiddity did follow from knowledge of this quiddity, then once we have come to know some quiddity, we must know that it implies one kind [of quiddity], is incompatible with another kind, and neither implies nor is incompatible with a third kind. When we know this, we would wind up knowing all quiddities. Therefore, if knowing the necessary concomitants of a quiddity followed from knowing that quiddity, then from knowing just one quiddity would follow knowledge of all quiddities in their infinity.

[T33] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 121v9–11

[*if knowing cause entails knowing effect, then one would know all one's own states*]

According to what they say, our self-knowledge is the same as we ourselves. From this it follows that our knowledge of ourselves must be continuous. All our necessary concomitants are, however, the effects of ourselves. In which case our knowledge of all our necessary concomitants, such as being separate [from matter], persisting, being originated, and being capable of this or that, would arise continuously.

[T34] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 456.22–457.2; 457.5–11; 457.15–23

[*on the inclusive knowledge theory*]

As for the third kind [of intellection] which is “simple,” in my opinion this is wrong. For knowledge, according to them, is just the presence of the form of an intelligible object in the one who intellectually grasps [it]. If this simple intellection is meant to be a single form that corresponds to the true reality of multiple things, then this is wrong. For if a single intelligible form were to correspond to multiple things, then it would be equal in quiddity to things which are different [457] in their true realities. Then this form would have different true realities, so that a single form would not be one single form, which is absurd. [...]

[457.5] Perhaps by “simple intellection” they meant that the forms of the objects of knowledge occur all at once, and by “differentiated intellection” they meant that the forms of the objects of knowledge are present in temporal order, one after another. If this is what they meant, it is true and there is no quarrel with them. But this is not a middle level between pure potentiality and pure actuality, the latter being [intellection] that is differentiated. Rather, it amounts to saying that what is known is sometimes is gathered together all at once, and sometimes not, but follows and succeeds one on another. [...]

[457.15] As for their claim that someone's knowledge of his own capacity to answer includes knowing the response, *we say*: in such a state, he knows his capacity to [produce] something that would deal with the question, but he does not know the true reality of that thing. Yet this response has a true reality and a quiddity, and it has a necessary concomitant, namely that it deals

with the question. So [before formulating the exact answer] the true reality is not [yet] known, but the necessary concomitant is known in a differentiated way. Likewise, if we understand by ourselves that soul is something that moves body, then its being a mover for the body is a necessary concomitant, which is known in a differentiated way even though the [soul's] true reality is not known until we understand it in some other way. Thus it has been established that their claim is wrong. And this also emerges from the proof we mentioned, that a single item of knowledge cannot concern many objects of knowledge.

[T35] Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 102.9–103.2

[*against the inclusive knowledge theory*]

The items of knowledge that are connected to different objects of knowledge do differ [in themselves], as opposed to [the opinion] of my master and father. [103] In our view, investigation prepares knowledge about what is proved, and has as its condition knowledge of the proof. Moreover, the belief that body is eternal is opposed to the belief that it is originated, and has as its condition knowledge of the quiddity of body, and of eternity and origination.

[T36] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 3, 151.4–10

[*the philosophers do not really deny all particular knowledge in God*]

Some people report that the philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) claimed that the Exalted is not knowledgeable about particulars. But this report is open to question. For His specific essence is a concrete essence, and He is knowledgeable about this concrete essence. But “particular” means nothing but this, so He is knowledgeable about a particular [after all]. Also, He is through His essence the cause of the First Intellect. It is evident from their teaching that they believe Him—may He be exalted—to be knowledgeable about [the first intellect] as such. Instead, it would be correct to say that [the philosophers] denied that He, the exalted, is knowledgeable about *changeable* things as such. And they also denied that He, the exalted, is knowledgeable about corporeal things in terms of their concrete specific magnitudes.

[T37] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārīʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 479.16–480.4

[*against the inclusive knowledge theory*]

As for the cases of inclusive [knowledge] mentioned among the three examples given, the opponent [might just] deny that [multiple] questions can be answered all at once. Rather, they are posed one after another, so that each question is inclusive of [480] the next one. Secondly, before [the answers are provided] in a differentiated way (*al-tafṣīl*), we find in ourselves nothing more than the ready capacity (*quwwa qarība*) to [give the answers] individually (*takhṣīṣ*). There is an obvious difference between the two capacities, one prior to being asked, the other after, the one capacity ready to hand, the other even readier (*aqrab*). For the capacity of finding things out (*wujūd*) has many levels.

[T38] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārīʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 480.8–10; 481.1–8

[*proposal that God knows things through their forms in His essence, and reply*]

[Another position adopted by recent philosophers] was that they sinfully claimed that the Necessary Existent knows things through their forms, and that the forms of all existents are in His essence. *They said*: these concomitant forms are extrinsic to His essence, and constitute a multiplicity that follows upon, rather than being intrinsic to [His] essence. Thus they avoid violating the idea of unity. [...]

[481.1] We mentioned their statement “His essence is a subject of inherence for many accidents, yet is not affected by them,” simply because ignorant people might believe that this has some sense. For they might suppose that one can speak of “affection” only in cases of newly arising [features], just as one understands the category “being affected.” This however does save him [sc. the proponent of this view]. For even if the existence of an accident [in Him] does not necessarily imply that any affection newly arises, still it implies a numerical difference between two aspects, productivity and receptivity, because we have seen that action is one aspect, and receptivity is another. Moreover, how can any reasonable person agree that an essence is the subject of inherence for accidents, even though that essence is not described with the accidents that are realized in it? Isn't the ascription of attributes to quiddities precisely because the latter are subject of inherence for the former?

[T39] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāri‘, Ilāhiyyāt*, 487.17–488.19

[his solution: God's knowledge by presence is relational]

The Necessary Existent needs no forms. He has illumination and absolute sovereignty, so that nothing escapes Him. Past and future things, whose forms are established in the heavenly rulers, are present to Him, since He has cognizance (*aḥāṭa*) and illumination concerning whatever bears these forms, and [488] the intellectual principles as well. So it is that “not even a speck of dust escapes Him: neither in the heavens nor on the earth” (Qur’ān 34:3).

If His knowledge is through presence and illumination, not through a form in His essence, and if something should for instance perish and a relation [thereby] perishes, still no change is implied in Him Himself. Similarly, if Zayd is existent and [God] is his principle, and if Zayd does not remain existent, and the relation of being a principle no longer persists, this implies no change in Him Himself. You know that if something on your right moves to your left, then there is a relational change with no change in you yourself. Temporal knowledge does in a way necessitate change, which is ruled out in the case of the Necessary Existent: if someone who knows that Zayd will arrive persists in [thinking] that he *will* arrive once he *is arriving*, then this person is ignorant. But if one knows that [Zayd] has arrived and the prior knowledge leaves [this person], then he changes. This applies to knowledge through forms. But when it comes to knowledge through presence and illumination of the things themselves, and of their forms which are in the heavenly perceivers, who are not prevented from changing and who are present with their forms and changes to the First, without Him changing, this does not follow.

[448.13] In general, the First knows all things without requiring any form, thought, or change. The descriptions (*rusūm*) of the objects of perception are present to Him by being themselves present (*li-ḥuḍūr dhawātihā*). [...] Taken all together, those attributes that are attributes of perfection are equivalent to His essence (*dhāt*). He has negational and relational attributes, yet there cannot possibly be multiplicity in His essence. This is the only way to save the Peripatetic doctrine, and it involves no departure from the truth. But an explanation and complete presentation of why it is so is possible only through the doctrines of our book entitled *The Wisdom of Illumination*.

[T40] Al-Suhrawardī, *Talwihāt*, 243.20–244.3

[*God knows only by presence*]

Temporal things that change, and are material as individuals, are not necessarily concomitant and present in the Necessary Existent, [244] since He is absolutely free of matter. In general, any knowledge that is in any way necessary for Him, the exalted, does not necessitate addition, change, or representation in Him; [it is knowledge] for which mere presence suffices. Any other [knowledge] is impossible for Him.

[T41] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 105.4–8 [trans. Walbridge and Ziai, mod.]

[*against productive knowledge theory*]

*The Peripatetics and their followers say*, “the Necessary Existent’s knowledge is nothing additional to Him but is only His not being unaware of His essence, which is separate from matter.” *They also say*: “the existence of things is from His knowledge of them.” Against them, it may be argued that if He knows and then something follows from the knowledge, then the knowledge is prior to the things and to not being unaware of them; for not being unaware of things comes only after they are realized.

[T42] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 106.5–11 [trans. Walbridge and Ziai, mod.]

[*the Illuminationist position, invoking relations*]

Therefore, the truth about the knowledge of the Necessary Existent is given in the following principle of Illuminationism: that His knowledge of His essence is His being luminous to Himself and evident to Himself. His knowledge of things is their being evident to Him, either through [things] themselves or through what is attached to them, namely places (*mawāḍiʿ*) of continuous awareness on the part of the higher, providential [lights]. This is a relation, while the lack of any veil is negative. That this is sufficient is indicated by the fact that vision occurs simply by the relation of the evidence (*ẓuhūr*) of something to vision, along with the lack of any veil. Thus the relation of [God] to anything evident to Him is His vision and perception of that thing. The fact that there are numerous intellectual relations implies no multiplicity in His essence.



[T43] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 346.1–15

[*against God's knowledge as relation*]

If knowledge is a relational attribute it is either existing (*wujudiyya*), non-existing, or neither existing nor non-existing. One cannot say the second or the third, as has been already [argued]. The only remaining option is that it is something existing. On this assumption it is either eternal or originated.

But it cannot be eternal. Otherwise it would not alter and change, since it is absurd to ascribe non-existence to eternal existence. And obviously associations and relations can change due to the variation in the object of knowledge itself. For the relation that is connected to the non-existent as such does not remain after [the non-existing thing becomes] existent, and vice-versa. Otherwise [knowledge] would be ignorance, which is impossible.

Nor can it be originated,<sup>13</sup> for two reasons. First, this would imply that God the exalted is a subject of inherence for originated things, which is absurd, as will be explained. Second, there will be an issue with the origination of that attribute and its requirement for another knowledge, just as there was an issue with the first [knowledge], yielding an impossible infinite regress.<sup>14</sup>

[T44] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 346.16–21; 347.18–20

[*knowledge must be an attribute of God*]

*They say*: we concede that [God] is knowing but not that He knows through [an attribute of] knowledge.

*We say*: if one concedes that His being knowledgeable is an existing attribute that is additional to the essence, this is just what it means to say that knowledge subsists in His essence. Thereby is refuted their claim that His being knowledgeable is necessary, so that it is not caused by [the attribute] of knowledge. How this can be so, if knowledge is ascribed to Him? If someone says that [knowledge] is necessary in the sense that it cannot be separated from His essence—may He be exalted—we concede this. But this does not exclude that knowledge subsists in His essence. [...]

<sup>13</sup> Which is al-Rāzī's position.

<sup>14</sup> Note that in *al-Nūr al-bāhir*, vol. 5, 201.16, al-Āmidī accepts that knowledge is a negational attribute, but in *Rumūz al-kunūz*, fol. 110v14 rather that it is a positive attribute.

[347.18] When two things exist, and there is one actual indication to both of them, such that it is impossible to indicate the essence of either one without indicating the other, then out of the two, the one that is dependent on the other for [its] existence is the attribute, while the other one, which is not so dependent, is the subject of inherence.

[T45] Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, 77.17–23

*[problems with God's knowing temporal events, whether knowledge is an impression or a relation]*

Knowledge about things that come to be consists in either the impression of their forms in the soul, or a relation that occurs between the [knower and the known]. If the former is the case, then the essence of the Necessary Existent must be divided into parts through the impression that has parts, as will be shown. If the latter is the case, then knowledge is either eternal or originated. It cannot be eternal, because otherwise the originated thing to which it is connected would need to be eternal, given that a relation cannot arise without the two things [it brings into relation]. But it is absurd to say that originated things are eternal. Yet if [the knowledge] is originated, that too leads to absurdity, as has been shown before [i.e. because God would then have attributes that are originated].

[T46] Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, 78.17–79.15

*[knowledge is one and unchanging, but has changing connections to changing things]*

[Avicenna] is wrong to say that if [God's] knowledge of Himself were connected to anything else, then [the two objects of knowledge] would be either identical or distinct, for both are absurd. For nothing prevents knowledge from being one in itself, even though the objects to which it is connected are different and distinct. [Knowledge] is connected to both of them, just as the sun is connected to whatever receives [its light] and is illuminated by it; or rather, just like what the opponent [sc. Avicenna] says about [the connection of] the Active Intellect to our souls. For it is one, even though the objects to which it is connected are different, multiple, and distinct.

They also rely on an invalid point when they specifically connect [God's knowledge] to universals and not to particulars. For the connection of knowledge

to that which comes to be necessitates no newly arising knowledge, nor prior ignorance. What preceded was the knowledge that [something] *will* come to be. The knowledge that something will come to be is the same as [79] the knowledge that it is coming to be at the moment of its coming to be, with nothing newly arising, and no multiplicity. The only thing that newly arises is the very thing to which [knowledge] is connected, and the connection to it. This does not necessitate that anything newly arise [on the side of] what connects [sc. on the side of the knower as opposed to the object of knowledge], following on prior knowledge that [something] will happen at the moment it happens, assuming [the knowledge] is continuous up until that moment. For, even if we eliminated all [newly] originated knowledge from the soul, [this thing] would not be unknown at the moment of its origination. Otherwise, knowledge that it will come to be would be ignorance at the moment of its coming to be, despite its assumed continuity. This is absurd. Thus, if one surely knows that Zayd will stand up at some particular time, for instance, then one does not find oneself to need any newly arising knowledge about this at the moment of its occurrence, if [one's knowledge] extends to [this time], and we did assume that the prior knowledge remains until that time. Whatever a person may find in himself in terms of a contrast between how he is before [the known thing] happens and how he is afterward, just comes down to sensory perceptions and factors that are extraneous to knowledge, and that were not yet there before [the known thing] happened. But with regard to the knowledge itself, there is no [difference between the two states]. Rather, the most one could say is that the *connection* of knowledge [to the event] at the moment it happens was not yet realized before it happens. But this implies, at most, the absence of a connection between knowledge and the existence [of what happens] while the latter is still non-existent, and the new arising of a connection to it once it exists. This does not imply the conclusion that the attribute of knowledge is originated. Rather, knowledge has been eternal, even as the connections and the things to which it is connected newly arise and differ, resulting from the new arising and differentiation of the conditions needed for the connection.<sup>15</sup>

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15 Al-Āmidī accepts this solution also in *Nūr al-bāhir*, vol. 5, 200–201 and *Rumūz al-kunūz*, fol. 110v.

[T47] Bābā Afdal, *Madārij al-kamāl*, 51.5–8 [trans. Chittick, mod.]

[*the Knower as “universal of universals”*]

Rather, the knower of the universal of universals is none other than the universal of universals. He who is aware of it is not aware of something belonging to himself, but is rather aware of himself. Those who are aware of anything below the universal of universals are aware of something belonging to themselves and depicted within it, but the universal of universals is both that which finds itself and that which is found. This is the perfection of all perfections and the final goal of all final goals.

[T48] Bābā Afdal, *Arḍnāma*, 231.18–233.4

[*the Knower through Himself encompasses all things in self-knowledge*]

Comprehension (*iḥāṭa*) is arriving at something as a whole, with the knower covering the whole of what he knows. If there is an object of knowledge outside the knower's comprehension, it is not known. There are two kinds of things: clear and unclear. Things in the intellect are not unclear, since the world of intellect is the world of clarity. The unclear is found only in sensation, imagination, and estimation, since there are some things that cannot be known to estimation, imagination, and sense. Moreover, [even] when [232] something becomes evident in sensation, evidentness and clarity may cease, because the sense object may depart from the sense organ, or the sense organ may not pay attention to it, so that what was clear becomes unclear.

One who knows through sensation is a potential knower, and the object of sensation is known only potentially, whereas one who knows by intellect is a knower actually, and what is intellectually known is known actually, both being complete. The potential knower is a trace and image of the actual knower, and likewise what is known potentially is a trace of the actually known. One who knows through sensation, at the level of particulars, and potentially, is a knower who does not know himself, since one cannot know sensation with sensation; for instance one cannot see sight with sight. [...]. [232.10] One who knows intellectually does know himself, since one can know knowledge and the essence of knowledge with knowledge. For there is no distinction between knowledge and the one who knows. Likewise, whoever knows can also know the senses through knowledge. For these are particular items and objects of knowledge, whereas the one who knows in himself is universal, and the universal arrives at all particulars, whereas no particular can grasp the universal.

Whoever knows comprehends the known essentially. For the known is in the knower and there is no distinction between the essence of the knower and the known. The existence of the one who knows is being knowledgeable. If knowing belonged to the essence but the known were outside the essence, then there would be no connection or association between the known and the knower. Or the knower would need to step outside of his own essence in order to join that which is outside his essence; but stepping outside of one's own essence is absurd. Or he would need to take that thing into [his] essence and to associate it with itself. But the non-essential cannot be associated with the essence. Hence the known is known in the essence and the knower comprehends the known. This comprehension is essential. Also, the comprehension of the one who knows is genuine (*bi-ḥaḳīqat*). For [233] the one who knows is the "root" for the existence of knowing, whereas the known is a "branch". Existence is more appropriate for the root than for a branch. Furthermore, the comprehension of the one who knows is universal. For there might be multiple objects of knowledge for whoever knows, even though there is no multiplicity in him. One who knows arrives at every known, is greater than it, and reaches up to something else [as well]. The more objects of knowledge there are, the greater is the one who knows.

[T49] Al-Abharī, *Tanzīl al-afkār*, fol. 49r6–11

[*in defense of inclusive knowledge*]

We do not concede that if [the parts of the response to a question] were known, then some would need to be distinguished from others. This would follow only if the knowledge of a thing implied knowing its distinctness from other things. Why do you insist on this implication, even though it is obviously wrong? For, if the knowledge of a thing implied knowing its distinctness from other things, then knowing the distinctness [of that thing] would imply knowing the distinctness of that distinctness, so that one would need to know an infinite number of things from knowing just one thing. But obviously this is necessarily false.

[T50] Al-Abharī, *Ḥidāyat al-ḥikma*, 194.2–7

[*whether God knows by taking on conceptualized forms*]

*Someone might say:* if the Creator were knowledgeable [by receiving a form from what He knows] then He would be both the producer of that form and its receiver. But this is absurd, because the receiver is the one who is disposed

for something, whereas the producer is the one who produces something. The former is not the same as the latter, implying composition [in God].

*We say:* why can't one and the same thing be disposed for a thing taken conceptually, while also engendering it? After all, the meaning of being "disposed for something" is that He is not in Himself prevented from conceptualizing [that thing], whereas the meaning of His "engendering" is that He is causally prior to that which is conceptualized. Why would you say that these are contradictory? Whoever believes that God's knowledge of the things is identical to His essence really just denies all knowledge [in Him], since all knowledge is by inscription (*al-irtisām*).<sup>16</sup>

[T51] Al-Abharī, *Hidāyat al-ḥikma*, 194.13–195.4

[*on the eclipse example*]

Rather [God] perceives in a universal way, just as you know universally the eclipse that is in itself particular. For you say of it that it is an eclipse [195] that occurs after such-and-such a thing<sup>17</sup> moves from such-and-such with such-and-such an attribute, and so on with all the accidents. Yet you do not know it as a particular, because nothing prevents what you have known being predicated of many. This knowledge does not suffice for the existence of that eclipse at this time, so long as observation is not added to it. And, as the change just mentioned [sc. the addition of new observation] is not possible in the case of God the exalted, He knows particulars only in a universal way.

[T52] Al-Abharī, *Zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq*, fol. 163r21–163v20

[*God's has knowledge by capacity, presence, and governance*]

*On how the Necessary in Itself knows all things*

Know that we intellectually grasp something [in the following ways]: (a) By an impression (*bi-al-inṭibā'*). This is the representation of an [163v] abstract form in an abstract essence, such as the representation of a universal form in the

16 Note that the argument that prohibits the inscription of forms in God is accepted in *Zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq*; see [T52] below.

17 Reading *al-shay' kadhā* instead of *shamāliyyan* with MSS H and B.

soul. (b) By capacity (*bi-al-iqtidār*). For instance when someone has intellectually grasped some problem and then forgets about it, then he is asked about it and he straightaway knows the answer. This is not [the same as knowing] “potentially (*bi-al-quwwa*),” since he knows at this moment that he is capable of answering, and this [knowledge] involves his knowledge of the response. For one perceives the difference between the state before hearing the question and the state afterwards, but the power (*quwwa*) was already there beforehand. (c) By presence (*bi-al-ḥuḍūr*), without the representation of a form, such as soul’s perception of its specific self. For the soul’s self-perception does not happen through the representation of a form, since every form in the soul is universal, not particular, so that its perception would not be the perception of the particular, specific self whose very meaning excludes anything else sharing in it. (d) By governance (*bi-al-tasalluṭ*). This is the perception of an abstract essence that bears a relation of governance to something else, without representing the form [of that thing] in [itself]. For instance, the soul perceives its specific self, which bears a relation of governance to body. [...] [163v15] Now that you understand this, we say that the Necessary in Himself knows Himself with presential knowledge, since His abstract self is present to Him and not hidden from Him. He does not perceive things in the sense that forms are impressed [in Him]. Otherwise, He would simultaneously be the producer of those forms and their receiver, which is absurd. Rather he perceives them through knowledge by capacity and of governance. For His essence, which is the principle of differentiation between [all] objects of knowledge and which bears a relation of governance to existents, is present to Him. Hence He has knowledge by capacity and governance, and His knowledge encompasses all existents.

[T53] Al-Abharī, *Bayān al-asrār*, fol. 53v14–19; 53v20–54r3; 54r7–12

[*God’s knowledge is by presence, not representations, but cannot know changing particulars*]

We say that the Necessary in Himself is separate from matter and is sheer existence, and that things are present to Him in terms of the relation of principality and governance. For everything is necessarily concomitant to His essence (*dhāt*). His not being hidden from Himself (*dhāt*), along with His being separate from matter, is His self-knowledge. His not being hidden from the concomitants of His essence, along with His separation [from matter], and their [sc. all other things’] presence to Him, is His knowledge of the things. As for His knowing of things in the sense that there would be forms present, this is absurd, as you have learned. [...]

[53v20] Relations are possible for God, as are negations; they do not harm His unity. His names are multiple because of these negations and relations. [54r] Nothing escapes His knowledge, “not even the weight of a speck of dust upon the earth or in the heavens” [Qurʾān 34:3]. The Necessary in Himself encompasses (*muḥīṭ*) all things and He perceives the numbers of existence. This is the same as presence and governance, with neither form nor image. [...]

[54r7] The Necessary's encompassing things is not something that changes with time, unlike our knowledge of temporal events. For if we know that Zayd *will arrive*, the judgment that he *is arriving* is false, but when He does arrive and our judgment remains that he *will arrive*, this becomes ignorance. Hence there must be change. But the Necessary in Himself is beyond all change. Therefore material, changing, temporal events are not present to the Necessary Existent, since He is absolutely separate from matter.<sup>18</sup>

[T54] Al-Nakhjawānī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, fol. 128r4–12

[*accepts God's knowledge by presence*]

Know that the Master [Avicenna] transmitted this issue from the Greeks, and the truth about it has not yet occurred to him. But in the end, when he understood how [God's knowledge works], he turned away from this approach and wrote an epistle called *Three Sections*, where he rejected this view [that God knows unchangeable things only]. The source of their delusion (*wahm*) was that they explained and understood knowledge as the occurrence of the forms of things in the mind, regardless whether [this happens] in the soul, which is among the things separate [from matter], or in powers, which are among material things. This is true for perceptions in the soul, but they thought that the knowledge belonging to the First and the separate [intellects] is of this kind too. They did not understand that in the First and the sanctified essences [sc. celestial intellects], intellection and knowledge are by way of action. [Their knowledge] is the cause and that which necessitates the existence of things. [They know] not through the occurrence of a form that would be inscribed in the essence of the one who grasps it intellectually, so that the knower would

18 Al-Abharī also accepts God's knowledge by presence in *Talkhīṣ al-ḥaqāʾiq*, fol. 92r11–15 and *Maṭāliʿ al-anwār*, fol. 131v15–19. In the latter, al-Abharī says that God knows Himself as the principle of all existents by way of presence. In *Maṭāliʿ*, fol. 132r4–9, al-Abharī rejects divine knowledge of temporal particulars, just like in *Bayān*.



change due to the change of the know. Rather, [their knowledge] is the presential illuminational knowledge which is before that which is known, simultaneous with it, and after it.

[T55] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 280.6–12

[*against the receiver-producer argument*]

As for the first objection, namely that knowledge is a relation between knower and known that is implied by His essence, which receives [the relation], so that one thing would be simultaneously receiver and producer, *the response is*: relations exist only in the intellect. They apply to pairs of things, each of which implies an attribute of relation in the other, so that it is a producer for that which the other receives, [but only] in the intellect. From this, it does not follow that one and the same thing is simultaneously producer and receiver for one and the same thing. His argument that two effects (*atharayn*) would need to be brought forth from something simple is wrong. For reception is not an effect; someone who both produces and receives brings forth only one effect. For when the effect of something else arises in him, that is not an effect he brings about.<sup>19</sup>

[T56] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 3, 915.11–916.11

[*God's knowledge of everything without forms*]

You have already learned that the First intellectually grasps Himself, He Himself and His self-intellection being distinguished not in existence, but only with respect to our mental consideration (*i'tibār*), as has been argued before. It has been also determined that His self-intellection is the cause of His intellection of the first effect. Since it was determined that both causes—that is, He Himself and His self-intellection—are one and the same thing in existence without any distinction, you should [now] determine that both effects too—that is, the first effect and First's intellection of it—are one and the same thing in [916] existence, with no distinction such as would imply that one of the two [sc. the effect] is distinct from the First, while the second [sc. intellection of the first effect] is realized in Him. And, since it was determined that the distinction between

19 Note that this argument is accepted as a problem for Avicenna in *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* [T56] and is only solved with the knowledge by presence theory.

the two causes is purely a matter of mental consideration, you should likewise determine that the same goes for the two effects. Therefore, the existence of the first effect is identical to the First's intellection of it, with no need for an auxiliary form that would inhere in the essence of the First—may He be exalted above that!

Furthermore, given that the intellectual substances intellectually grasp that which is not among their effects through the occurrence of forms in them, and they intellectually grasp the necessary First, and there is no existent that is not caused by the Necessary First, thus all forms of universal and particular existents occur in [the intellectual substances] according to the way they exist. The Necessary First intellectually grasps those substances along with those forms, not in virtue of any other forms, but in virtue of these substances and forms, and likewise according to the way they exist.

[T57] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ mas'alat al-'ilm*, 85.10–19

[*God's knowledge by presence and its mediation*]

The perception of the First, the exalted, has two aspects. (a) On the one hand [perception] of Himself, which is just [perception] of Him Himself (*bi-'ayn dhātihi*): here the perceiver, perception, and the perceived are one and the same. No number applies to them, other than in terms of aspects which intellects employ [to conceive of God in these three ways]. (b) On the other hand [perception] of His effects that are near to Him. He [perceives] these concrete effects in themselves (*bi-a'yān dhāwāt*), since here it is wholly unthinkable that their presence, in the sense mentioned above, would be lacking. Here the perceived and the perceptions are identical, and no number applies to them except in terms of aspects; yet both differ from the perceiver.

As for His remote effects—like material [things] and non-existents which are such as to be contingently existent at some moment, or [such as to be] connected to the existent—these are [perceived by Him] by having their intelligible forms' inscribed in His near effects, which perceive [the remote things] primarily and in themselves. And so on like this, until one reaches the perception of sensible things through the inscription of their forms in the organs that perceive them. For what exists in the present is [itself] present, and whoever perceives the present perceives whatever is present together with it.

[T58] Al-Ṭūsī, *Maṣāri‘ al-muṣāri‘*, 141.10–16

[*the First Intellect is particular yet known by God*]

His claim that if [God’s] knowledge were particular, it would need to change along with the object of knowledge, is also subject to correction. For not every particular changes. The First Intellect is a particular, yet does not change. The particular that changes is a temporal particular, insofar as it is temporal. This is not something that proceeds from Him, the exalted, without any intermediary, but proceeds from Him only through intermediaries. [God’s] knowledge of it is along the same lines as the way that its existence is from Him. For knowledge of the existence of causes implies knowledge of the existence of their effects. And [knowledge] of the existence of their effects implies knowledge concerning the existence of the effects of their effects, and so on until the last effects are reached.

[T59] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 3, 918.5–919.15; 924.13–16; 929.7–8

[*what Avicenna meant by knowing of particulars in a universal way*]

[Avicenna] means the distinction between on the one hand perception of particulars in a universal way, which rules out change, and on the other hand perception of them in a particular way, which changes along with them. Let it be clear that the First, the exalted, and indeed whatever engages in intellection, insofar as it is engaging in intellection, perceives particulars only in the first way and not the second. They are perceived in the second way only through sensation, imagination, or whatever else has the status of corporeal organs. Before explaining this, we say that the universality and particularity of perception are connected to the universality and particularity of conceptions (*al-taṣawwurāt*) which arise in them; assent (*al-taṣdīqāt*) does not come into it. For our statement “this man says this thing at this moment” is particular, while our statement “man says something at some moment” is universal. The only change between the two is whether “man” and “moment” are particular or universal. Every particular about which one passes a judgment has a nature that exists in the individual. Insofar as that nature becomes particular, [919] the intellect does not perceive it, nor does any demonstration or definition apply to it, because of the addition of a sensory indication or some such thing that specifies it, which can be perceived only through sensation or the like. If that nature is taken separately from those specifiers, it becomes universal so that the intellect perceives it, and demonstration and definition do apply to it. The judgment that was connected to it when it is particular remains as it was, except

insofar as the judgment is connected to specifying items, insofar as they are specifying.

*Having established this, we say:* [suppose] someone perceives the causes of that which comes to be, insofar as they are natures, and also perceives their particular states and their features, such as their being adjacent or distant, touching or remote from each other, or composition and dissolution, insofar as they are connected to those natures, and he perceives the things which originate together with them, after them, and before them insofar as all this happens at certain moments which are determined, one through another, in such a way that nothing at all escapes [this perceiver]. So, the form of the world occurs for him including all its universals and particulars, both stable and newly arising and ending, which are specific to some moment to the exclusion of any other moment, according as it exists, with no difference whatsoever from how they are. That very same form would also correspond to other worlds, if they were to arise in existence, just as much as to this very world. So the universal form corresponds to the particulars that originate at their own times, but without changing along with them. This is how it is to perceive particulars in a universal way. [...]

[924.13] If knowledge is connected to the universal, it is not at all connected to the particular that falls under that universal, unless [another] knowledge comes to help, and [the former knowledge] arises anew, so that it is connected to this particular in another way. For instance the knowledge that animal is a body does not by itself imply that human is a body, until another knowledge is attached, namely that human is animal. [...]

[929.7] It would be correct to take the explanation of this issue in another way, by saying that knowledge of the cause necessitates knowledge of the effect, yet it does not necessitate its sensation.

[T60] Al-Ṭūsī, *Maṣāri‘ al-muṣāri‘*, 147.14–148.5

[*comparison between temporal knowledge and spatial location*]

Avicenna's teaching is that the judgment that something was in past, something is now, and something will be, can be made only by someone who is himself in time, with time changing for him. [148] Something is past and gone for him, something else is present for him, and yet something else is future for him and yet to come. Everything temporal is related to him from some specific inter-

val. It is like when someone is in a given place, and some things are located in front of him, others behind him, others above him, and yet others below him. Everything located has a certain position with respect to him, which nothing else shares.

[T61] Al-Ṭūsī, *Maṣāri‘ al-muṣāri‘*, 157.18–158.9

[*God's atemporal knowledge*]

We have already mentioned that past and future, before and after, belong to the one [158] whose existence is temporal. As for Him who is exalted above time, time is for Him a single thing, from the eternal past into the eternal future (*min al-azal ilā al-abad*), related equally to Him. His knowledge encompasses its parts in a differentiated way (*‘alā al-tafṣīl*), and insofar as one part comes after another. Temporal [knowledge] is like when one takes up a book and moves one's gaze from one word to another, so that one word has been already read, the next word is present to as it falls under one's eye, and a third word is not yet been seen. Whereas the [knowledge] that is exalted above time is like when someone has the whole book<sup>20</sup> present to oneself, and it is readily available for the one who knows its arrangement. The First's knowledge of temporal things is like this. As for His knowledge about things newly arising and coming to an end, this is through the intermediary of the soul which conceives of these things newly arising and coming to an end.

[T62] Al-Kātibī, *Hikmat al-‘ayn*, 46.1–4

[*does knowledge of something imply knowledge of its concomitants?*]

The knowledge of a quiddity need not imply knowledge of its proximate necessary concomitants. Otherwise, the knowledge of the concomitants of the concomitants would follow from the knowledge of its concomitants, and so on infinitely. Admittedly, the conceptualization of a quiddity together with the conceptualization of its proximate concomitants does imply a judgment concerning its relation to the quiddity. And from<sup>21</sup> the first [concomitant] an inquiry can be led to something that is not proximately concomitant,

20 Emending *al-kiyān* to *al-kitāb*.

21 Correcting *fī* for *min*.

or to something whose concomitant is one of the things that are concomitant to it [sc. the first concomitant].

[T63] Al-Kātibī, *Ḥikmat al-ʿayn*, 46.12–14

[*knowledge follows the known*]

Knowledge must change along with the object of knowledge, since it corresponds to the known, and one and the same item of knowledge cannot correspond to two different things. Since the change of universal natures is impossible, knowledge about them cannot change either; unlike the case of particulars, since knowledge about them can change, given that they can change.

[T64] Al-Kātibī, *Jamīʿ al-daqāʾiq*, fol. 145v9–12

[*God's knowledge by presence*]

[God] knows Himself and [other] things without the impression (*intibāʿ*) of forms. As for His knowledge of Himself, it is because His concrete being (*huwiyya*), which is separate from matter and its attachments, is His knowledge of Himself. And as for His knowledge of [other] things, it is because He Himself necessitates their true realities themselves, so that the form that is the principle of all other existents is present to Him. This form is His knowledge of things by way of productive, inclusive<sup>22</sup> knowledge, not passive, differentiated knowledge, since no impression [of a form] is possible for Him.

[T65] Al-Samarqandī, *Muʿtaqad*, 11.12–12.2

[*argument for knowledge of particulars from God's will*]

The Necessary is knowledgeable, because when choosing, one cannot turn one's intention towards something unknown. So, if [God] wishes to make something to exist, He inevitably knows the true reality of whatever He wishes to render existent. And if He wishes that [12] something persist (*baqāʾ*), then He knows this concrete thing as existing. Hence He knows both the true realities of existents and knows them as concrete things. The true realities are universal, while the concrete things are particulars.

22 Deleting *lā* before *ijmāliyyan*.

[T66] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 181.12–182.6

[*unchanging knowledge of changing things*]

Changing particulars may be perceived in an unchanging way, or in a way that changes along with them. You may take as an example how this happens that, when you remember a poetic ode and it is present in your mind all at once, just as it was written, verse for verse and word for word, then perception of these in all their detail (*tafāṣīlihā*) occurs in an unchanging way. But when you read it one word after another and one verse after another, without representing its detailed words and verses all at once, this is the initial perception of such concrete, perceived details, but it changes along with the objects of perception.

When someone alludes to something particular, as when saying “Zayd is the one who is in [182] a given city” or “the solar eclipse will happen one month after our present moment,” this cannot be predicated of many things, and it is not grasped intellectually but rather perceived through the senses, so knowledge of it will be changing and particular. But when someone makes no allusion at all to any particular object (*mushār ilayhi*), but rather knows it by means of its causes—as when one knows through the causes the magnitude between two eclipses—then the knowledge of it does not change, and it makes no difference whether [the object of knowledge] is existent or non-existent. Then the perception of it is universal intellection.<sup>23</sup>

[T67] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 371.1–2

[*response to al-Rāzī’s claim that we know particulars by knowing their causes*]

From one object of conceptualization, we may only make an inference to another object of conceptualization, and individuals can be perceived by the intellect only in a way that is compatible with being predicated of many things; what rules out [this sort of] sharing is, for instance, concrete being (*al-huwīyya*), concreteness (*al-ʿaynīyya*), and being extramental.

23 Ibn Kammūna accepts the notion of God’s knowledge by presence at *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 430.2–9. He also accepts the idea that God knows the sublunary things through their impressions in the celestial intellects at *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 430.16–19. Still, Ibn Kammūna immediately says afterwards that God knows everything only in an unchanging universal way.

[T68] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 382.6–9

[*God's knowledge through forms amounts to knowing without forms*]

It makes no difference whether that which is present and not hidden from Him is a form established in certain bodies, or for separate [intellects], or whether it has no form in being grasped by Him. So, things in the present and future, whose forms are established for the celestial governors, as you will learn, are present to Him, since He grasps the bearers of those forms [sc. the celestial intellects] by way of illumination.

[T69] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 390.21–22

[*against the relations solution*]

We cannot say here that only the relation changes. For if we perceive that a given thing will be, then [that future thing] is negative [because it is not yet existent]. Hence there can be no relation to it. Thus its form must occur, and there has to be change.

[T70] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 391.8–19

[*God knows universals only*]

So long as all things in the causal chain terminate at Him, He must know them all in a universal way, which is not subject to past, future, and present; for you have learned that whatever we know through its cause, we know universally. The knowledge of it does not change, regardless whether it is existent or non-existent. The Necessary Existent knows everything in a universal way, yet no individual escapes Him. So long as corruptible things are intellectually grasped in terms of their separate quiddities and whatever follows upon these without individualizing them, they are not intellectually grasped as corruptible. When on the other hand they are perceived as connected to matter and to the accidents of matter, and time, and individuation, they are not intellectually grasped, but rather perceived by the senses, or imagined. It has been shown that every sensory and imaginative form is perceived only insofar as it is perceived by the senses, or imagined, by a divisible and corporeal organ. So perceiving them in this way requires that sort of organ. But that which is absolutely separate [from matter] does not perceive through any corporeal organ. Otherwise it would be perfected through matter, rather than being completely separate from it. This is however a contradiction. So, if the Necessary's separation from matter



is beyond every [other sort of] separation, this type of perception is impossible for him.

[T71] Bar Hebraeus, *Hēwath hekhmtā*, *Met.*, 184.18–185.3

[*knowledge through causes and definitive descriptions is always universal*]

Every effect that is known through its cause is known in a universal way. For when we know A to be the bestower of existence upon B, we know B and its being brought into existence by A, yet both [items of knowledge] are universal. The definition of a universal [185] through a universal is universal. One thereby knows that the image (*yuqnā*) of Socrates which the intellect takes when he is perceived by it is universal, since it is compounded out of universal humanity and universal accidents, although only one of him is found in actuality.

[T72] Bar Hebraeus, *Mnārath qudhshē*, vol. 3, 66.6–68.32

[*God only knows universals: change argument*]

*First objection:* they say that, if God knew that Socrates is sitting now at this place, when he stands up and moves from this place, if what God knew before still remains as it was, it is not knowledge but ignorance, since He would know the Socrates who stood up and moved as the one who is still sitting. If however it does not remain, it changes. But it is impossible to introduce change into the nature of the Creator. Therefore, God knows Socrates in a universal way (*kullāyā'īth*) only, for instance, that he is a human and that he is naturally capable of sitting and standing, of coming and going. This kind of knowledge is never subject to change, since no universal ever changes. St Dionysius confirms this view of ours when he says: “it is therefore insofar as the Divine Wisdom knows itself that it knows everything material immaterially and everything divisible indivisibly and everything multiple in a unified way.”<sup>24</sup> He also said: “those that are, do not know Him insofar as He is, nor does He know them insofar as they are.”<sup>25</sup>

24 Ps-Dionysius, *Divine Names* VII.2, PG III, 869B.

25 Ps-Dionysius, *On the Mystical Theology* V, PG III, 1048A.

*[being immaterial, God cannot know the material]*

*Second objection:* every particular perception happens through a corporeal organ. For instance, vision is through the eye, hearing is through the ear, and the rest through the other [organs]. If the Creator had particular perception, He would have corporeal organs and would be a body, which is absurd. [...]

*[response: God's transparent knowledge captures individuals as such]*

[66.27] *Solution to the first objection:* We say that God—may His goodness be praised—knows that Socrates is sitting, and how long he will be sitting and when he will stand up, due to the completeness of His knowledge. From this it is known that His knowledge does not change at the time when Socrates stands up, since He already had knowledge before Socrates stood up about his standing up at the time when he stands up.

*Question:* they say that the knowledge through which a knower knows that Socrates is going to stand up does not suffice for the knower to know [that Socrates stands up] when Socrates stands up. For instance, a blind astronomer knows that at a given hour the Moon is going to be eclipsed. However, he cannot know that the Moon is eclipsed, as he cannot know that that hour has arrived. From this it is known that there is a difference between knowing that [Socrates] is going to stand up and knowing that he has stood up, and between knowing that the Moon is going to be eclipsed and that the Moon is eclipsed.

*Reply:* we say that what you have described happens only to us, who have deficient knowledge, since it is possible that we know that which comes to be without knowing the coming to be of the time at which it comes to be, as you said about the blind person who is deprived of vision. By contrast, the Creator is beyond any deficiency and His knowledge is complete in all ways, so nothing you said can apply to Him.

As for the claim in the book that you have drawn upon [sc. Dionysius], someone who is immaterial knows the material in an immaterial way. Indeed, He knows not through the senses, that is, the material organs, for instance, through an eye, ear, etc. Rather [He knows] through unified and immaterial knowledge. Furthermore, when the sainted book said that the Divine Wisdom does not know those that are “as they are,” it means that the Creative Wisdom does not know those that are “as they are” and at the time at which they are *alone*, but also before they come to be and after they cease to be.

[*perception of the material without organs is possible, as argued by Abū al-Barakāt*]

*Solution to the second objection:* we say that not every particular perception happens through corporeal organs. For the rational soul, for instance, despite having neither eyes nor ears, does know the objects of vision and of hearing, and other sensible things besides. If it did not perceive them, how could it determine that opposites cannot occur altogether at one and the same time in one and the same subject, for instance white and black, as we have said many times?

[T73] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 499.18–500.4

[*relations solution*]

You must know that since divine perception is not through a form in His essence but rather through the illuminational presence which is the noblest among all types of perception, and negations and sheer relations are possible in the case of God the exalted. So if He knows anything through that presence, such as the form of the existent Zayd for instance, then He has a principle-relation to him. If the form of Zayd perishes [500], that principle-relation, which He had to it, perishes as well. Nevertheless, no change follows from its perishing in Himself, since you have already learned that the change of the relatum does not follow from the change of sheer relations. If we move from the right to the left something moves from the right to the left of us, and our relation to whatever is to the right and to the left changes without our essences' being changed themselves.

[T74] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 506.3–7

[*al-Ṭūsī and al-Kindī in agreement*]

This is the gist of what that man [that is, al-Ṭūsī] said. Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī has already indicated it by saying: If the First Cause is connected to us due to its emanation into us, whereas we are connected to it only in some sense, then we may be aware of it to the same extent as something emanated may be aware of the emanator. Hence the extent of His knowledge about us cannot be related to the extent of our knowledge of Him, since [His knowledge] is more intuitive, abundant, and deeper than ours.

[T75] Al-Shahrazūri, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 506.15–507.2

[*God knows sublunary things directly and not through their impressions in celestial intellects*]

As for the difference [between al-Ṭūsī's and al-Suhrawardī's theories of God's knowledge by presence] it is [al-Ṭūsī's] establishing all forms of existents in intellectual substances. You have already learned about this path that all intellectual substances grasp themselves through themselves and perceive all other existents through presential illumination without any form or image being in any of them, as we have established. Furthermore, you have already learned that the Necessary through Himself and the intellectual principles as they perceive abstract [507] intelligibles through presential illumination, also perceive material things through presential illumination without perceiving them through any form which would occur in the intellectual principles.

[T76] Al-Tustarī, *Muḥākamāt*, fol. 99v4–10

[*whether God's knowledge is through forms*]

This is what he [i.e. al-Ṭūsī] said and it is reported that the eminent Bahman-yār pointed to this principle [that knowledge occurs without the impression of forms in the knower]. It is a good solution and splendid analysis, apart from the last statement, which stands in need of further investigation. For if knowledge is explained as the occurrence of the forms of His effects in concrete individuals, then the Necessary will lack intellection of non-existent things and their features, that is, [they will] be hidden from Him. A more principled way [to deal with these issues] is to say that we do not accept that the [supposed] absurdities follow. They would follow only if His knowledge of things consisted in the realization of forms in His essence. Yet speaking of a form that is equivalent [to the object known to God] does not imply this; for, when the philosopher [sc. Avicenna] says that the Exalted knows Himself, he means by "knowledge" that [God's] concrete being is separate from matter and occurs to Him, as the Master [sc. Avicenna] has established elsewhere, and this idea is not additional to His essence, just as our knowledge of ourselves [is not additional to us]. But when he says that [God] knows other things, he means by this that the separate concrete being, which is the principle of things, occurs to Him and not to anything else. [For His knowledge of Himself is essentially identical to His knowledge of His effects, and He differs from them only in aspect. According to their account,]<sup>26</sup> His knowledge of Himself and of other things thereby excludes that He is both producer and receiver, since this holds only if one

explains [God's knowledge] as inherence, but there is no need to do that. So we do not concede that knowledge is a real attribute that is additional [to His essence], and the same goes for the rest [of the divine attributes]. This is evident to any reasonable person.

[T77] Al-Urmawī, *Maṭālī'*, fol. 30v5–18

[*the eternal truth of propositions*]

Knowledge of an individual changes along with its changing. They said: if we know that Zayd is in the house while he is there, then when he leaves that knowledge has changed, unless it remains; but if it does remain, then it is ignorance, not knowledge. This calls for further investigation. For, if Zayd is in the house that day at sunrise, then it is true that: Zayd is in the house *that day at sunrise*. This proposition is known regardless whether Zayd is in the house before the sunrise that day or afterwards. If Zayd goes out of the house after the sunrise, that proposition does not become false. Rather it remains true, and its knowledge [can] occur after Zayd goes out. Therefore, one horn of the dilemma is wrong, especially given that "Zayd is not at home after sunrise" is true after he goes out after sunrise, since the truth of this [proposition] does not annihilate the truth of that proposition [that Zayd is at home that day at sunrise]. As for the knowledge that Zayd is at home after sunrise, this does not occur, which is why one says that it perished. What is reported about some of our companions, that [on their view] the knowledge that something *will be* is the same as the knowledge that something *is now*, ought to be understood in this way.

[T78] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 560.7–11

[*knowledge changes along with what is known*]

There is no doubt that the connection of knowledge to the future is different from the connection of knowledge to the present. Hence one may be in doubt about one of these two, while there occurs knowledge of the other. Again, the future occurrence is not the same as the present one, nor does it imply it. So the knowledge connected to [the future occurrence] must differ from the

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26 From Carullah 85r23–24. Two other MSS omit this because of the similar beginning of the following phrase.

knowledge connected to [the present occurrence], whether one assumes that knowledge is a form or that it is a relation.

[T79] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 560.13–21

[*knowledge of causes*]

The knowledge of a cause may happen in three ways: (a) The knowledge of [a cause] regarding its essence, quiddity and true reality, but not regarding its accidents and concomitants. This sort of knowledge of [the cause] necessitates no knowledge of the effect, either completely or incompletely. (b) The knowledge of [a cause] insofar as it is the cause of an effect. Here the knowledge of the effect, insofar as it is an effect, does follow upon the knowledge of [the cause]. For the knowledge of the cause is knowledge of the relation of one thing to another. The knowledge of a relation calls for knowledge of the relata. However this does not imply *complete* knowledge of the effect. (c) The knowledge of [a cause] regarding what it is, and regarding its concomitants and its accidents, as well as that for which it is a concomitant and for which it is an accident, what it has in itself and what it has through a relationship to something else. There can be no doubt that this sort of knowledge of the cause does imply the complete knowledge of an effect.<sup>27</sup>

[T80] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 564.10–11

[*against the agent's knowing its own acts through knowledge by presence*]

An action's occurring for its agent does not imply its being intellectually grasped. For those effects that necessarily proceed from their causes may not be intellectually grasped by [those causes].

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<sup>27</sup> Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 566.11–13 accepts al-Rāzī's arguments for God's knowledge of particulars. He also accepts Abū al-Barakāt's idea that change in the divine knowledge is merely relational.

[T81] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 564.14–18

[*against al-Ṭūsī's claim that God's knowing something is the same as that thing's existing*]

This eminent scholar comes to the view that [God's] intellection of an effect is identical to the existence of the effect, with no call for any form other than [that of the effect]. But the existence of the effect differs from the intellection of Necessary Existent in Himself, and essentially, not only in terms of some aspect. How can it be true to claim that the intellection of something is identical to the very existence of that thing, given that the intellection of something is an attribute of one who engages in intellection, whereas the existence of something is not one of his attributes?<sup>28</sup>

[T82] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 564.22–565.2; 567.13–568.6

[*celestial intellects would function as "organs" for God*]

The statement of this eminent scholar [i.e. al-Ṭūsī] that [God] intellectually grasps whatever is below intellectual substances through the existence of [that lower thing] in them, implies that [565] intellectual substances are like organs for Him, the exalted, such that He can intellectually grasp whatever is found in them. What then is the difference between these substances and the senses of the soul, which are the organs for perception? [...]

[567.13] Do the objects of perception belonging to these two groups [sc. things in time and place] require corporeal organs to perceive the things that change and are present at their respective times, and to judge that those things are existent, or that something is absent that is [present] at some other time, that is, to judge that it existed at some past time or future time? Or do they not [require corporeal organs]?

It is true that *we* do require organs for our perception of [such things]. Yet it is not so for the Necessary Existent, either by the demonstration we put forward of His knowledge of them—may He be exalted—since He is their wise maker and thus knows about them; or by their aforementioned demonstration of His knowledge of them—may He be exalted—namely that He has knowledge of Himself, and the knowledge of the cause implies the knowledge of the effect.

<sup>28</sup> Still, al-Ḥillī seems to agree with al-Ṭūsī at *Asrār*, 561.5–10 and 566.1–2.

Because they put forth arguments concerning the perception of the Necessary Existent on the basis of things having to do with us, and we perceive them only [568] through corporeal organs, such organs being denied in His case—may He be exalted—they could not avoid denying His perception of [temporal things]. The mistake arises at the first step. For anyone who says that the Necessary Existent perceives things only because they are inscribed in a substance that is separate from matter and intellectually grasped by the Necessary, the exalted, must take this substance [sc. the First Intellect] to be an organ for perception. Why then don't they affirm organs for Him, through which He would perceive particular things that are connected to time and place? But this is a gross error; may God be exalted above such suppositions!



## Free Will, Determinism, and Human Action

If you were looking for just one topic where a debate found in post-Avicennan philosophy resonates with a debate in contemporary analytic philosophy, you could do worse than to choose the controversy over free will. Ideas that standardly crop up in the latter context, such as the “principle of sufficient reason,” the “principle of alternative possibilities,” determinism and indeterminism, compatibilism, and the claim that uncaused actions cannot be choices, are all clearly expressed in the passages collected in this chapter. Our texts also touch on the problem of future contingents, which of course goes back to Aristotle (*On Interpretation* ch.9).

As so often, we find our authors responding both to Avicenna’s own remarks on will and action, and to earlier *kalām* arguments. They tend to assimilate Avicennism to determinism (*al-qawl bi-al-jabr*). This is simply the view that everything is necessary. Whereas we might nowadays express this more precisely by saying that for the determinist, all *events* are necessary, the post-Avicennans think about it more in terms of existence. Just as a substance, like a human, can exist or not exist, so an act, like walking or praying, may exist or not. In light of this and having now looked in detail at other aspects of Avicenna’s metaphysics, we might almost guess what he is going to say about whether human actions are necessary. Since an act like walking, or prayer, does not exist necessarily (only God exists necessarily), the act will be in itself contingent. But it will become necessary as soon as an agent causes it to exist [T3], true causation always meaning that the effect must necessarily follow. As Bahman-yār adds, even apparently incidental or chance things, like a person being born with six fingers on one hand, are in fact necessary and would be understood as such by someone who grasped their hidden causes [T10].

The fact that the various acts one can perform are only possible, or contingent, may seem to imply that Avicenna would endorse the “principle of alternative possibilities” (PAP), which states that genuine agency requires the availability of more than one possible way of acting. Minimally, this could be the possibility to perform or not to perform a given act, and our passages often put it that way, contrasting *fi’l* (“act”) with *tark* (“refraining”). In fact though, Avicenna rejects PAP [T1].<sup>1</sup> He says explicitly that the performance of an act fol-

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1 See further T. Kukkonen, “Potentiality in Classical Arabic Thought,” in K. Engelhard und M. Quante (eds), *Handbook of Potentiality* (Berlin: 2018), 95–121.

lows on the “decisive will,” which may itself be such that it could not have been otherwise. So there is no need for alternative possible outcomes. One reason this is important for Avicenna is that God is necessary in every respect. Nothing about Him, and no causation He exercises, could be otherwise.

Yet Avicenna still wishes to say that God acts through “will.” This just means, as Fakhr al-Dīn explains, that God causes the good to exist by necessarily willing whatever is good, or best [T40]. Suhrawardī makes a similar point at [T37], when he remarks that divine action happens neither by will nor by nature, but by self-awareness. Likewise, on Avicenna’s view humans can be said to act through choice (*ikhtiyār*) and will (*irāda*) even if they could not have done anything else. Acts that qualify as “chosen” or “willed” are not such because other options are available, but because the act is the result of the agent’s motivations and beliefs, rather than being compelled from the outside. Bahmanyār duly asserts that the Avicennan position is indeed a form of determinism [T9] and spells out the reason why: nothing can happen without prior causes, which all trace back ultimately to God [T11]. Our beliefs and motives too are necessitated by God through inevitable chains of causation. Even when we pray to Him for some specific, apparently contingent, event to occur, our prayer’s being answered does not mean that God intervenes gratuitously and arbitrarily into the sequence of world events. Rather, the prayer is efficacious just so long as it fits into the necessitated complex of events that God has providentially willed into existence from eternity [T12].

If, like some modern-day libertarians, you rebel at the notion that free agency could be exercised without the presence of alternative possibilities, you will appreciate the *kalām* reaction to Avicenna’s position. Al-Ghazālī complains that a cause that gives rise to its effect without having other options does not really count as an “agent (*fā’il*)” [T5]. God Himself exercises arbitrary, not necessary, will. That is, He chooses between alternatives and need have no decisive reason determining His choice, something al-Ghazālī illustrates with an analogy to arbitrarily choosing one of two similar dates [T4]. Indeed he goes so far as to define “will (*irāda*)” as “an attribute whose function is to distinguish one thing from its similar” [T8].<sup>2</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn adds that this should be considered a constraint on the term “capable” or “powerful” (*qādir*), not just on “agent”: fire does not, strictly speaking, have “power over” heating things, since it cannot do otherwise [T44]. Fakhr al-Dīn does also raise a technical problem for PAP, namely that in the moment one is acting, one would no longer have

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2 A standard context in which this arises is God’s arbitrary choice of a moment for the world to begin.

the capacity to refrain—it is “too late,” so to speak—but elsewhere he dismisses this idea as a mere verbal trick (*lafẓī*) [T43].<sup>3</sup> In a similar vein, al-Ṭūsī and al-Samarqandī explain that the debate whether alternative possibilities should be available to the agent at the moment of the act, which took place between the Muʿtazilites and the Ashʿarites way before Avicenna, was a merely verbal dispute [T83, T88].

One is tempted to infer from all this that God should have untrammelled power over absolutely everything, given that all other existents are contingent and thus could either exist or not. But there may actually be a few exceptions: God has no power over things that are intrinsically impossible [T66], a point also admitted in al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut*.<sup>4</sup> Nor, according to al-Kashshī, does God ever will absolute non-existence [T72]. One rationale for this might be simply that whatever God wills happens; so for something to happen is enough to be the object of God's will.

With these caveats in place, all our authors are happy to assert that God is “powerful,” which we can again understand in terms of existence. To have power over something means, in the first instance, to be in a position to make that thing exist (hence the constant use of the word *ījād*, “bestowal of existence”). The main point of controversy discussed in our texts is whether humans are also “powerful” in this sense. A useful taxonomy of views, which integrates Avicenna into a spectrum of *kalām* positions, is given by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī [51].<sup>5</sup>

- (a) humans are not independent bestowers of existence
  - (a1) because their acts are necessitated by motivation (held by the “philosophers” and Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī)
  - (a2) God and the human are joint causes (held by al-Isfarāʾīnī)
  - (a3) God causes motion, the human specifies the motion as a particular type, e.g. prayer or adultery (held by al-Bāqillānī).<sup>6</sup>
  - (a4) God creates both the act and the power for the act; the human has no effect on their act whatsoever (held by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī).

3 Al-Rāzī, *Mulakkhkhaṣ* fol. 252r8–9.

4 Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 175.

5 On theories of human agency in al-Rāzī and *kalām* see further A. Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Leiden: 2006), ch. 1. An older but still very useful overview of different positions in *kalām* is D. Gimaret, *Théories de l'acte humain en théologie musulmane* (Paris: 1980).

6 For (a2) and (a3) see also [T86]. Note that al-Samarqandī seems to believe that the compatibilist position that he endorses in [T88] is identical with (a2) and (a3). A similar view can be also found in al-Ghazālī [T7].

- (b) humans are independent bestowers of existence
  - (b1) this is immediately obvious (Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, again: al-Rāzī notes the discrepancy)
  - (b2) this is known by inference (held by most other Muʿtazilites)

While this menu of positions is more fine-grained, it still reflects the usual dichotomous contrast made when speaking of *kalām* accounts. On the one hand we have (a) the compatibilist determinism associated with the Ashʿarites, on the other hand (b) the libertarianism associated with the Muʿtazilites. As expected Avicennists are seen as partisans of the first position. Note that Fakhr al-Dīn does not mention any upholders of what we now call “hard determinism,” which endorses both incompatibilism and determinism to conclude that, since human acts are caused, they are in fact unfree. Rather we have a dispute between group (a), who are “compatibilist determinists” in modern parlance, and group (b) who are “libertarians,” that is, incompatibilists who reject determinism. Both parties acknowledge “will” or “choice” in human acts, but disagree about whether humans are independent causes in acting: group (a) says no, group (b) says yes.

Let us turn first to arguments for the second, libertarian position. As mentioned in [T51] under option (b1), one thought here could be that we simply have immediate awareness that we exert power over our acts. This would count as “necessary knowledge” and it is not really something that stands in need of proof [T19, T23]. The Muʿtazilite author Ibn al-Malāḥimī considers a riposte to this, namely that this can hardly be necessary knowledge given that many people deny it [T27]. But he thinks such denial is found only among stubborn theologians, who drop their pretense in “everyday life.” A more profound challenge to the claim of epistemic immediacy is found in [T41], where Fakhr al-Dīn uses a regress argument to suggest that it is not evident to introspection whether we are independent in our higher-order acts of will. If my willing to walk presupposes that I will to will that I walk, and if this second-order willing is not obviously up to me, then there is some doubt as to whether my first-order willing is up to me. One might compare this to [T21], where al-Shahrastānī discusses an interesting point made by the early theologian and literary stylist al-Jāhīz, namely that other people’s acts are just as much a possible object of my will as my own acts (see also [T80] for this kind of distinction).

The Muʿtazilite appeal to intuition is sometimes linked to our immediate awareness that our acts proceed “in accordance with our own motivations” (*dawāʿī*) [T26]. We are aware of exercising voluntary action just when we exercise power on the basis of motivation, something that is lacking in cases of involuntary acts like spasms. To this argument it is responded that voluntary acts are often less than fully in accord with our motives: al-Shahrastānī gives the

nice example of trying to hit exactly the same spot with two successive throws of a rock [T19] (see [T93] for a similar example with handwriting). Conversely, sometimes when motivation *is* present, there is clearly no “power to bestow existence.” When I dye cloth it is my motivation that it takes on color, but I am not the one who makes the color exist [T69]. Fakhr al-Dīn offers further examples, like someone turning over in their sleep, and the skilled musician who can play without conscious motivation [T62]. He offers the solution that in such cases the motive is present, but not explicitly; failing that, the act should be deemed involuntary after all.

The Mu‘tazilites are playing a dangerous game here, because the determinist can easily respond that acts are not just *in accordance with* motivation, but *caused by* motivation. If our motives are not subject to our will and they necessitate our acts, then the phenomenon of acting out of motivation counts against the libertarians, not for them. It is presumably to avoid this consequence that Ibn al-Malāḥimī, as reported by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, said that motivation makes the act only “more appropriate” rather than guaranteeing it [T47, T82]. Al-Rāzī and al-Ṭūsī are both unimpressed: if motivation does not render the act necessary, it does not explain it fully [T47, T83]. Fakhr al-Dīn elsewhere explains what motivation is, namely a combination of belief or knowledge with seeking an observable benefit [T61]. If I am thirsty, I am motivated to drink, but I will not drink water unless I also believe that water quenches thirst. Again, this is problematic for the libertarian, since it is not simply up to me to believe whatever I want [T58] [T59]. Rather my beliefs are themselves caused by factors that are out of my control, which may be either internal or external to me as an agent.

A further rationale for the Mu‘tazilite position is that we cannot be morally (or religiously) responsible for that which lies outside our control. As the point is usually put, “obligation (*taklīf*)” to act requires power over the act and is incompatible with determinism [T20, T22, T23]. In this context, Ibn al-Malāḥimī offers a consideration to remind us of our “necessary knowledge” concerning genuine agency. What we know immediately is that we stand under moral obligations; but obligation presupposes the power to bestow existence on one’s acts; so we must have such power [T25]. Here one might also mention al-Ḥillī’s point that if God ruled over my acts deterministically, then I would be obeying Him no matter what I do, which is absurd [T89] (al-Ḥillī himself accepts a compatibilist formulation that God rules over my acts by way of my voluntary choice). One response to the Mu‘tazilite argument from obligation, going in the direction of divine voluntarism, is simply to deny that issuing a command requires that the one under a command has the ability to do otherwise [T64]. Another, more rationalist, response is to say that reward and

punishment for an act are “co-necessitated” by God along with the act, since these are just concomitants of the act [T29, T30, T42]. ‘Umar al-Khayyām offers an explanation for why God commands the things that He does, without even referring to punishment and reward, namely that the commanded things are those that promote social cohesion [T14].<sup>7</sup>

So much for the arguments offered on behalf of Mu‘tazilite libertarianism. Let us now turn to arguments against ascribing agency to humans. One intuition that lies behind these arguments is that humans cannot “bestow existence” on anything, since this would mean creating something, and only God can do that. Al-Shahrastānī offers the rather abstract argument that if humans could make their acts exist, they should be able to make absolutely anything exist; after all existence always is existence [T16]. A more concrete rationale is what we might call the “competition argument,” namely that God and humans cannot *both* have power over the same thing. This would lead to overdetermination if these two agents agreed what should happen, and worse still, absurdity if they disagreed, since neither can have more power than the other over one and the same act [T55]. Surely God cannot have only equal or less power than the human [T68]! But al-Ḥillī just denies the problem and insists that God must actually have the decisive say in what will happen [T92]. And al-Ṭūsī notes a gap in the competition argument, namely that God may have power over a certain act but simply choose not to exercise that power, leaving it open to the human to make the act exist (or not) with their admittedly inferior power [T78]. As al-Āmidī says, the Mu‘tazilites may even insist that human acts are not objects of divine power at all, since something may be contingent but up to the human rather than to God [T67].

A further anti-libertarian proof, which we may call the “knowledge argument,” works from the assumption that “creation” or “bestowal of existence” requires the creating or bestowing agent to know thoroughly the thing that will result. Yet we see that God’s creatures do not have this detailed understanding of their own works. Knowledge is entirely lacking in small children and animals [T7], and even adult humans have only limited knowledge of the effects they (seem to) produce [T15, T54]. The aforementioned impossibility of doing exactly the same thing twice, as with the thrown rock, or producing two samples of handwriting that are exactly alike, also shows that to some extent, we quite literally “do not know what we are doing.” Sometimes things go even more badly, and we reach the opposite of the result we intended, as when we

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7 For more on rationalism vs arbitrary divine command theory, see the chapter on Good and Evil in this volume.

seek knowledge and wind up with “ignorance” i.e. false belief [T56]. Both phenomena show that humans lack full control over the results of their actions.

An obvious way to respond to the knowledge argument is that genuine agency may not require *full* control and complete knowledge [T79]. Even if you can't write two words in the same script with total precision, you can certainly write the same word twice, and the tiny differences are just a matter of chance [T93]. Furthermore, we can do things on purpose without explicitly intending them as such. When we move, we do not need to form an intention to occupy every single position along the motion; rather we just “inclusively” intend them all by intending the single motion [T91].<sup>8</sup>

A theme that has run throughout this survey of arguments so far is the idea that a cause must necessitate its effect, and as we have just seen, arguably necessitate *exactly* the resulting effect (not just a written word, but a written word of exactly this size, in exactly this script, etc.). Here we have one of the most important links between Avicenna and the subsequent discussion of human agency. Like him, many or even most thinkers in our period believe that an act needs to be “preponderated” to exist rather than not existing, and that to preponderate means to guarantee or necessitate. More generally, whenever there are genuine options available, there must be preponderation to settle which option is realized [T36]. In other words, our authors are attracted to the “principle of sufficient reason” (PSR): nothing just happens or exists, rather each thing is either necessary in itself, or is contingent and needs to be preponderated to exist.<sup>9</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn suggests a quick inference from this line of thought to determinism at [T39], while at [T38] he gives a fuller line of reasoning: human acts proceed from their causal capacities and motivations (including, as we have seen him say elsewhere, belief states), but all these preponderating factors are themselves caused by God. On this reckoning, the Ash'arite position turns out to be true. His way of defending it, though, is distinctive, combining the Avicennan commitment to the PSR with Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's point that acts are dependent on motivation, so that the agent's motivation can itself be the “sufficient reason” that preponderates an act, or part of that reason.

Yet some Ash'arites are nervous about the PSR, because of the case of God Himself. Surely He is not caused in His choices, nor is His will necessary in itself as Avicenna said. Instead, He chooses arbitrarily between contingent options, without being preponderated to do so by any consideration or (or course)

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8 For “inclusive knowledge” see also the chapter in this volume on God's Knowledge of Particulars.

9 See K. Richardson, “Avicenna and the Principle of Sufficient Reason,” *Review of Metaphysics* 67 (2014), 743–768.

external cause. In light of this they may simply decide to abandon PSR by admitting, as Fakhr al-Dīn puts it, that “preponderation can occur without a preponderating factor” [T40]. This takes us back to the meaning of “having power”: we saw Fakhr al-Dīn saying that it implies being able to act or not act, as one wishes; more technically, he says it means to preponderate between options without being preponderated to do so [T45]. But it seems *ad hoc* to stipulate that there is an exception to PSR in just the case of God, as Fakhr al-Dīn does [T53], on the rather thin grounds that God’s will is eternal, not originated. Perhaps the idea here is simply that it is absurd to demand preponderation for that which is eternal. But it is hard to see why this should be so unless eternity implies necessity, and then one is back with the Avicennan position. Thus one may easily sympathize with al-Ḥillī, who says he does not understand what would stop us from just saying that humans too can preponderate without a cause [T90]. And after all, al-Ghazālī’s famous example of selecting one of two dates illustrates unpreponderated choice with a case of human, not divine, agency [T4].

Fakhr al-Dīn mentions a similar case at [T63], but insists on the contrary that action cannot ensue until there is some preponderation. He imagines a person stopping dead in their tracks, like a character out of Sartre, waiting for something to tip the scales in favor of going home or continuing on their journey. So committed is he to PSR for human agents, that he thinks “hidden causes” must explain our apparently arbitrary choices, for instance between two loaves of bread (perhaps it is date bread) [T48]. In humans the preponderating factor may be a belief state, whereas in God’s case it would of course have to be certain knowledge [T49]. Fakhr al-Dīn gives a strong rationale for his devotion to PSR, namely that a preponderation with no preponderating factor would just be an unexplained, spontaneous event, which is hardly what we mean by agent control [T52]. This is a complaint still made against libertarian theories of free will. Unfortunately, it is again unclear why the point would not be just as problematic for God’s arbitrary will, which Fakhr al-Dīn is happy to invoke in order to explain, for instance, why God chooses certain times for certain events to occur [T50]. Evidently the Ash‘arite, no less than the Mu‘tazilite, thinks that there is indeed unpreponderated agency, and that causally speaking the buck stops with “someone endowed with power, who originates it in respect of his capacity,” as Ibn al-Malāḥimī puts it [T24]. The disagreement is only over whether this someone could be a human, or only God, because it is only in His case that there is no “why” [T13].

Given that the Ash‘arites deny humans the power to originate, how could they still think that humans are worthy of praise and blame? The answer, notoriously, lies with their doctrine of “acquisition (*kasb*),” according to which



the human “acquires” and carries responsibility for an act that God creates. As we see in [T17] and [T20], acquisition could be spelled out in terms of the theory of “states (*ahwāl*).” God bestows existence on an act or motion, but this act or motion only becomes a performance of walking, or obedience, once it belongs to or is “acquired by” the human agent. With this analysis al-Shahrastānī is following the lead of the theologian al-Bāqillānī [T17]. In fact though, this traditional Ash‘arite doctrine is less prominent in our period than one might have expected, which is why it does not come up often in the passages cited below. Al-Āmidī for one sees it as a promising compromise solution [T69]. But Fakhr al-Dīn finds it literally meaningless, an “empty name” [T65]. He adheres to his own dichotomy between (a) and (b) from [T51] and admits no other option.

At this point it may be clearer why Fakhr al-Dīn saw the “philosophers” as having a view like that of the Ash‘arites: on his reading, at least, both groups were putting forth compatibilist views of human agency. And indeed, Avicenna’s view was often explicated in these terms, as ascribing genuine agency to humans while *also* seeing their acts as necessitated by chains of causation that trace back to God. We have seen this already in Bahmanyār, and it is interesting to see that al-Shahrastānī thinks al-Juwaynī took over this sort of position from Avicenna [T18]. It can also be found in al-Abharī, who unhesitatingly endorses “determinism” [T71], and in al-Ṭūsī, who defines the voluntary not in terms of uncaused causal efficacy but in terms of doing what is in accord with one’s preferences, just as a modern-day compatibilist might say [T73, T74, T75, T83]. Al-Ṭūsī also responds to the classic “lazy argument” already considered by those much earlier compatibilists, the Stoics, and gives the same response they did [T76]. It is worth exerting effort even though all things are determined in advance by God, because the effort and the good result are (as Chrysippus put it) “co-fated”: we have seen above a similar view with respect to the problem of religious obligation. A compatibilist position is also endorsed by al-Samarqandī [T87], who spells out explicitly what it involves: “the fact that both [human power and will] may be traced to the power of God ... and the fact that the act becomes necessary through them is not incompatible with voluntary choice.” Much like the Ash‘arites, whom he too sees as having a view comparable to that of the Avicennist, al-Samarqandī says that his favored account can be considered a “middle view”, that is, between libertarianism and hard determinism [T86, T88], which also how al-Ghazālī saw his own position [T7].

This leaves us with one major issue to discuss: the problem of divine foreknowledge. Here we should give pride of place to Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, who offers a very interesting discussion of this issue and of determinism more

generally. Unlike al-Rāzī, Abū al-Barakāt sees a difference between Avicennan and Ash‘arite determinism.<sup>10</sup> Avicennan determinism refers to causal chains that go back to natural motions of the spheres [T29]; to this, Abū al-Barakāt objects that the motions of the spheres are also voluntary and hence not predestined [T34], cf. [T70]. A more theological kind of determinism is based on the notion of divine foreknowledge. Abū al-Barakāt identifies divine foreknowledge as a major consideration in favor of determinism, which he calls “decree and predestination (*al-qaḍā’ wa-al-qadar*)” [T28]. The issue is familiar one: if God knows in advance what will occur then it cannot fail to occur [T31], cf. [T46]. Divine omniscience requires that there must be certain truth concerning future events, even when the events in question have to do with human action; this is a version of a more general problem of future contingents discussed in [T2] and [T60].<sup>11</sup> Against this Abū al-Barakāt argues that knowledge, by its very nature, cannot embrace the infinity of future occurrences [T32], so God’s knowledge must be assumed to be (to use words he does not) limited or partial [T33]. What God knows in advance are, firstly, regularities of nature, and secondly, the events He specifically chooses to cause. These would include, for instance, His decision to answer prayers [T35]. It seems that, from our point of view, such things would be indistinguishable from chance events. The example of Zayd meeting a scorpion and being bitten by it looks like a standard case of Aristotelian chance, but it may also be intended and decreed by God [T33].

Since this solution requires greatly restricting the range of God’s knowledge, it was never likely to be widely accepted. We do however find Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, at least in one passage, agreeing with the earlier theologian Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam that God does not know what we will do in advance, as a way to avoid admitting that God knows in advance that we will sin [T57]. He mentions the standard example of Abū Lahab, who is condemned by name in the Qur’ān (111.1–3). Al-Ṭūsī, alluding to the same example, says instead that God foreknows precisely that Abū Lahab will sin *voluntarily* [T81]. We find the same idea in Bar Hebraeus [T84, T85], who seems to be adopting a similar Avicenna compatibilist view on human choices rather than traditional Christian libertarianism.

10 On Abū al-Barakāt’s account of determinism and free will see further: J. Kaukua, “The Question of Providence and the Problem of Evil in Suhrawardī,” in S. Rizvi and M. Terrier (eds), *The Problem of Evil: A Challenge to Shī‘i Theology in Islamic Philosophy* (Leiden: 2021), and M. Shehata, “Abū l-Barakāt al-Baḡdādī on Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will,” *Nazariyat* 6 (2020), 99–131.

11 On the problem of future contingents in pre-Avicennan philosophy see P. Adamson, “The Arabic Sea-Battle: al-Fārābī on the Problem of Future Contingents,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 88 (2006), 163–188.

For those who accepted that God does foreknow everything that will occur, it was useful to recall the Avicennan point that the things God knows are in themselves contingent [T2]. They are only necessary as objects of knowledge insofar as we are considering them in light of the fact that they are (or will be) caused by something else. For once al-Ghazālī agrees with Avicenna here [T6], and as usual so does al-Ṭūsī, who adds that it is not because of God's knowledge that the events occur, but the other way around [T77, T83]. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī makes the same point by saying that the connection of knowledge to an act "follows upon" the act's being brought about [T46, T77]. This might imply a permanentist view of events, since God's foreknowledge would not be able to "follow upon" something that has not yet occurred.

Texts from: Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, Bahmanyār, 'Umar al-Khayyām, al-Shahrastānī, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, al-Suhrawardī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Āmidī, al-Abharī, al-Kashshī, al-Ṭūsī, Bar Hebraeus, al-Samarqandī, al-Ḥillī.

## Free Will, Determinism, and Human Action

[T1] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* IV.2, 132.11–133.20 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

*[power and will need not involve alternative possibilities]*

What may raise a doubt in this connection is the issue of potency (*al-quwwa*) in the sense of power (*al-qudra*). For it is supposed to exist only for those who are in a position both to act and to refrain from acting. If [potency is attributed] to one who is only in a position to act, then they do not believe that he has “power.” But this is not true. For [this would be the case only] if this thing that only acts, were to act without wishing or willing: in that case, he would have neither “power” nor “potency” in this sense. If, however, he acts through will (*irāda*) and choice (*ikhtiyār*), even though he be willing perpetually without changing, then, [regardless whether] his will just happens to exist [in this way] or cannot possibly change, this impossibility being essential, he acts with power.

This is because the definition of “power” preferred by these people is found to apply here. For [this definition] will hold true of the [agent] in acting when he wills to do so, and in not acting when he does not will to do so. Both these [statements] are conditional: that is, “if he wills, he acts,” and “if he does not will, he does not act.” The two fall under the definition of power only insofar as both are [133] conditionals. The truth of a conditional does not demand that there should be in any way a repetition of [the antecedent or consequent] or a categorical truth. For when we truthfully say “if he does not will, he does not act,” this does not imply that it is true to say, “but at some time he did not will.” Nor does it follow from the falsity of “he did not will at all,” that it is false to say, “if he did not will, he did not act.” For this would entail that, if he had not willed, he would not have acted, just as, if he does will, he does act. Now, if it is true that, if he wills, he acts, it is also true that, if he acts, he has willed; that is, if he acts, he acts insofar as he has power. So if he did not will, he did not act, and, if he did not act, he did not will. But there is nothing in this to imply that at some time he did not will. This is clear to anyone who knows logic.

*[when power and will are present, action must follow]*

As for those powers that are principles for motions and actions, some are connected to reason and imagination, and some not. Those connected to reason and imagination are of the same kind as reason and imagination. For it is pretty well the case that human and not-human are known by a single power, and that

it belongs to a single power to imagine pleasure and pain and in general to imagine a thing and its opposite. Likewise, these powers themselves are, in their individual instances, each a power over a thing and its opposite. But in fact, it will not be a *complete* power (that is, completely and actually a principle of change of one thing in another thing, insofar as the latter is “other”)<sup>12</sup> unless it is joined by will, which is impelled by either an estimative belief (*i’tiqād wahmī*) following upon a desiring or irascible imagination, or by an intellectual opinion (*ra’y ‘aqlī*), following intellectual thinking or the conceiving of an intellectual form. So if that will, being not a will that involves [mere] inclination, but a decisive will (*al-irāda al-jāzima*)—namely, the one that issues a decision leading to the movement of the organs—is joined to [the power, then the power] inevitably becomes a principle for necessitating action. For we have shown that, so long as a cause has not yet become a *necessitating* cause, such that something comes from it necessarily, the effect will not come to exist from it. Until this happens, the will remains ineffective (*da’if*), with no decision yet occurring. On their own, these powers that are connected to reason do not necessarily act, whenever that upon which they act is present and they are in the appropriate relation to it; they still remain [merely] a power [until decisive will is joined to them].

[T2] Avicenna, *Shifā’, Ibāra*, 70.11–71.1

[*principle of bivalence and future contingents*]

When we divide the states of the contradictory propositions into true and false, it need not be that either of them holds good. For truth and falsehood become determined (*yata’ayyana*) for quantified propositions (*al-maḥṣūrāt*) due to the propositions themselves and the nature of the event (*ṭabī’at al-amr*). This is how things are for the particular temporal proposition whose time is past or present. For the time, having already passed, has made one of the two be in conjunction with the nature of the other, by necessity. But in the case of the contradictory particular propositions concerning future events, it is not necessary that truth or falsehood be determined in them by the nature of the events. Nor is one of the two [sc. either truth or falsehood] determined for them through the occurrence of a determining cause. For determination [of truth and falsehood] is either necessitated through the event itself (*al-amr fī naḥsihi*), or once there exists a determining cause, which need not be determined [as true or

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1046a11.

false] through itself. For everything is necessary, but it may be either necessary in itself, or necessary [71] through the occurrence of a cause that renders it necessary.

[T3] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ibāra*, 74.7–74.11

[*the sense in which everything is necessary*]

Clearly, some things are neither necessarily existent nor necessarily non-existent. For it is commonly accepted and obvious that there are many things that do not exist necessarily. I do not mean [that they are not necessary] “so long as they exist (*mā dāma mawjūdan*), and on the condition that they exist,” because given this condition—and the other similar conditions which you will learn about in the relevant place, conditions which may be satisfied for a contingent [thing]—the status [of the thing] changes into necessity. Thus the thing becomes necessary in light of [these conditions], but its existence remains contingent insofar as one considers its quiddity without any additional condition.

[T4] Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 23.16–24.4 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*principle of sufficient reason: the dates example*]

Even so, in our [own human] case, we do not concede that [a choice between similar things] is inconceivable. Let’s say that there are two equivalent dates in front of someone, who is gazing longingly at them but unable to take both. Inevitably, he will take one of the two through an attribute whose function is to specify something over what is similar to it. Even when the specifying features you have mentioned, in terms of goodness, proximity, and readiness to hand, are supposed as absent, there still remains the possibility of taking [one of the two]. So you are left between two alternatives. Either you say that one cannot ever conceive of equivalence relative to someone’s goals, which is sheer foolishness, as it is [obviously] possible to suppose this; or else, when equivalence is supposed, the man yearning [for the dates] is left permanently undecided, [24] looking at them but taking neither one of them through sheer will and choice, which [according to you] are cut off from the goal. This too is impossible, as it is necessarily known to be false. Therefore it is inescapable that anyone engaged in theoretical reflection on the true reality of voluntary action, whether in the realm of the observable or the unseen, should affirm the existence of an attribute whose function is to specify a thing over what is similar to it.

[T5] Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 56.1–4; 57.15–19 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*will and action vs. necessitation*]

We say: “agent (*fā’il*)” is an expression [referring] to one from whom the act proceeds, together with the will to act by way of choice and the knowledge of what is willed. But, according to you [philosophers], the world [proceeds] from God, as effect from cause, as a necessary consequence, which is inconceivable for God to prevent, the way the shadow is the necessary consequence of the person, and light [the necessary consequence] of the sun. This has nothing to do with “action.” [...]

[57.15] As for your statement that our term “acted” is ambiguous (*‘amm*), and may be divided into what is by nature and what is by will, this is not conceded. This would be like saying that our term “willed” is ambiguous, and divides into one who wills while knowing, and one who wills without knowing what he wills. This is wrong, since will necessarily involves knowledge. Likewise, action necessarily involves will.

[T6] Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtisād*, 84.2–11; 85.3–9 [trans. Yaqub, mod.]

[*the necessary and the possible*]

You should know that there is a terminological ambiguity [regarding modal language]. This should become obvious for you when I tell you, for example, that it is true of the world that it is necessary, that it is impossible, and that it is contingent (*mumkin*). It is necessary, in that once the will of the Eternal is assumed to exist necessarily, what is willed is inevitably necessary, not merely possible (*jā’iz*). For it is impossible that what is willed fail to exist while the eternal will is realized. It is impossible, in that if [God’s] will is assumed to lack attachment to the world’s existence, the world’s origination would definitely be impossible, since this would lead to something’s origination without a cause, which is known to be impossible. And it is contingent, in that when one reflects solely on [the world] in itself, without considering the existence or non-existence of the will, then it is described as contingent. [...]

[*the problem of foreknowledge*]

[85.4] We say: if it is part of God’s knowledge that Zayd shall die on Saturday morning, for instance, then we ask whether it is possible or not possible that life be created for Zayd on Saturday morning. The truth of the matter is that it is

both possible and impossible. It is possible when considered in itself, without taking any other perspective into account. But it is impossible through another, not in itself, namely when one considers the perspective of knowledge attaching to Zayd's death. What is impossible in itself is that which in itself cannot be, such as [a thing's] being both black and white, as opposed to impossibility as the consequence of something other than itself. If we were to assume Zayd's life, this would not be prevented in itself. But its impossibility is a consequence in virtue of something other than itself, namely knowledge itself, because otherwise knowledge would become ignorance, and it is impossible that knowledge become ignorance.

[T7] Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtisād*, 86.10–93.7 [trans. Yaqub, mod.]

*[problem that creaturely power is incompatible with omnipotence]*

*It might be said:* you claim that [God's] power is all-encompassing in its attachment to all possible things. What do you say, then, about things over which animals, and all other living creatures, have power? Does God the exalted have power over them, or not? If you say no, you have contradicted your statement that the divine power is all-encompassing. But if you say yes, you must affirm something over which two [agents] have power, which is absurd. Alternatively, you might deny that humans and other [87] animals have power. But this is a denial of something necessary, and a repudiation of the requirements of the religious Law, since one cannot be required to do something over which one has no power. It is impossible that God the exalted would say to His servant, "it is incumbent upon you to do that which is within my power, and over which I have exclusive power, while you have none."

*[two extreme responses: determinists and Mu'tazilites]*

*In averting [these problems] we say:* people are divided into disparate parties on this issue. The determinists (*al-mujbira*) take the position of denying that man has power. Hence they are forced to deny the necessary distinction between a tremor and a voluntary movement, and to deem impossible the obligations set forth in the religious Law. The Mu'tazilites, by contrast, take the position of denying that the power of God the exalted attaches to the acts of people, animals, angels, jinn, and devils. They claim that whatever proceeds from them is created and originated by them, and that God has no power over either to prevent or bestow existence on these things.



[*refutation of the Mu'tazilites: knowledge argument*]

Two extremely repugnant consequences follow [from their position]. First, the denial of the consensus of the early Muslims, may God be pleased with them, that there is no creator or originator except God. Second, their ascribing origination and creation to the power of those who would create unknowingly. For [88] if humans and other animals were asked about the numbers, details, and magnitudes of the motions that proceed from them, they would have nothing to say about them. After all an infant, taken from his cradle, seeks his mother's breast by choice, and suckles. A newborn kitten crawls to its mother's nipple with its eyes still shut. A spider weaves webs in wondrous shapes, which would baffle a geometer by their roundness, their equilibrium of form, and the symmetry of their arrangement. But it is known necessarily that spiders have no knowledge of what the geometers are unable to know. And bees structure their honeycombs as hexagons. [...]

[89.9] Upon my life, I would love to know, how bees could know these subtleties, which the most intelligent men fail to apprehend! Or is it rather the Creator, who is the sole possessor of omnipotence, who directs the bees to acquire that which they need? They are carriers of God's plan. [...]

[*Ash'arite position*]

[90.4] See now how the followers of the Sunna were guided to the right view, and favored with moderation in belief. *They said:* the doctrine of determination (*al-jabr*) is a false absurdity, while the doctrine of origination (*al-ikhtirā'*) is an outrageous presumption, so the truth lies in affirming that there are two powers over a single act, and saying that an object of power is related to two possessors of power. [...]

[90.9] *It might be asked:* what leads you to affirm an object of power that is related to two possessors of power? *We reply:* a conclusive demonstration [that shows] the difference between a voluntary movement and a tremor. If it is supposed that a tremor is willed by one who experiences it, and is intended by him as well, then the only thing to distinguish it from a voluntary movement would be the absence of power. Besides, [we may appeal to] the conclusive demonstration [that shows] the attachment of God's power to every possible thing. Every originated thing (*hādith*) is contingent; the human's act (*fi'l al-'abd*) is originated; therefore, the human's act is contingent. So if God's power did not attach to the human's act, it would be impossible. For we say that a voluntary movement is similar to the movement in a tremor insofar as it is an

originated, contingent movement. So it is impossible that the power of God the exalted attach to one of them and not the other, which is similar to it [in this respect].<sup>13</sup>

[T8] Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtīṣād*, 106.12–14 [trans. Yaqub]

[*the divine will is eternal and chooses between equivalent options*]

The followers of truth, on the other hand, say that things are originated through an eternal will that attaches to them, and hence distinguishes them from their opposites, which are equivalent to them. It is erroneous to ask, “why does the will attach to this created thing, when its opposite is equivalent to it in contingency?” For the will is precisely an attribute whose function is to distinguish one thing from its similar.

[T9] Bahmanyār, *Tahṣīl*, 473.4–474.7

[*power without alternative possibility*]

Active potency (*al-quwwa al-fīʿliyya*) is sometimes called “power (*al-quḍra*).” Some used to believe that it only exists when one is in a position both to act and to refrain from acting; if one is only in a position to act, then the common people would not call this “power.” This however is not necessary. For if this thing is the only thing one can do, and one does it without volition (*mashīya*), then one would lack “power” in this sense. But if one acts through will (*irāda*)—even should the will be unchanging, whether incidentally or through essential alteration—then one is acting through power. [...]

[473.14] Among the potencies that are principles of motions and acts, some are connected to reason and imagination, [474] while others are not. The former potencies, which are connected to reason, are potencies over something and its opposite. But in fact, these are not complete potency (*quwwa tāmma*). It becomes a complete potency only when decisive will is connected to it, such

13 In what follows, al-Ghazālī also brings up the argument based on the competition between two powers, divine and human, cf. [T55], and reiterates the traditional Ashʿarite view that the relation between the human and their act can be characterised only as “acquisition” (*kasb*, at 90–92).

as to necessitate the motion of the limbs. Only then does the active potency become necessity. Regarding the potencies that are connected to reason, an act does not proceed from them just by themselves, as soon as that upon which they act is present. For [that potency] is capable of both a thing and its opposite. So if an act proceeded from it [by itself], then two opposite acts would proceed from it at the same time, which is absurd. We will explain this well in the appropriate place, and show that human acts proceed from [their potencies] by way of determination (*al-jabr*).

[T10] Bahmanyār, *Tahṣīl*, 535.1–536.5

[*perpetual, for the most part, and incidental*]

You have already learned that among existents, some are eternal (*dāʾima*), while others [occur only] for the most part. For instance fire burns wood for the most part when they meet, and someone who goes out from his house to his garden reaches it for the most part.

The difference between the perpetual and that which is for the most part is that nothing can prevent the eternal at all, whereas that which is for the most part may be prevented. It follows from this that for what is for the most part comes to fruition so long as all hindrances are removed. This is clear in natural things. As for voluntary things, if the will is sound and complete, and the organs are propitious to the motion, and there is no hindering cause or deficiency due to any weakness, and the goal is such as to be achieved, then clearly it is impossible that it will not be achieved.

Then there are things that are equal [in terms of happening or not], such as Zayd's sitting or standing, and things that are unusual, such as a person's having six fingers.

Now, you know that whenever something is eternal or for the most part, one does not say for either of these that its existence is incidental (*ittifāqan*). So coincidence exists only for that which is equal or unusual. But the equal and the unusual may still be necessary in some respect. The reason is that if in the formation of the embryo there is an excess of matter beyond what would be needed for forming five fingers, and the distinguishing faculty meets with adequate preparedness in the natural matter, then by necessity additional fingers will be created.

[536] In general, if a person knew everything, so that nothing escaped their knowledge, then there would be nothing incidental [from their point of view]. Rather everything would be necessary. Things that exist coincidentally are only incidental when taken in relation to someone ignorant of their causes. But in relation to the one who causes [all other] causes, may He be exalted, and to the auxiliary causes, there is nothing incidental.

[T11] Bahmanyār, *Tahṣīl*, 657.11–658.6

[*determinism*]

Among existents, nothing is coincidental. Rather all of them are either natural and according to [the existent's] essence, like the downward motion of the stone; or are natural in relation to the whole, despite not being natural in relation to its essence, like the existence of fingers as a tool for acquisition. [Furthermore] will (*al-irāda*) is something originated. Everything [658] originated has an infinite number of causes, as you have learned. Also, it is connected to motion, which allows for the existence of that which is infinite, specifically in the case of the continuous eternal motion that is the motion of the sphere. And motion comes forth from the First. Therefore, our will too must be connected to the Necessary Existent in Himself, and He is its cause.

If someone asks whether we have a power (*qudra*) over [our] act or not, *we say*: we have power over the act in relation to [actions] taken singly, but in relation to the whole, we have power only over that which has been predestined (*al-muqaddar*).

[T12] Bahmanyār, *Tahṣīl*, 662.10–663.1

[*prayers and determinism*]

Prayers, and whatever comes to a person's mind, are among things that are predestined. However, so long as [God] has no intellectual grasp of the one who prays, He does not grasp that [this person] is praying. If that for which he prays does not hinder the arrangement of the good, that is, the arrangement of the universe, its existence will follow on [his prayer]. You have already learned that everything conceived by the First, and whose existence is contingent, must inevitably come into existence. So the one who prays, being endowed with the estimative power (*wahm*), is one of the reasons that his prayer and his power of estimation are in a way conceived by the First. So his prayer is, in

a way, a cause for the existence of that for which he prays. This is like the fact that, so long as one does not conceive of the form of Zayd, one cannot conceive of his capacity to write, since Zayd's existence is among the causes of his being able to write. Just so, Zayd [663] is among the causes of the First's conceiving of his prayer, and his prayer is among the causes of that for which he prays.

[T13] Al-Khayyām, *Kawn wa-taklīf*, 142.1–2

[*providence has no further explanation*]

If they ask us to answer why He is generous (*'an limiyya jūdihi*), we shall say: there is no "why," because it is necessary. Just as the essence of the Necessary Existent has no "why," neither does His generosity, nor do any of His attributes.

[T14] Al-Khayyām, *Kawn wa-taklīf*, 143.12–144.3

[*divine obligation (taklīf) is for social cooperation*]

Obligation (*al-taklīf*) is something that comes forth from God the exalted, and leads human individuals to the perfection that brings them happiness, during their life either initially or in the hereafter. It keeps them from injustice, oppression, wrongdoing, the acquisition of defects, and preoccupation with following the corporeal powers that hinder them from following the intellectual power. As for the question whether there is obligation, it is included in the question why there is obligation, since asking "why" about things includes "whether" [they exist].

*We say then*, on the question of why there is [obligation], that God the exalted created the human species in such a way that its individuals cannot, in terms of what is possible for the most part, survive and acquire the state of perfection without cooperation, help, and support. For so long as their nourishment, clothing, and shelter (which is what they need most in order to live) are not fashioned, they cannot possibly be in a perfect condition. No single human being can by himself take charge of all that [144] he needs in order to stay alive. Thus each of them is required to take charge of one of the things needed to stay alive. In the absence of a companion, he would have to take charge of it all by himself, so that too many occupations would be forced upon a single person. Things being so, it is necessary that [people] are required to observe just customs (*sunna*) in which they can interact with one another justly.

[T15] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 67.19–68.5; 70.2–16

[*humans lack complete knowledge of their actions so are not true agents*]

Wise acts are indicative of the knowledge of the one who originates them, since proficiency (*al-ittiqān*) and wise judgments (*al-aḥkām*) are surely among the effects of knowledge. If an act [68] proceeds from a proficient agent, then it must be an effect of that agent's knowledge. But it is well-known that a person's knowledge does not unfailingly connect to the act he performs in all respects. Rather, even if he knows [his action], he knows it [only] in some respect, by way of inclusive, undifferentiated knowledge. So the aspects of wise judgment in the act do not indicate that he has knowledge, nor are they the effects of his knowledge. So it is determined that they have some other agent: He is the one whose knowledge embraces them in all respects. [...]

[*why humans do not know their acts: regress problem*]

[70.2] The aspects in respect of which an act is known are divided into that which is known necessarily, and that which is known though inquiry (*naẓaran*), such that when one bestows existence [on an act], one needs inquiry in order to obtain that knowledge. But [the act of inquiring] would be a second-order acquisition, so one would need understanding (gained either necessarily or through inquiry) into the aspects of the acquisition [of the inquiry into the initial act]. This yields an infinite regress, so one will never get to bestowing existence upon the intended act.

[*human knowledge is passive, only God's is active*]

Because of this point, many of the reasonable philosophers (*falāsifa*) came to think that the bestowal of existence occurs only through knowledge. So that, if one were to conceive of a person having knowledge of all aspects of an act—as a universal, as a particular, [its] subject of inherence, [its] place, time, number, form, accidental state, and perfection—then one would conceive them as bestowing existence and as originating. On this basis they came to believe that the knowledge God the exalted has of Himself is the principle of existence for the first act; and they distinguished between active and passive knowledge.<sup>14</sup> Humans, though, need power (*al-qudra*), will, motivations, instruments and means, because their knowledge cannot be conceived as active knowledge. Rather, for them all instances of knowledge are passive. For this reason all

14 See further the chapter on God's knowledge of particulars, esp. [T6], [T18], [T19].

the theologians (*mutakallimūn*) agreed that knowledge follows upon objects of knowledge, and is connected to them as they are, but it does not confer any attribute upon [the known object], nor does [knowledge] acquire any attribute from [the object]. This is the secret of this approach, and its utmost end (*nihāya*).

[T16] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 70.18–71.9

[*the power to bestow existence must be unlimited*]

If [a created power] were capable of bestowing existence, then it would be capable of bestowing existence upon any kind of existent things, both substances and accidents. For existence is one and the same predicate, which encompasses all existents. It does not vary just insofar as it is existence. Substance does not surpass accident in respect of [71] existence as such, only in other respects, namely self-subsistence, volume, location, and independence from a subject of inherence. According to the opponent [i.e. the Muʿtazilites], all these are attributes that follow upon origination (*al-ḥudūth*) and are not effects of power. As for being a thing (*al-shayʿiyya*), being concrete, being a substance, and being an accident, these are on his view generic names that are real in non-existence, and also not among the effects of power. So among the attributes, no other aspect remains to be connected to power apart from existence. But it does not vary among existents, nor does the aspect of being apt [to bestow existence]. In power there is only one aspect, and if it is apt to produce some existent, then it is apt to produce all existents. But in fact [a created power] is not apt to bestow existence upon some existents, namely the substances and most of the accidents; hence it is not apt to bestow existence on *any* existent.

[T17] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 73.3–75.8; 75.16–76.11

[*acts as “states (aḥwāl)”*]

Al-Qāḍī [al-Bāqillānī] said: a person necessarily senses in himself a difference between a necessary and voluntary motion, for instance, the motion in a tremor and a motion that one has chosen to perform. This difference does not have to do with the two motions themselves, just insofar as they are motions, since as motions they are similar to one another. Rather, [the difference] has to do with something additional to their being motions, namely being an object of power and will in one case, and not in the other case. Now, one of the following two options must be the case. (a) One might say that the connection of power

to one of them [sc. the voluntary motion] is of the kind that knowledge has [to its objects], without any effect (*al-ta'thīr*). But this leads to denying the difference [between the two kinds of motion], since to deny having an effect is tantamount to denying the connection as related to the essences of the two motions.<sup>15</sup> In fact people find a difference between the two precisely in light of something additional to their existence, and the states (*aḥwāl*) of their existence. (b) Or one might say that the connection of power to them is a connection of having an effect. But then, one of these must be the case: (b<sub>1</sub>) having an effect might have to do with existence and origination, (b<sub>2</sub>) or it might have to do with one of the attributes of existence. (b<sub>1</sub>) The first is false, given the aforementioned point (see [T16]) that having an effect on [one] existence would mean having an effect on all existents. (b<sub>2</sub>) So it remains only that having an effect has to do with some other attribute, namely a state (*ḥāl*) that is additional to existence.<sup>16</sup> [...]

[74.14] Anyone who wants to determine that aspect (*wajh*) which [al-Bāqillānī] called a state (*ḥāl*) should adopt the following approach. There occurs for motion, for instance, the name of a genus which encompasses species and kinds, and also a name of species which is distinguished [into individuals] through accidents and concomitants. Now, motion is divided into several types. There is the motion of writing, of speech, of handiwork. Each of them is [further] divided into kinds, so that [75] the motion of the hand being a motion of writing is different from its being a motion of craft. This distinction has to do with a state found in a given motion, through which it differs from another motion, while sharing in common with it that both are motions. The same goes for necessitated motion and voluntary motion. This “state” attaches to the human servant an acquisition (*kasb*) and an act. From it is derived a specific name for him, like [from] “stands” and “sits,” “standing” and “sitting” or [from] “writes” and “speaks,” “writing” and “speaking.” Furthermore, if there is a command (*amr*) that applies to it, and [the act] occurs in accordance with the command, then it is called service and obedience, whereas if a command applies to [the act], but it occurs at variance to the command, then it is called sin and disobedience. It is this aspect (*wajh*) that is subject to obligation (*al-mukallaf*), and that receives punishment and reward. [...]

15 In other words, knowledge could be connected to both a tremor and a voluntary motion, so this understanding of the connection would relate indiscriminately to both, insofar as both are motions.

16 For this doctrine see the chapter “Universals” in the present volume.



[*interpretation of states as mental considerations*]

[75.16] A point that explains al-Qāḍī [al-Bāqillānī]'s approach, and shows that it does not differ much from that of our companions [i.e. the Ash'arites], is that an act has intellectual aspects (*jihāt al-'aqliyya*) and mental considerations (*i'tibārāt dhihniyya*) which are common or specific, like existence, origination, being an accident, being a color, being a motion or a rest, and being the motion of writing or speaking. The act is not in itself any [76] of these aspects. Rather all of them are acquired from an agent; what belongs to it in itself is contingency alone. As for its existence, this is acquired from the bestower of its existence in the respect in which it is. [Existence] is the most common of its aspects. By contrast, [the act's] being a case of writing or speaking is acquired from the one who writes it or speaks it, and this is the most specific of its aspects. The aspects are distinguished intellectually, not through sensation. The two kinds of connection<sup>17</sup> are different. One is called "bestowal of existence" and "origination (*ibdā'*)," and it is a relation between the most common of aspects and an attribute, to which commonality of connection applies. The other is called "acquisition (*kasb*)" and "acting," and is a relation between the most specific of aspects and an attribute, to which specificity of connection applies. In respect of its existence [an act] requires a bestower of existence, but in respect of its being writing or speaking, it requires a writer or a speaker. The bestower of existence does not change in its essence or attributes through the existence of that which is made to exist; [the agent's] knowing all aspects of an act and acquisition is a condition [for the bestowal existence upon it]. By contrast, the essence and attributes of the one who *acquires* [an act] do change through the occurrence of acquisition, and it is not a condition that he know all aspects of an act.

[T18] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 78.8–79.2

[*Ash'arite positions*]

Abū al-Ḥusayn [al-Ash'arī]—may God have mercy upon him—stayed on the safe side by affirming no effect for the originated power at all, apart from the human's belief that he has the facility for action when his organs are sound. The creation of capability (*al-istiṭā'a*), power, and everything [else] is from God the exalted.

<sup>17</sup> Reading *al-ta'alluqāni*.

Imām al-Ḥaramayn [al-Juwaynī], by contrast, went too far when he affirmed an effect for the created power, namely existence. Nevertheless, he still did not grant independence to the human in respect of [bestowing] existence, such that [his action] would not rest upon a further cause, and then the chain of causes go back to God—may He be praised—who is the Creator and the independent Originator and requires no cause for His origination. [Al-Juwaynī] followed the lead of the philosophers (*falāsifa*), in that they spoke of a chain of causes, and the effects of higher intermediaries upon lower things that receive [these effects]. Concerns about the weakness of determinism (*al-jabr*) brought [al-Juwaynī] to this stance. Yet determinism follows even more from a chain of causes. For every matter is disposed for a certain form, and all forms emanate on instances of matter from the Giver of Forms deterministically, so that [79] the choice between two options is determined, as is power over two objects. The occurrence of human acts turns out to be determined, if one takes causes into consideration.

[T19] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 79.10–83.7

[*Muʿtazilite appeal to intuition and motivation, and critique of acquisition theory*]

[*The Muʿtazilites*] said: humans sense from themselves that acts occur in accordance with motivations (*dawāʾī*) and deterrents (*ṣawāʾirif*). Whenever one wants motion, one moves, whereas if one wants rest, one rests. Whoever rejects this defies necessary [knowledge]. If created power had no capacity for bestowing existence, one would not sense this from oneself. *They said*: you agree with us that one senses the difference between necessary and voluntary motion. So one of two options must be the case. Either the difference comes down to the two motions themselves, insofar as one of them occurs through one's power, the other through the power of someone else; or [the difference] comes down to an attribute in whoever has the power, insofar as he has power over one [kind of motion, namely voluntary motion] and not the other. [Either way], if someone has power then he must surely have an effect upon the object of his power. This must be identified as an effect on existence, because acts occur through existence, not through any other attribute that is connected to existence.

[80.1] What you refer to as “acquisition” is not intelligible. Acquisition is either something existent or not. If it is something existent then you have conceded [that human agents do have an] effect on existence; but if it is not existent, then it is nothing at all. [...]

**[response: action without motivation, motivation without action]**

[80.8] *We say:* the occurrence of acts in accordance with motivations is rejected. Indeed, this is the very point on which we disagree. It is not right to speak of the necessary [knowledge of motivation], since we differ from you on this point, and it can be turned back against you. For the acts of a sleeping, inattentive, or oblivious [person] do not occur in accordance with motivations, yet are still ascribed to the human as bestowal of existence, on your view. Also, many accidents occur in accordance with motivations, but are not ascribed to the human as bestowal of existence, as you agree, such as the color that occurs in paint, the flavor that occurs through mixture, heat, moisture, cold, and dryness when bodies are brought together, satiation by eating, quenching thirst by drinking, understanding by explanation, and other cases which God the exalted has made habitual (*al-āda*). So the claim that the knowledge [of motivation] is necessary is not correct, and the proof is not coherent. [...]

[81.5] In general, one does not sense bestowal of existence, nor does one perceive [the connection between motivation and act] through the senses of the soul necessarily. [...]

[81.13] Humans do not find in themselves the motivation for bestowal of existence. They find motivation for standing and sitting, motion and rest, praise and blame. These are features that occur in acts in addition to existence, and are distinguished from existence in terms of commonality and specificity. If you want, you can call them “aspects (*wujūh*)” and “conceptual considerations (*i’tibārāt*).” [...]

[82.14] *Furthermore, we say:* we can turn the proof back against you and argue that motions are not created by the human, because quite a few of them occur against motivations and intentions. For instance, when a person wants to move his hand in a certain direction, with a predetermined constraint, like moving his finger in a perfectly straight line, we cannot conceive [of his managing to do] this without deviating from the specific direction. Likewise if someone shoots an arrow and intends to hit a target,<sup>18</sup> [83] then he may miss. Or he might throw a rock and hit a certain spot, and then want to throw and hit that spot again, but he won’t manage it. This happens repeatedly in all deeds that are dependent on causes. For disposition and deviation with respect to them result from the motions of the hand, and humans fall short of having a power to

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18 Adopting the reading from MS B.

dispose them just as motivation would want. So we find motivation without success, and success without motivation, and thus know that the variety of states and motions are indicative of some other source than human motivations and deterrents.

[T20] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 83.12–84.6; 87.1–11; 87.17–88.6

[*Mu'tazilite argument: obligation presupposes free will*]

Obligation (*al-taklīf*) is imposed upon the human as “act!” or “do not act!” One of two options must be the case:<sup>19</sup> either no act is realized by the human at all, in which case the one who imposes the obligation is doing so pointlessly (*safahan*); and not only is it pointless, it is also self-contradictory, as it means that one should act, but without acting. Also, obligation is a demand (*ṭalab*), and demands presuppose that what is demanded is possible for the one upon whom the demand is placed. If no act is conceivable for him, the demand is invalid. Again, promise and threat are connected to obligation, and penalty requires [the possibility] of acting or refraining from action. If no [84] act arises from the human and this [sc. acting and refraining] is inconceivable for him, promise and threat would be invalidated, as would reward and punishment. The upshot would be “you must act, but without acting,” and furthermore “if you should act, then you will not have acted.” So reward and punishment would be assigned for acts that have not been performed. This flies in the face even of the judgment of sensation, let alone the judgment of the intellect, as there would remain no difference between the speech of a reasonable person and a stone, and no difference between subjugation and incapacity on the one hand, and obligation and demand on the other. [...]

[*response using the theory of states*]

[87.1] We have already explained the aspect of the effect that arises through created power. It is an aspect or a state that belongs to the act, just like what you affirm in the case of eternal powerfulness. So take the human case, which you claim to be like the Creator's act. And consider whether the injunctions “act!” and “do not act!” [imply] “bestow existence” and “do not bestow existence,” or rather “obey God,” without adding anything further. The aspect of obedience, which is a maximally specific description for an act, becomes the

19 Here we quote only his discussion of the first option. The other option would of course be the Mu'tazilite view that humans can indeed create their own actions.

obedience to a command, and it happens through the human's carrying it out (*taḥṣīl*), it being related to his power. What disturbs you about the further relation we believe in? It is just like [other aspects] that you believe follow [upon the act]. According to you,<sup>20</sup> existence is as if it follows [upon the act], or like an essential attribute that is real even in non-existence. The difference between you and us is that we make existence that upon which [the act] follows. We say that [existence] is tantamount to the object itself and the concrete entity. We ascribe [its bestowal] to God, praised and exalted, whereas [the origination of] all the attributes concomitant to it [e.g. being blameworthy] are ascribed by us to the human, and this cannot be ascribed to God the exalted. [...]

[*response on behalf of al-Ash'arī*]

[87.17] As for the approach of the Master Abū al-Ḥusayn [al-Ash'arī], may God have mercy upon him: given that he did not ascribe any effect to the [created] power, is more difficult for him to respond to the problems that have been raised. Nevertheless, he did affirm capacity (*ta'tī*) [88] and possibility (*tamakkun*), which people sense from themselves. This comes down to having sound constitution and believing in one's own capability, on the basis of the custom (*al-'āda*) that whenever a human has some act in mind, and decides to follow the command, God the exalted creates for him a power and capability connected to that act, which is originated in [the human], so that the human is described as [performing that] specific [act]. It is this that would be the source of obligation. [Humans] sense it the way they sense the attributes that follow upon origination, according to you, even though these are not an effect of any created power.

[T21] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 238.14–239.10

[*distinction between knowledge and will*]

Al-Jāḥiẓ came to reject the whole principle of the will, both in this world and in the hidden realm. He said that [239] whenever an agent is not oblivious and knows what he is doing, then he is willing. But if he himself prefers that someone else perform an act, this preference is called "will." [...]

20 Correcting *'indanā* to *'indakum* with MSS "B" and "Z," since this view is explicitly contrasted with al-Shahrastānī's own view in the following line.

*It may be said to him:* entities and accidents<sup>21</sup> are established, and then each distinguished in their true realities, on the basis of what people sense from themselves. When people sense that they have knowledge about something, and power to do it, they also sense from themselves an intention to do it and a decision to do it. Furthermore, sometimes they act in accordance with what their will enjoins, but sometimes they don't. Someone may will the act of another person without themselves preferring or wanting it. Likewise one may will one's own act without any preference or desire, for instance when one wills to drink medicine even though one finds it disgusting.

[T22] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 137.7–16

[*complaint about philosophical determinism*]

As for the philosophers (*falāsifa*), they cannot speak of obligation and recompense in the way the Muslims speak of it, as they describe everything that arises as being necessitated by necessitating causes. They would not affirm that any of us really have a voluntary action. And one cannot impose obligation on things that are necessitated, nor do they deserve reward or punishment in the way established through revelation.

[T23] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 144.7–19

[*Mu'tazilite libertarianism vs theological and philosophical determinism*]

*The people of Islam say:* it having been established that God the exalted imposed obligations on His servants, and obligation does not hold unless the servant performs an act or does not do so; and obligation does not hold unless the one under the obligation can both accept or refuse the act he is obligated to perform; and the Wise will only be good in His imposition of obligation if He makes [the human] open to deserving a reward, but there can be no openness to [deserving reward] unless one can both do what is obligatory and not do it, since if [the human] is forced to his act, then he deserves no reward for acting; how then [could all this be true] if He created in [the human] what He has made obligatory, as claimed by the determinists (*al-mujbira*) and those who follow them in speaking of "acquisition (*al-kasb*)"? The same goes for those who

21 Correcting *al-aghrāḍ* to *al-a'rāḍ*.

say that the human's act exists from the necessitating causes [that exert influence] on the human, and these causes are outside him but within a chain of causes and necessitated effects that terminates at the Necessary Existent, this being the doctrine of the philosophers (*falāsifa*). So they are determinists and fatalists too, and from this perspective cannot talk about obligation either, nor about humans deserving a reward for their act, or punishment for refraining from it.

*The scholars of Islam said:* it is known in a primary way that a given act can exist from [the agent] or not exist. That is why reasonable people make value judgments, blaming the bad and praising the good. If [the act] were made [by God] for [the human agent], or it were necessitated by necessitating causes, then reasonable people would not make value judgments by meting out blame to someone as recompense for [doing] what is bad. So anyone who says that [the act] is necessitated, whether because the power necessitates the act, or due to necessitating causes, or because it is created in [the human agent by God], is wrong.

[T24] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 145.22–146.13

[*causal determinism*]

He says that everything that has been originated is so through necessitating causes. He has argued in support of this by saying: if someone believes that he does what he wants and chooses whatever he wishes, let him explain concerning his choice, whether it originates in him [146] after not having been, or not. If it does not so originate, then that choice must accompany him throughout his existence, so he would be attached to that choice and cannot be freed from it. From this it follows that his choice is required for him by something else. If on the other hand [his choice] is originated, and everything originated has a cause, then his choice is originated by a cause that requires it. This cause is either [the human agent] himself or something else. If he himself is the cause, then one of two things must be the case: either he bestowed existence upon his choice through a [further] choice, and then this will yield an infinite regress; or his bestowal of existence upon his choice is not by choice, so he will be brought to this by something else, which terminates at external causes that are not by his choice. This terminates at the eternal choice which necessitates the order of the universe as such, since if it terminated at an originated choice then argument starts over again. Thus it becomes clear that everything that comes to be, whether good or evil, is traceable to the causes that branch off from the eternal will. This is what he says, verbatim.

[*response*]

*But we say to him:* you have based all this on principles that we do not concede. We have already spoken about them previously.<sup>22</sup> As for your claim that everything originated must be traceable to a cause, we ask, what do you mean by this “cause”? If you mean something that necessitates, then we do not concede what you have mentioned without any qualification. Rather, [the originated] is traceable either to something necessitating, or to someone endowed with power, who originates [it] in respect of his capacity.

[T25] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fāʾiq*, 131.6–16

[*human agency known intuitively*]

An indication, by way of a reminder, that reasonable people know intellectually that humans originate their own actions, is that they necessarily know the appropriateness of blame and praise for [human actions]. The knowledge that they are appropriately subject to blame and praise has as its basis knowledge that [humans] are the ones who originate [their actions], since they cannot possibly have necessary knowledge of what has a basis (*al-farʿ*), without having necessary knowledge of that basis (*al-aṣl*). What we have said is made evident, and supported, by the fact that they approve a command that a human should act, and demand that he does it, as one who knows that he originates [the action]. [...]

[131.13] If the knowledge that [the human agent] is the originator were not necessary for them, then they could not know all this by necessity. In fact, this knowledge belongs even to children and adolescents. This is why, if someone hurts them by throwing a brick at them, they blame the one who threw it, not the brick, because they know that the agent of the pain is no one but the thrower. This knowledge is akin to their knowledge of things that are directly observed.

[T26] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fāʾiq*, 132.13–132.19

[*genuine human agency as arising from human motivation*]

*If someone says:* given that you describe God the exalted as having the power to create your motivations in you, and to create your acts, how then can you insist

22 See the chapters on the eternity of the universe in the Physics and Psychology volume.



that they are *your* acts? How can you deny that they are created [by God], in accordance with your motivations? *We say to him*: we do not allow this, because we know that [our acts] must occur in accordance with our motivations. The fact that our motivations are created in us does not exclude that they are *our* motivations. If our actions were [also] created in accordance with [our motivations], then we would have to allow that they could be created against [our motivations], since it cannot be that the act of someone else must occur in accordance with our motivations. Our knowledge that God does have power over this, as we have stated, does not entail that He is the agent. Rather it can be ruled out that He is the agent for [our actions], due to the fact that they must occur in accordance with our motivations.

[T27] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fā'iḳ*, 134.12–135.2

[*Ash'arite doubt against argument from intuition, with reply*]

*They may argue against us, saying*: how can the knowledge that the human is originator of his actions be necessary, given that as you know, a large group of people disagrees with you? A large group cannot agree to deny something that they know necessarily. [...]

[134.15] *Response*: we do not acknowledge this large number of theologians holding their view. They may just be stubbornly denying something they know necessarily for the sake of disputing with us, seeking to get close to the common folk and trying to lead [them]. As for the common folk who have avoided uncritically following (*taqlīd*) them, as soon as we confront them with our position, they readily grant it and say it is right. By contrast, when we confront them with the position of [our rival] theologians, [the common folk] reject it, and refuse [to admit] that scholars can hold it. And it should be clear to you [135] that those theologians necessarily agree with our view in their everyday life, as they blame only those who are unjust to them, and praise only those who are good to them.

[T28] Abū al-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 180.14–182.6

[*decree vs predestination*]

[People] use “decree” and “predestination” (*al-qaḍā' wa-al-qadar*) to speak about whatever is and will be among the things that originate in the world of generation and corruption in accordance with what was previously in the

knowledge and wisdom of God the exalted; or in accordance with what happened, and is [still] happening, as a consequence of the motion of the spheres and their stars. The resulting decree (*qadā'*) is something universal—whether that which was previously known, or that which is in the motion of the spheres. And predestination (*al-qadar*) is the determination (*taqdīr*) of this [universal decree] as a distribution of [the decree] over the existents, and is what is specified for every individual at every moment with regard to its own measure, its size, its qualities, its time, its proximate and remote causes, and its relation to whatever is determined for it in terms of associations and dissociations, pleasure and suffering, good and evil, happiness and unhappiness. For instance, to take an example from God's knowledge and the knowledge of his angels: He *decreed* in His previous knowledge that every human shall die. But He *predestined* in a definite way, in a detailed application (*tafṣīl*) of His decree, each of their life spans and moments of death, both natural and accidental, in accordance with their differences and their proximate and remote causes. Thus the death of, say, Zayd after a hundred years of life, dying naturally of old age in a certain region, on a certain day [181] of a certain month in a certain year. As opposed to the death of 'Amr, after fifty years of life, dying accidentally and violently by some accidental cause on a certain day, and in a certain condition. And likewise for the life spans of anyone else, and even to all events (*akwān*) and actions. This is the meaning of "decree" and of "predestination," if one inquires into them adequately, according to the understanding of those who speak about them and as carefully considered (*mu'tabar*) usage would testify.

*[various positions on determinism]*

Those who endorse [decree and predestination] divide into two groups, which profess different teachings.

(a) The first group says that [decree and predestination] apply in common and include everything that is originated and all events, both those that exist and those that do not. This group is further sub-divided into two.

(a1) The first [sub-group] relates both [decree and predestination] to whatever was previously in the knowledge of God the exalted. They say that He knows, from eternity and everlastingly, all that has been and will be, all that exists and does not exist, in the whole universe. His knowledge thereby encompasses both particulars and universals, and reaches all parts and particulars, in accordance with the determination by which He delimits excess and deficiency, place and time. Nothing is originated or fails to exist, nothing is generated or corrupts, not

the smallest or greatest thing, without previously being in the knowledge of the First, which is the first knowledge [and] the knowledge of things as they are: no created things, however small, are allowed to elude His knowledge, which falls short of none of them, at all moments, and it is [all] set down in His knowledge as if set down upon the Hidden Tablet. Thus no generation or corruption departs from it or varies from it, in any respect whether small or large. Rather all this happens in accordance with whatever was previously in the first knowledge.

(a2) The second [sub-]group raises God's knowledge above this entirely, with regard to matters great and small, as we have reported in [the chapter on God's] knowledge. Instead they relate decree and predestination (which they apply to all existents, small or great, as delimiting their qualities, their determinants, and their times) to the motion of the spheres and their stars. These move according to a single delimited pattern, without variation, and everything originated is connected to them. They say that whatever is connected to something determined and delimited, and does not depart from it whether in non-existence or existence, neither in excess nor deficiency, and is accordance with and from this delimited cause, is also determined and delimited.

(b) The second group from the original division speaks of [decree and predestination] in relation to the previous knowledge of God the exalted, but without saying that [His knowledge] encompasses everything. Rather, whatever falls under the commands and prohibitions of the Law lies outside it. They say that divine wisdom, from the beginning of creation, through decree and determination finished with [182] all that has happened and is happening, and made it necessary, or like what is necessary. Yet it left out of this whatever is associated with the commands and prohibitions of the Law. It did not include these things among the necessary consequences of prior decree and predestination. Instead, it left these out, placing them under the merely possible and the contingent, so that whatever happens, and whatever comes to nothing, does so through human choice (*ikhtiyār*), through which [a person] deserves reward for obedience, and punishment for disobedience and defiance. Were it not so, reward and punishment would be unjust and futile, but God the exalted is above decreeing disobedience as inevitable for a servant and then punishing him for it, or [decreeing] obedience and then rewarding him for it.

[T29] Abū al-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 182.24–183.15

[*determinist accounts of evil and happiness*]

Those who are real determinists, that is, those who subsume [183] everything under “decree and predestination,” say that God the exalted is a king and a ruler, who disposes over his kingdom as He wishes. One should not ask about [His rule], or protest against it. Nor should one relate to Him the justice and injustice one may relate to His creatures, in application to whatever they dispose of, without exercising rule.

Those who relate things to the motions of spheres and the stars that move according to a single pattern, say that it has happened in such a way and still does, and has gone on like this and still does, without any connection to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of a lord, or of a servant. There is nothing but what happens due to the motions of the spheres and the stars, and is caused by them, without exception. Nor does obeying the commands of the Law lead to happiness, nor does disobeying them lead to unhappiness. This is why one sees the obedient suffering and the disobedient happily enjoying the goods of this world, while [the obedient] are deprived of them. The happy person is simply the one to whom the spheres and stars bring happiness and its causes, while the unhappy person is the one for whom they bring unhappiness and its causes.

Among those who see decree and predestination as applying [to all things] in common, some refuse to acknowledge whatever the Law has set forth, and reject it; then there are some who find a pretext to accept it. Those who disavow and reject [the Law] are those who relate [whatever happens] to the motions of spheres and celestial bodies. The ones who find a pretext to accept it are those who relate it to the knowledge and predestination of God the exalted. They say that He determined one thing for another, and another thing for something else, in the initial predestination and prior decree, from eternity. It never goes in any other way. But obedience and happiness are predestined jointly (*ma'an*), as are disobedience and unhappiness: when He predestined one of the two for someone [sc. either obedience and disobedience], He [also] predestined whichever goes together with it.

[T30] Abū al-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 183.21–184.12

[*against determinism: pointlessness of divine command*]

*It may be said to them:* why didn't God the exalted bestow favor upon his creatures by bestowing reward without any obligation (*taklīf*), and why did He not excuse them from punishment? Haven't you said that the obligations He imposed on them bring Him no benefit and ward off no harm from Him? So what need is there [184] for this obligation?

[*determinist response*]

*In response they say:* God the exalted did this due to His providence (*ināya*), since reason teaches that the gift that is deserved is more perfect and better for one who receives it than a gift given out of condescension. [...] [184.8] [As for why He punishes the disobedient], this is because, when someone obedient sees the disobedient being punished, this increases his pleasure in his own reward and his enjoyment of his own happiness. So along with his pleasure in his own happiness, he takes pleasure insofar as he *deserves* it thanks to the deeds he has performed, and he takes still further pleasure when he sees how the disobedient receive torment, in that he sees the misery he escaped and the blessings conferred upon him [instead]. So the suffering of the disobedient is also for the sake of the happiness of the obedient.

[T31] Abū al-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 184.13–185.5

[*foreknowledge argument*]

Those who argue that there is decree and predestination (*al-qaḍā' wa-al-qadar*) of all other things through the prior knowledge of God the exalted, say to [their opponents]: God knows the objects (*al-dhawāt*) He creates, and knows whatever acts proceed from them in accordance with the potencies He created in them, and what he gave to them in terms of power and disposition for acting, and being acted upon, in respect of motivations and deterrents (*al-dawā'ir wa-al-ṣawārif*). In keeping with this, He knows what happens as a result of these things, in every time and place, and in respect of every motivation and deterrent. In this way, acts and states are predestined in accordance with proximate and remote causes. Nothing can be added or subtracted from it; He embraces all of this with His knowledge. It is as He knows it to be, and He knows it to be as it is. So the decree never falls outside His knowledge, and destiny does not break what [his knowledge] has determined. Whatever He has known goes to happen, and whatever He decreed by His willing it, and whatever satisfies

Him. Predestination happens in keeping with the decree as applied in detail to the whole and the distribution of causes. There remains nothing in existence that might or might not be. Rather, whatever is, is, and whatever is not, is not, according to first knowledge that came before, which is the first knowledge of the First. In respect of existence everything either necessarily is, or necessarily is not, whether it is eternal (*dā'imān*) or happens at a given time. What necessarily happens at a given time must do so, and it would be impossible that it happen at any other time. But in the supposition of the mind, [185] in respect of happening or not happening, when the notion of its time is vague, it happens or does not happen contingently. The fact that it is contingent according to the mind does not mean that both options are embraced by knowledge, or that there is no moment of time determined for it. Thus when one says that the Sun may rise and may set, this statement is correct in terms of mental consideration. But when it comes to existence, its rising or setting can only happen relative to a determinate time. Sunrise is necessary at its time, as is sunset. There remains no place for contingency in it.

[T32] Abū al-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 187.9–17

[*argument against foreknowledge: knowledge cannot be infinite*]

*On this point, I say:* it is impossible in itself, and something that is not in the power of anyone, that a single knower should encompass with his knowledge every concrete thing that exists at its time, whatever has already been and then become non-existent, and whatever will happen and will exist. To say that God the exalted does not encompass this entails no deficiency or incapacity in His knowledge, because it is impossible from the side of the known, not from the side of the knower. Knowledge occurs only through the existence of the objects of knowledge in the knower, and existence is not restricted to being finite. How can that which is infinite be an infinite weakening in the infinite, being present at the time of its occurrence, and non-existent at the time before it occurs, and [again non-existent] after it occurs? This is impossible in itself and absurdities follow from it. How then can one relate an absurdity to the knowledge of God the exalted, and how can one blame those who keep Him untouched by it, saying that it is impossible for Him? The power and knowledge of God the exalted comprise only whatever He wills, as He wills it, insofar as He has willed what is past and is presently existent.

[T33] Abū al-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 187.22–188.23

[*God knows all regularities and some single events that He chooses*]

He eternally knows the natures and effects of nature happening at every time and place according to the same unchanging patterns, since with one and the same judgment, about one and the same world, and one and the same object of knowledge, and one and the same time, there is no difference between finite and infinite multiplicity. As for [188] voluntary things that differ with regard to times, individuals, and states of motivation and deterrent, being many or few, more or less, and that fall under no limit or restriction: no single knower can embrace them with his knowledge, nor are they preceded by any “decree,” nor does “predestination” arise ever anew for them on the part of God the exalted, in such a way that He would have common and encompassing [knowledge] of the whole in every part at every time. Rather God [knows] whatever He wishes, concerning what He wishes, and as He wishes. This is the meaning of His “power (*qudra*).” Decree and predestination apply in common to natural things that happen according to the same patterns, but they do not apply in common to voluntary things: rather, they apply specifically to those that God wishes, as He wishes, concerning what He wishes. Likewise [His knowledge] does not include whatever is combined and mixed together from them (that is, from the voluntary and the natural) among consequences and causal effects. To this class belong luck and coincidence (*al-bakht wa-al-ittifāq*), which are not related purely to volition or purely to nature, but rather to the combination that has arisen incidentally between voluntary and natural causes. No one intends [this combination] and no one determines it.

For instance, if Zayd leaves his home and walks off to the left along a certain path at a certain time, and a scorpion comes from the right and travels along a way that intersects with [Zayd's] path at a later time, and the scorpion is moving slowly, while the person may go quickly so as to reach the point of intersection between the two paths before the scorpion does, and does not meet it; or he may instead go slowly, so that the scorpion reaches that point before him; or he may go at a moderate pace, so that the motions [of the scorpion and Zayd] will reach the meeting point at the same time. If that happens, the scorpion and he will have motions that bring them together at the meeting point, and the scorpion will bite [Zayd], or he will step on it and kill it. The scorpion did not intend this, nor is it by nature capable of doing so, nor does it have the ability to plan such a thing. Nor did the person intend this, nor is he by nature capable of doing so, nor could he plan it. Nor did anyone else

apart from the two of them intend that this [would be the outcome] of their motions. Rather God predestined it if He wished, as He wished, for the time He wished. As to whether His intention ranges in common in this way over every part of existents, so as to include how every particle of dust encounters every other, in every place, and at every time when this comes to be: no, it does not, because it is impossible in itself, not because [God's] power is incapable of it.

[T34] Abū al-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 190.14–191.1

[*against astral determinism: thought and volition*]

We do concede to this position the general idea that the eternal cannot be a cause for the originated, unless through some originated necessitating factor that entails the origination of [the originated effect] from [the eternal cause] at the time of its origination. The cause that necessitates and entails the originated is also originated. The priority of this causality never arrives at a temporal beginning, just as with circular motion, or those circular motions which are like this, as they say. However [these originated causes] are not the only necessitating factors among motivations and deterrents. Rather, there are also volitions that arise anew from the causes that entail or deter [them], which keep happening according to the ideas called to mind on the basis of what is preserved in the memory. The preserved ideas that are brought to attention are causes of volitions, and volitions are in turn causes for them, successively and in a circle, just as with the [celestial] motions that had no definite beginning from eternity. God the exalted and His angels have volitions that agree or disagree with what is entailed by the heavens and their motions. They add to them and subtract from them, necessitate other [motions] that do not belong to them, and take away much of what does belong to them. Likewise, human volitions are [191] necessitated by the factors that necessitate them and incidentally occur through ideas that come to mind and are brought to attention.

[T35] Abū al-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 3, 191.7–18

[*voluntarist account of God, with account of prayer*]

As for [their argument] that God the exalted has no originated volitions concerning originated things and with regard to them, we have already shown this teaching to be false and objected to it, when we objected to those who deny His



knowledge of particulars.<sup>23</sup> Instead, God the exalted sees and hears, rewards and punishes, is angered or satisfied, pays attention or turns away, as He wishes and for whatever He wishes. [...]

[191.13] His volitions and the originated objects of His volition may be traced back causally to two kinds of cause: efficient and entailing. In this context, the efficient cause is His perfect wisdom, putting everything in its place, which is suitable to both the agent and that which is acted upon, and to the seeker and what he seeks. The entailing cause is whatever He knows at each time, in terms of newly arising states in respect of which He acts; so has said the Greek Sage.<sup>24</sup> He inspects the intentions of those who beseech [Him] along with their words, as to whether they deserve that for which they ask; He hears, sees and acts through His wisdom in keeping with what He has come to know from what He has heard and seen.

[T36] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārīʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 470.7–471.7

[*volitions require preponderance*]

Among those who speak of [divine] will, some fail to mention the benefits [bestowed upon humans], and instead limit themselves to saying, “He willed and then acted, with no goal (*lā li-gharaḍ*).” According to them, “will” is capable of relating to the specification of one of two options, [for instance] specifying health for Zayd and disease for ‘Amr. But [that would mean that] the specification happens without any preponderating factor, yet it is absurd that the contingent occur just by itself. [On their view] one should not say: it is a property of the will that it preponderates one of two similar options, these being equivalent in relation [to it]. For if it had specified the other option, this property [of the will] would still be realized. Whenever one posits a preponderating factor for the will, the same problem arises, which eventually leads to a necessary factor (*amr*) among quiddities and their agent.

*It may be said to them:* is the Creator able to make something nobler and more perfect than this existing world, or not? If they answer no, then precisely the consequence they sought to escape is forced upon them, and most of their conclusions fail. If on the other hand He was able [to do this] but did not, then was

23 See [T15] in the chapter God’s Knowledge of Particulars in this volume.

24 “Greek Sage” is usually a reference to the Arabic Plotinus, but a specific source of Abū al-Barakāt’s reference is still to be identified.

His foregoing the more noble contingent and choosing the more base as equivalent option, or was it preponderated? If it was equivalent, then it required [471] a specifying factor (*mukhaṣṣiṣ*). And if you deny that there must be a specifying factor in cases of equivalence, then you will not have a proof for the existence of God anymore. Whenever you take recourse in the property of will, a similar point could be made by taking recourse in the properties of quiddities. Thus one could say: existence and non-existence were equivalent in relation to certain quiddity, but it is one of its properties that it exists in itself, either perpetually or after having not yet existed. If you say that this is possible only in the case of will, then you are just being stubborn while we try to bring you to heel. The worst of these doctrines is the one that occurred to that madman and would-be medical doctor [Abū al-Barakāt], out of his blindness, when he affirmed that there are an infinity of originated volitions in [God's] essence.

[T37] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārīʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 471.8–18

[*voluntary, natural, and divine acts*]

As for the claim that the act proceeds from the cause either from will, from nature, or from a combination of the two, this is not a correct division—unless one adopts the convention that whatever is outside the voluntary is “natural,” which would be an arbitrary usage. The correct division is to say: every act proceeds either (a) from someone who has awareness and perception, or (b) from someone who lacks awareness and perception of it. The former case divides into (a<sub>1</sub>) that which proceeds through will and (a<sub>2</sub>) that which proceeds from the self (*al-dhāt*) of the one who has awareness, insofar as the self is aware [of the act] rather than this being hidden from it, and without need for will. (b) The second case—that is, when an act proceeds without awareness of what proceeds—is properly “natural.” But it must belong to the “natural” that it proceeds from the specified body due to something additional to corporeality. That which is separate in all respects is not like this. (c) [Finally], an act can proceed both by nature and by will, but in two different respects and not just one. Thus the act of the Necessary Existent transcends [options (a<sub>1</sub>), (b), and (c), which involve] will and nature.

[T38] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 9, 21.8–23.7

[*argument for the Ash'arite view, based on the principle of sufficient reason*]

Whoever has power (*al-qādir*) over a specific act is either (a) capable (*yaṣīḥḥu*) or refraining from it (b) is not.

(b) The second option implies that this power would have the act in question as a necessary consequence: the act would be necessary whenever the power occurs, and impossible when the power is gone. The result would be determinism (*jabr*).

[22] (a) *As for the first option, we say:* so long as this power is capable of acting and refraining, the preponderance (*rujḥān*) of one side over the other either (a1) depends on a preponderating factor (*murajjih*) or (a2) does not.

(a2) *The second [sub-]option* would imply that one side of an equivalent contingent is preponderated without any preponderating factor. From this follows the denial of God [that is, because it undermines the Avicennan proof of God's existence]. Also, on this assumption, the occurrence of the act rather than refraining from the act would be a mere coincidence (*ittifāq*), and could not be referred back to the human [agent]. So [again] determinism follows.

(a1) *As for the first [sub-]option, we say:* that preponderating factor is either (a1a) due to the human [agent] or (a1b) from something else, (a1c) or neither. (a1a) It cannot be due to the human [agent]. Otherwise we are back at the original choice [between (a) and (b)], yielding either an infinite regress or determinism. (a1c) Nor can it be the third [sub-sub-]option [with neither the agent nor something else preponderating], since this would imply that something could be originated (*ḥudūth*) without an originator or producer. [Again] this implies the denial of God. Furthermore, determinism would follow, as we have shown. Given that both of these [sub-sub-]options are false, it turns out that (a1b) this preponderating factor can originate only by something else originating it.

*We say:* this preponderating factor can preponderate only if it preponderates the side of the act over the side of refraining. When such preponderation occurs, the act becomes necessary. This is because the side of refraining—while being equivalent to the side of the act—is impossible in respect of preponderation [i.e. it cannot be preponderated in itself without a preponderating factor]. But once its occurrence is out-preponderated (*marjuh*), all the more is it

impossible in respect of preponderation. But once [23] the out-preponderated becomes impossible, the preponderated (*rājih*) becomes necessary, given the principle of the excluded middle.

Thus it has been established that the human's act is dependent on whether or not something else makes this preponderating factor in him. And you should know that, when this "something else" makes such a preponderating factor in him, the act proceeds from him necessarily.

It has then been established that the combination of power and motivation (*al-dā'i*) necessitates the act. If God the exalted creates both of them, the act is necessary. Whereas if He does not create their combination, the act is impossible. So it has been established that the human is not independent in himself (*mustaqill bi-nafsihi*) in acting and refraining from action. And this is the conclusion sought.

[T39] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 2, 544.11–18

[*determinist implications of the argument based on principle of sufficient reason*]

Thus it has been established that human acts exist necessarily when their causes exist, and cannot possibly exist when their causes are absent. *So we say*: the causes of the acts of humans are either acts on the part of humans, or not. The first option implies an infinite regress and is absurd. The second option implies that their actions are traced back to the Necessary Existent, either through intermediaries or immediately, and all of the intermediaries would [also] be traced back to their cause. Therefore human acts are traced in a chain of dependence back to the Necessary Existent Itself. Thereby it is established that human acts are in accordance with the decree and predestination of God the exalted, and that the human [agent] is necessitated (*muḍṭarr*) in terms of his choice, and that there is nothing in existence but determination (*al-jabr*).<sup>25</sup>

25 For texts on the preponderation principle see the chapter above on Proofs for God's Existence, esp. [T31].

[T40] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 251r17–251v16

[*the philosophers on God's will*]

*The philosophers (falāsifa) said:* the contingents cannot proceed from the Creator due to an intention (*qaṣd*) on His part to bestow existence upon them, since the Necessary Existent surely never seeks after (*tālib*) anything from among the contingents, and whoever is like this has no will.

*Proof for the first [premise]:* if He were to seek after perfection, then what He seeks would either (a) already be occurring in Him, in which case He would be seeking after something He already has, which is absurd; or (b) it is not yet occurring. Then (b<sub>1</sub>) either it cannot possibly occur, but this is absurd, [251v] since seeking after the impossible is realized only for one who does not know it is impossible. (b<sub>2</sub>) Or [the sought object] occurs contingently. But then, when we assume its occurrence there will be change, which is absurd in the case of God the exalted.

*Proof for the second [premise]:* whenever someone intends to bestow existence upon a thing, either (a) it is more appropriate for him to bestow existence than not to do so—and in this case, that bestowal would be a cause for the occurrence and the origination of that appropriateness, which is a contradiction—or (b) it would not be [more appropriate], but then He would not will it. Or, (c) one would be forced into accepting the preponderation of one side of a contingent matter over the other, without a preponderating factor, which is absurd.

[*against the Mu'tazilite appeal to benefit*]

*Let it not be said:* He intended that act seeking after a perfection that belongs to something else, and this is called “benefit (*al-iḥsān*).” *For we say:* (a) if the bestowal of the perfection to this other thing, and refraining from it, are equivalent in relation to Himself, then we are back with the absurdity that one of two sides of a contingent matter is preponderated over the other [without a preponderating factor]. (b) If on the other hand it is not equivalent, then the bestowal of a perfection to something else would be a cause for the occurrence of a perfection in Him, bringing us back to the original absurdity.

[*the philosophers' understanding of “will”*]

*But they said:* His being “willing (*murīd*)” means that He knows that which proceeds from Him, and that whatever proceeds from Him is good, and does not clash with it. It is not a condition upon being “willing” that one is able to refrain from willing, and this for two reasons. *First*, it is impossible for Him (the exal-

ted) not to will something when He knows He will bestow existence upon it, or will something when He knows He will not bestow existence upon it, since knowingly willing an absurdity is itself absurd. [...]

[*solution: deny the preponderation principle*]

[251v15] *Response*: against the foundations of their theory stands what we have already shown, namely that the powerful can preponderate one side [of a contingent matter] over which he has power, without any preponderating factor.

[T41] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 2, 546.1–10

[*determinist response to our intuition of free will*]

*If someone says*: I find in myself that, if I want to do something, I do it; and if I want not to do something, I do not do it. So my acting and refraining are connected to *my* choice (*ikhtiyār*), no one else's.

*We say*: we grant to you that you do find in yourself that, if you will an act, you perform it, and if you will to refrain from it, you refrain. But do you also find in yourself that your willing of things depends on [a second-order] will, so that when you will to will something, this happens, and when you do not will [to will something], it doesn't? Obviously this is not the case, since if your will for things were dependent on a [second-order] will, then the second-order will would be dependent on a third-order will, and a regress would follow. Rather, the occurrence of will in you does not depend on your will; hence the occurrence of the act after the occurrence of this decisive will does not depend on your will either. So the will does not belong to you, nor does [your] act depend on your will. Rather everything is predestined (*bi-qadar*).

[T42] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 2, 546.19–547.11

[*problem of theodicy and determinist response*]

*If someone says*: if everything is in accordance with God's predestination, what advantage is there in commanding and prohibiting, and what reason is there for reward and punishment? Also, if everything is in accordance with God's decree and predestination, then the act [547] determined by the decree to exist would be necessary, and the act the decree determines will not exist would be impossible. But we know that power (*al-qudra*) is not connected to the neces-

sary or the impossible. So it follows that animals have no power to act or refrain from acting. But we know self-evidently that they do have power over acts. So what you say is wrong.

*Response:* as for command and prohibition, they too occur by decree and predestination. And as for reward and punishment, they are necessary concomitants of the acts that occur due to the decree. Just as bad foods are causes for bodily illnesses, so false beliefs and wrong deeds are the causes of illnesses in the soul. The same goes for reward. As for the issue of power, an act's being necessary does not imply that there can be no power over it. For necessity of the act is an effect of the necessity of the power, and there is no clash between the effect and the cause. It's only when an act is necessitated, but not by the power, that power can exercise no power over it.

[T43] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 2, 517.2–6

[*no capacity to refrain from acting at the moment of acting*]

Some people claimed that the one who has power is the one who acts if he wishes to do so, and does not act if wishes not to do so. But you must know that the truth of this hypothetical proposition does not have, as one of its conditions, that the categorical [proposition] is true: that is, [it need not] be true that he wishes not to act and so does not act. For an agent is an "agent" only when the act is proceeding from him. At this moment it cannot possibly be true of him that he wishes to refrain from action, and so does not act.

[T44] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 174.7–11

[*power as having alternative possibilities*]

You should know that "one who has power (*al-qādir*)" is one who is capable of acting or refraining from action, in accordance with various motivations. For instance, if a person wants to walk, he has power over this, and if he wishes not to walk, he has power over this too. Fire's having the effect of warmth is not like this, since warmth appears from fire without depending on its will and its motivations; rather it a concomitant item for its essence.

[T45] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 175.24–176.11; 180.14–181.5

[*argument that everything in God is necessary, with reply*]

On this assumption [sc. that everything has a necessitating cause], at the very moment when the effects are proceeding from the one who has power, the intellect deems it necessary that the effect proceed from him, and impossible that it fail to do so. And at the very moment when [176] the effects do not exist, the intellect deems it necessary that the effect not proceed from him, and impossible that do so. Furthermore, on this assumption, there remains no difference between “one who has power” and “one who necessitates.” Or rather, the only difference between them is that in the case of the “one who has power,” the conditions for producing effects quickly change. When they occur after not having been existent, the one who has power becomes necessary in respect of production, but once they perish after having been existent, he becomes impossible in respect of production. However, that kind of change in conceivable only in the case when [the agent’s] production of effects depends on conditions that are distinct from himself. But the Creator, the exalted, does not depend on any conditions that are distinct from Himself before His production of effects among other things, since the exalted is the principle of everything else. Hence, His production of effects other than Himself does not depend on anything distinct from Him. Surely then, His production of effects other than Himself is specified by His essence. His essence cannot change, so His production of effects other than Himself cannot change either.

[180.14] *The theologians (mutakallimūn) responded*: we do not say that the preponderation of one side of a contingent matter over the other never requires a preponderating factor. Rather, we say that if something exists after it was non-existent, this origination and this contingency need something that requires it [to be one way or another]. But for the preponderation of acting over refraining from action in the case of one who has power, no preponderating factor<sup>26</sup> is needed.

An indication of this is the necessarily known fact that there is a difference between someone who has power and choice, and a cause that acts by necessity. Anyone will necessarily distinguish between a human choosing to do or say something, or to stand or sit, and [181] a stone falling by nature. If an act’s

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26 Reading *al-murajjih* with manuscript B.



proceeding from the one who has power depended on a preponderating factor, this would imply that there remains no difference at all between the one who acts by necessity and the one who chooses. Any inferential [knowledge] that leads to denying something that is [known] necessarily must be wrong. So we know for sure that the proceeding of an act from one who has power does not depend on a preponderating factor.

[T46] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 176.21–177.4; 181.21–182.4

[*deterministic argument from divine foreknowledge*]

There is no doubt that God the exalted is knowledgeable concerning everything. He knows that a given thing will occur at a given moment, and that a given thing will not occur at a given moment. It is absurd that any divergence from what He knows should occur, since something's failing to occur is contradictory to knowledge that it does occur. Contradictories exclude each other [177] by themselves. This being so, whenever God the exalted knows that something will occur, it is necessary that it occur, and impossible that it be non-existent. But when He knows it will *not* exist, it is necessary of non-existence, and impossible of existence. There is no alternative to these two options. So God the exalted is necessitating through His essence, not acting by choice. [...]

[*reply: knowledge follows that which is known*]

[181.21] The connection of knowledge to the occurrence of an act at a specified time follows upon the occurrence of the act at that specified time. [182] In its turn, the occurrence of [the act] at that specified time follows upon the power's having an effect, and upon the will, in making it to occur at that time. This being so, the connection of knowledge to the occurrence of [the act] at that specified time follows upon the connection to the power and will in making it to occur at that time. Therefore, the connection of knowledge [to the act] cannot exclude the connection of power and will [to the act].<sup>27</sup>

27 Al-Rāzī ascribes this solution to Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī in *Maṭālib*, vol. 9, 53.19–20.

[T47] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 177.20–178.12

[*idea that motivation makes appropriate but not necessary*]

The act's proceeding from the one who has power depends on motivation. [178] However the act taken together with motivation only becomes more appropriate to occur, without reaching the point of being necessary.<sup>28</sup> Due to its becoming more appropriate to occur, occurrence comes to preponderate over non-occurrence, but just insofar as it does not reach the point of being necessary, there still remains a difference between one who necessitates, and the one who has power.

This view is unconvincing, for two reasons. *First*: if at some moment acting and refraining from action are on an equal footing, preponderation of existence over non-existence is impossible at that moment. But when one of the sides is preponderated, it is more appropriately impossible that the out-preponderated should enter existence, even while being out-preponderated. For while it is being out-preponderated, it is weaker than at the moment when it was equivalent. But if the out-preponderated *cannot* enter existence, the fact that the preponderated does enter existence turns out to be necessary, since there is no alternative to the two sides of a contradiction.

[T48] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 179.4–180.13

[*Buridan's ass case shows that preponderation is unnecessary*]

*Second argument of the theologians on this issue*: the proceeding of an act from the one who has power does not depend on the addition of any motivation or preponderating factor. This is the view adopted by most scholars. *Explanation*: if a thirsty person is choosing between two drinks which are equivalent in all respects, he will choose one over the other without any preponderating factor. The same goes for a hungry person choosing between two loaves of bread which are equivalent in all respects, or someone fleeing from a savage beast of prey: if there are two paths before him he will choose one over the other with no preponderating factor. Thus it is established that proceeding of an act from the one who has power does not depend on any motivation.

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28 This position is ascribed verbatim to Ibn al-Malāḥimī, called in the relevant passage simply al-Khwārazmī, later in the work at vol. 1, 321.1–2.

[*responses*]

But the philosophers (*falāsifa*) said that one can object to this argument in two ways.

*First*, if one admits it as reasonable that one side of a possibility can be preponderated without a preponderating factor, then the fact that one side of a contingent matter is preponderated over another will offer no proof for the existence of a preponderating factor. But there is no other way to prove the reality of the Creator apart from this, so once this approach is discredited, the proof for the reality of the Creator on the basis of contingency and origination becomes invalid.

*Second*, if we consider our own experience (*jarrabnā*) in the case of [choosing between] two cups [of water], two loaves of bread, or two paths, we know that so long as there occurs no inclination or motivation in our hearts towards choosing one of them over the other, we will not choose this one that is selected over the other. Or alternatively, given that we know there must an inclination towards one of them in the heart, in order to select [which will be chosen], in order that there be preponderation, and this inclination is [itself] a specific preponderating factor; so it follows that in [cases of] this kind, there is no preponderation without a preponderating factor.

[*accepts need for preponderation, whose cause may be hidden*]

[180] *The utmost that one can say on this issue is:* we do not know why there occurred an inclination to this loaf of bread, and not to the other. For we say that the reason for the origination of the inclination in our hearts is not due to a further inclination in the heart; otherwise an infinite regress would follow. Rather, inclinations and volitions terminate at an inclination and volition that originate in the heart either, through the creation of God the exalted, or on account of astral causes. On this account, the problem will no longer arise.

A confirmation of this view is that, when a thirsty person chooses between two cups, until he specifies one of them by reaching out with his hand to take it, he cannot drink that water. And so long as his heart does not incline towards taking that cup, his hand will not reach out to it. This specific inclination and specific will are the preponderating factors for one side over the other. So it has been established that in [cases of] this kind, there is no preponderation without a preponderating factor. As for why there occurred an inclination towards this and not the other, this may be traced back to causes among the celestial spheres.

[T49] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 205.14–22

[*belief or knowledge as a preponderating factor*]

The person has power over acting and refraining from action. There is an equivalent relation between his power and either option, of acting or refraining. So long as the power is in that state of equivalence, there can arise no preponderation, since preponderating and equivalence are contradictories. But if there arises knowledge, belief, or opinion in the heart, which says that action is conducive to some added benefit, because of this preponderation occurs. The resulting combination of power together with this knowledge, opinion, or belief is what produces the occurrence of that act. As for the case of God, praise be to Him, both opinion and belief are ruled out. So it remains only that the motivation in the case of God the exalted is knowledge, which says that this act is conducive to the preponderation of well-being.

[T50] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 207.15–24

[*God's acts are preponderated by His will, not His power and knowledge*]

*Our view is:* we find that some acts of God the exalted come earlier, and some later. Still, it is conceivable that the earlier ones could have been later, and vice-versa. This being so, there needs to be a preponderating and specifying factor for [the acts] being earlier and later, since there can be no preponderation without a preponderating factor. Next, we say that this preponderating factor is either power, or knowledge, or some other attribute. But it cannot be power, since the specific task of power is bestowing existence, and this is equivalent in relation to all moments of time. Nor can it be knowledge, since the knowledge of an occurrence follows upon that occurrence. If [the occurrence] were to follow upon that knowledge, this would yield a circle. So it has been established that there must be something else besides power and knowledge, which is the specifying and preponderating principle.

[T51] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 319.4–321.6

[*taxonomy of positions on voluntary action*]

You should know that reasonable people have adopted two views about the voluntary acts that belong to animals.

(a) The first view is that such an animal is not independent in bestowing existence upon [the act] and making it be. The adherents of this view fall into four groups.

(a1) The first group are those who say that the act depends on motivation. If there is power, and motivation is added to it, then their combination becomes a cause that necessitates the act. This is what most of the philosophers (*falāsifa*) say, and among the Mu‘tazila it was the view adopted by Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. He claimed to be taking Mu‘tazilism to its logical extreme, in that he claimed there is necessary knowledge that humans do bestow existence upon their acts and are independent in respect of them. However, since he taught that the act depends on motivation, and while it hangs in the balance [whether or not it happens] it cannot occur, and then once it is out-preponderated it is all the more impossible, and given that when the out-preponderated is impossible the preponderated is necessary, because there is no alternative from the two contradictories, so [his position] just amounts to the theory of determinism (*jabr*). For the act will occur necessarily as soon as the preponderating factor occurs, and its occurrence is impossible so long as the preponderating factor is absent. Thus it is established that Abū al-Ḥusayn was extreme in [upholding] the theory of determinism, even if superficially he claimed to be the extreme in Mu‘tazilism.

(a2) The second group are those who say that the producer of the existence of the act is the combination of the power of God the exalted and the power of the human. This seems to be the statement of the Teacher [320] Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā‘īnī, since it is reported that he said “the power of the human produces due to a helper (*mu‘īn*).”

(a3) The third group are those who say that prayer and adultery share in common that each of them is a motion, but the two motions are distinguished in that one is prayer, the other adultery. Hence prayer comes down to a motion that has the attribute of “being prayer,” while adultery comes down to a motion that has the attribute of “being adultery.” Bearing this in mind, we [the third group] say that the basic feature (*aṣl*) of motion exists through the power of God the exalted, but the attribution of “being prayer” or “being adultery” occurs through the power of the human. This is the doctrine of the Judge, Abū Bakr ibn al-Bāqillānī.

(a4) The fourth group are those who say that the power of the human has no effect, whether on the act or any attribute of the act. Rather God the exalted

creates both the act and the power that is associated with that act. That [created] power however has no effect on that act whatsoever. This is the doctrine of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Aṣārī.

All this was a detailed exposition of the teachings of those who hold that animals are not independent in bestowing existence upon their acts.

(b) The second view is that animals are indeed independent in bestowing existence upon their acts. This is what most of the Muʿtazilites say. They fall into two sects.

(b<sub>1</sub>) The first sect are those who say that we have necessary knowledge that we are the ones who bestow existence upon our acts. This is the view adopted by Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī.

*Remark by the author of this book [al-Rāzī himself]:* I really wonder about his position. How can he simultaneously hold this, and also say that the act depends on motivation? For the latter claim is extreme determinism, so how can it be compatible with extreme libertarianism (*al-qadar*)? Maḥmūd [321] al-Khwārizmī, seeking to make both ideas compatible, said that the act becomes more appropriate to occur when it is taken together with motivation, but without reaching the level of necessity. We will show how unconvincing this position is [see T47].

(b<sub>2</sub>) The second sect are those who say that we have [merely] inferential (*istidlālī*) knowledge that we are the ones who bestow existence upon our acts. This is the teaching of most of the masters of Muʿtazilism.

This, then, has been a detailed exposition of the doctrines people have adopted on this issue.

[T52] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿūn*, vol. 1, 323.2–7

*[if preponderation occurred without a cause, determinism would still hold]*

Furthermore, even on the assumption that this is the case, preponderation would have to occur by chance (*bi-al-ittifāq*), in the sense that it would occur without any factor (*amr*) that proceeds from the agent. But this too implies determinism, since if this chance event occurs, the act will take place regardless whether one wants it or not. Conversely, if it does not occur, the act will

not take place regardless whether one wants it or not. So determinism follows again, according to this assumption.

[T53] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 323.13–21

[*the principle of sufficient reason is inapplicable to God's will*]

*If someone says:* what you have mentioned as applying to evident cases would also follow for hidden cases. So it would be necessary that the Creator, the exalted, is an essentially necessitating cause and not a voluntary agent.

*We say:* the difference between the evident and the hidden is that the proceeding of an act from the one who has power depends upon will (*al-irāda*). In the evident cases, this will is originated and requires an originator. If that originator is the human himself, then an infinite regress follows, which is absurd. So one must say that [the chain of] volitions terminates at the necessary will which God the exalted creates in the human directly (*ibtidāʿan*). That is why determinism turns out to follow. However, the will of God the exalted is eternal, according to us. So it requires no further will, due to its eternity. The difference between the two cases is obvious.

[T54] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 323.22–324.12

[*knowledge argument*]

If the human were the one who bestows existence upon his own acts, he would know his acts in all details (*bi-al-tafāṣīl*). In fact though he does not, so he cannot be the one who bestows existence upon them. *Explanation of the conditional premise* [i.e. the first sentence in the argument]: given that [the human] has power, [324] this act may occur from him to a certain extent, but it might also occur to a greater or lesser extent. The fact that such an act occurs to just that extent, rather than doing so to a greater or lesser extent, can be due only to intention and choice. But choice and intention require knowledge, since the intention to bestow existence upon ten rather than five and instead of twenty can arise only together with the knowledge that it is indeed ten, not five or twenty. [...] [324.9] We say that the human does not know his acts in all details due to several reasons. For one thing, someone who is asleep or unconscious may turn from one side to another, while having absolutely no idea of the quantity and quality of these acts.

[T55] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 326.19–327.8

[*competition argument*]

If the human's power were able to bestow existence, then if God the exalted wanted a body to be at rest, and we suppose that a human wants it to be in motion, then either (a) both things that have been willed would happen, which is absurd; or (b) neither of them happen, which is also absurd, as we explained while discussing the topic of [divine] unity, since this would be an alternative to two sides of a contradiction, or (c) what God wills would happen, and not what the human wills. But this too is absurd, since it is no more appropriate for one to happen than the other. For, even though God the exalted does have power over an infinite number of objects, and the human does not, this implies no differentiation (*al-tafāwut*) between the power of God the exalted and the human's power in this [particular] case. For one and the same motion, or one and the same instance of being at rest, is a quiddity that allows of no division or differentiation, in any respect. If the object of power is not liable to differentiation, then neither is the power over that kind of object. So the power of God the exalted to bestow existence upon this motion cannot be any stronger than the power of man to bestow existence upon the instance of being at rest. [...] [327.6] So one of these three options [(a), (b), or (c)] must be the case, but we have established that each of them is false. So one must conclude that the human's power is unable to bestow existence.

[T56] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 327.9–23

[*argument from involuntary ignorance*]

A voluntary act arises from [the human] only when intention and choice are associated with it. But the unbeliever neither intends nor chooses that ignorance be originated [in him]. To the contrary, he intends knowledge and truth, so it is only knowledge and truth that should arise for him. Since ignorance arises for him instead, despite his intending knowledge, we know that he is not the one who made it happen to him; something else did.

*If it is said:* this ignorance arises only because he thought it was knowledge, so inevitably he did intend to make it happen. *We say:* so then he chooses ignorance only because of ignorance that has arisen for him previously. If we then apply the same reasoning as in the first case, then all ignorance would be preceded by another ignorance, and so on without end, which is absurd. Therefore



all these cases of ignorance terminate in a first ignorance, which is preceded by no other. This first ignorance could not be because the human chose it, since the human does not want to choose this [sc. ignorance] at all. We have then established that this first ignorance arises when God the exalted bestows existence upon it, and creates it; then other instances of ignorance branch out from it. So in fact, everything may be traced back to the creation of God the exalted and His bringing things to be.

[T57] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 328.11–18

[*problem of divine foreknowledge of sins, with solution*]

God the exalted knows from past eternity to future eternity that Abū Lahab<sup>29</sup> refuses to believe. Yet He nonetheless commands him to believe. This is a command to bring together two contradictories, so it is absurd. So you also have the problem of obligation to do something over which one has no power (*taklīf mā lā yuṭāq*) in the issue of [divine] knowledge, just as much as you force it upon us with the issue of the creation of [human] acts.

If all intelligent people were to come together and try to come up with a solution to this argument, they could do no better than to follow the teaching of Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam, namely that God the exalted does not know things before they happen, not that they will exist, or that they will not exist. Yet most of the Muʿtazilites called whoever espouses this doctrine an unbeliever. Well, God knows best.

[T58] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 330.14–332.8

[*lack of choice in the cases of conceptualization and belief*]

No conceptualization is [voluntarily] acquired (*muktasab*), nor is any immediate assent (*al-taṣdīqāt al-badihiyya*), so no assent [in general] is acquired. And yet [God] issued the command that we should attain understanding. So this is an obligation to do something over which one has no power.<sup>30</sup> [...]

29 A sinner mentioned in the Qurʾān: 111.

30 This is followed by a passage using Meno's paradox to show that our conceptualizations (*taṣawwurāt*) are not up to us. See further our chapter on this paradox and acquiring definitions in the Logic and Epistemology volume.

[331.1] *We say*: given that conceptualizations are not acquired, neither then are cases of immediate assent. For cases of immediate assent are those in which the mere terms, their subjects and predicates, are sufficient for the mind to judge that one is to be affirmed or denied of the other. On this assumption, whenever the [relevant] conceptualizations are present, this assent arises necessarily; whereas if they are not present, this assent cannot possibly arise. Now, if this assent arises necessarily, then in turn there will be affirmation or denial, as soon as these conceptualizations are present as affirmed or denied. We have then established that the presence of these conceptualizations, as denial or affirmation, does not happen in accordance with human choice. So it follows that neither is the occurrence of these assents, as denial or affirmation, in accordance with human choice either. So we have established that no immediate assent is acquired.

*But then we say*: this being the case, no assent [in general] can possibly be [voluntarily] acquired. For acquired assents do not regress indefinitely, nor do they go in a circle. Rather, the acquired assents must stop at whatever was acquired first. The first acquired conceptualization must inevitably be those immediate [assents]. Now, these cases of immediate assent are either (a) complete in such a way that they force the first acquired assent to arise from them, or (b) not.

(a) If the immediates are complete [in this sense], then as soon as they arise the first acquired [assent] must arise, whereas so long as they do not arise, neither can the first acquired [assent]. For there is no reason for the first acquired [assent] apart from these immediates. Therefore that first acquired [assent] is necessary in its turn, whether as negation or affirmation, and is among that which is not chosen. Thus the first acquired [assent] falls outside that which is by the choice [of the human]. And now that you understand this, we can say that the case of the second acquired [assent] is just as we've explained in relation to the first acquired [assent], on the same grounds. So nothing known is acquired [voluntarily].

[332] (b) If on the other hand we say that those immediate [cases of assent] are *not* complete, in such a way that they would force acquisition of the first [acquired assent], then in that case one would need, alongside the immediates, some acquired [assent]. And that acquired [assent] would be prior to the first acquired [assent], which is absurd.

Thus has been established what we mentioned, namely that no item of knowledge, whether it be immediate or a consequence of the immediates, is ac-

quired. Therefore no [item of knowledge] is acquired [voluntarily]. Yet there is no doubt that a command has been issued [to acquire knowledge], since God the exalted said: “know that there is no god other than God” (Qur’ān 47:19). So it has been established that everyone is under an obligation to do something over which they have no power.

[T59] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 9, 35.4–43.22

[*determinist argument from the sources of belief*]

[35.4] *First premise*: we observe that people differ in their beliefs. We must investigate the cause of this difference. So we say that the causes of this difference are either (a) internal to the person himself or (b) external to him. There are three options for the first case:

(a1) The quiddities and true realities of rational souls differ. For some are clever by essence and substance, while others are dull. Some are merciful by essence and substance, while others are cruel. Some are naturally inclined to pursue the pleasures of the body, others to reject them in favor seeking spiritual happiness. [...] [36.5] Thorough investigation (*al-istiqrāʾ*) indicates that these divergences are essential, inborn (*gharīzī*), and substantial, and cannot be eliminated. [...]

[36.15] (a2) The second of the internal causes is difference in the states of [bodily] mixture. When someone is hot in his mixture, especially in the mixture of the brain, then he is quick to anger and confused in his thinking. But if someone is cold in the brain, he is dull and lacking in thought. [...]

[36.22] (a3) The third of the internal causes is difference in the shapes [37] of organs. If someone has a large forehead, this positively effects the faculty of imagination (*al-takhayyul*), whereas if the back of his head is large, it positively effects memory. [...]

[37.9] As for the causes external to the essence of the person, they are also three.

(b1) The first is the familiar and the customary (*al-ʿāda*): for, when the rational soul is created in its initial inborn nature (*mabdaʾ al-fiṭra*), it is without any beliefs and character traits. [...] [37.14] If a person hears early in life and when first growing up that a certain teaching is true, good, correct, and satisfactory, and its opposite false and unsatisfactory, then the necessity of these conceptions will be established in his soul. [...]

[38.4] (b2) The second of the external causes is that this teaching should be among those that help achieve mastery in this world, and superiority over one's peers. This too is something that makes [a person's] heart incline to these beliefs and character traits. [...]

(b3) The third of the external causes is that the person should be trained in the art of inquiry and proof, for whoever is more practiced in this art arrives more easily at the truth. [...]

[39.9] *The second premise* to show how acts proceed from animals is the following. You should know that, whenever an animal performs an act, it only does so if it believes that performing the act is better for it than refraining from the act. [...]

[39.14] *Third premise*: what every animal seeks for its own sake (*al-maṭlūb bi-al-dhāt*) is pleasure and happiness, while that which one avoids for its own sake is pain and distress. Apart from these two classes, everything is sought accidentally, not for its own sake. [...] [39.20] One cannot say that every act is performed for the sake of something else, since otherwise a regress or circle would follow.

[40] *Fourth premise*: if the motivation for an act is added to healthy constitution and a sound [bodily] mixture, and nothing hinders, then this act will occur. [...]

[43.11] In general, the acts of the limbs depend on acts in the heart, and some acts in the heart may be traced back to others. But the last among these [acts in the heart] may be traced back to external, incidental objects. For instance, if someone's sight lights upon something, and then he remembers something [else]; or he hears a sound, and this makes him remember something—along with our necessary knowledge that such external incidents lie outside his remit and his control. Moreover, we have mentioned those six factors that are causes for the variation in the states of the person, with respect to his beliefs and character traits. Once these external incidents are added to these six causes that we have mentioned, it is obvious that one is then forced to accept the doctrine of determinism.

[T60] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 9, 59.18–63.9

[*principle of bivalence and determinism concerning future contingents*]

You should know that this demonstration cannot be securely established without first speaking about the true reality of contradictories. *We say then*: [contradictories] are a pair of propositions which in themselves must be such that one of them is true, the other [60] false, either in their own right or on account of something else (*bi-‘aynihi aw bi-ghayr ‘aynihi*).

*Explanation*: if we take one specified subject in itself, and one specified predicate in itself, and one specified moment in itself, and if we say that this predicate is affirmed of this subject at this moment; and then we say that this predicate is not affirmed of this subject at this moment, then reason determines that inevitably, either this affirmation or this negation is true, and the other false.

*But then, they say*: true and false are two notions that apply to the necessary, the impossible, and the past and present contingent. In the case of the necessary, everything on the side of affirmation is true, and everything on the side of negation is false. In the case of the impossible, it’s the other way around. In the case of the past and present contingent, though, that which has failed to occur is false in itself, while that which has occurred is true in itself. In the case of the future contingent, some have said that the true and the false are indeterminate (*ghayr muta‘ayyin*), but one is true and the other false upon determination (*‘alā al-ta‘yīn*).

On my view, though, it must be that in the case of the future contingent, the true and false are both determinate in the facts themselves (*naḥs al-amr*).

*Proof of this*: being true and being false are two real attributes (*ṣifatāni ḥaqīqiyatāni*) occurring in the facts themselves. Inevitably, each of them has a subject of inherence (*maḥall*) that exists extramentally. But everything that exists extramentally is in itself determinate, since whatever is existent in itself is determined in itself. Undecidedness (*al-ihām*) occurs only in the mind, in the sense that one does not know whether it is this proposition, or the other one, that has “being true” as an attribute. It is absurd that what exists concretely should have indeterminacy between the two [propositions], in respect of existence. Having then established that being true and being false are existent attributes, and that existent attributes require<sup>31</sup> a determinate subject of

31 Reading *tastad‘ā* with MS L from the apparatus.

inherence in the facts themselves, it is established that [61] one of these two propositions has “being true” as an attribute in the facts themselves, while the other has “being false” as an attribute in the facts themselves; yet we are not aware of which of the two options has “being true” as an attribute, and which “being false.” But in the facts themselves, it must be the case that one of them determinately has “being true” as an attribute, and the other “being false.”

*This being established, we say:* this implies that all occurring events (*al-ḥawā-dith*) are predestined in a certain respect, as they cannot undergo increase, decrease, or alteration, in keeping with our teaching on the topic of the decree and predestination.

*Proof of this:* the side for which it is true that it will occur at a certain moment is either such that it [can] fail to occur at that moment, or not. But the former is false, since whatever is contingent must not imply any absurdity when it is supposed to occur. Let us suppose then that it fails to occur. Given that it does not occur, our saying “it will occur” was false from the very moment when that statement entered into existence. But we already supposed that it has the attribute of “being true.” If that act fails to arise at the relevant moment, then from its non-occurrence at that moment, there follows the removal of “being true” from that statement, at the moment when the statement first entered into existence. So the non-occurrence of that act at that moment implies that the attribute of “being true” would be removed from it in time that is already past. This would require the occurrence of change in time that is already past, which is absurd. We have then established that the non-occurrence of that act at that moment implies an absurdity. Yet the contingent implies no absurdity when one supposes that it occurs. We have then established that the non-occurrence [of that act] at that time is absurd. Thus its occurrence is necessary, which was the conclusion sought. [...]

[62.19] You should know that this demonstration shows that all future events to be ordered in themselves in a certain way: the earlier cannot become later or the later earlier. This refutes Mu‘tazilism entirely.

Next, if we wish to show that this necessity arises precisely *through* necessitation by God the exalted, and His predetermination (*taqdīr*), *we say:* this necessitated [event] cannot be [27] due to itself, as it has been established that the contingent-through-itself cannot be the necessary-through-itself. Rather it must be necessary through another. That “other” is not the human being, since this necessity already occurred before the human formed the intention to

bestow existence upon it. Indeed, it occurred even before the human existed. How could this not be so, as this necessity we have securely established occurs from past eternity to future eternity? Inevitably then, whatever demands this necessity must be something that has gone on continuously from past eternity. This is nothing other than God, praise be to Him. We have then established that this necessity arises for these future events only through the predetermination of God and His bestowal of existence, either immediately or through an intermediary. This was the conclusion sought.

This is a first-rate demonstration, and one should consider it carefully in order to agree with it as one ought to.

[T61] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 3, 24.17–21

[*motivation requires belief*]

The motivation for an act is not the act's being beneficial in itself, nor is deterrent from an act the act's being harmful in itself. Rather, the motivation for the act is [the agent's] knowledge, belief, or opinion that that act is beneficial in itself, while the deterrent from an act is one of these three in respect of the act's being harmful.

[T62] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 3, 38.13–39.11; 42.13–44.10

[*action without motivation*]

Sometimes acts proceed from someone who is not paying attention, or is asleep, in the absence of motivation. [...]

[38.21] The case of someone who is asleep may be established in a couple of ways. *First*, someone who is asleep breathes, [39] and this breath is a voluntary act; but it occurs without any motivation, since being asleep prevents the person from having any belief or opinion. *Second*, someone who is asleep may turn from one side to another, or may utter many words, even though just at the moment there is no knowledge or belief occurring in his heart, since sleep prevents this. Here again, we have an act without motivation. [...]

*They said:* if a person becomes proficient in a certain handicraft, for instance if one becomes proficient in the art of writing, or in playing on the tanbur, or in something else, he becomes able to write at length, or play on the tanbur for

a certain period of time, even as his heart pays no heed to [forming] the individual letters or [plucking] each of the strings. If he is paying no heed to them, he can hardly be knowing them, or having a belief or opinion about them. So, in this case we again find acts without the occurrence of motivations for them.

[*response: unconscious motivation, or not really a voluntary act*]

[42.13] There is some reason for the motions of someone who is asleep. *First reason*: while he sleeps, he may see imaginary things (*al-khayālāt*), and volitions and avoidances may arise in keeping with these imaginations. Thus occur various different motions due to different imaginations. *Second reason*: having lain on one side for a long time, he may have discomfort on that side. And we have [just] explained that sleep does not prevent the occurrence of imaginations, which inevitably make him turn from one side to another so as to relieve this discomfort. *Third reason*: the deed may be a matter of compulsion (*ḍarūriyyan*), or akin to this, like breathing. [...]

[44.3] As for the case where someone who is adept in writing may write even without paying mind to the forming of individual letters, we say that this is because his long practice in writing gives him a habit (*malaka*) in his fingers to write out these letters easily, and just as the knack to do these things arises in his fingers thanks to his long practice, so does this habit arise in his imaginations, and long practice in calling these imaginations to mind, so for this reason he has no need to call to mind the form of each one of these letters. Rather, these letters simply come one after another to his imagination (*khayāl*), just as the acts do to his hand.

[T63] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 3, 51.7–14

[*preponderation needed to resolve conflicting motivations*]

If one of us leaves his house and goes to visit a friend, but then it occurs to him on the way that he has left something important at home, and needs to go back, and if these two motivations oppose one another and are equally strong, then preponderation will not arise for either option over the other. So the person will remain at this spot, without being able to move in either direction, unless there occurs in his imagination a preponderation of one option over the other. He will move in that direction only once this imagination comes. Since this phenomenon is one that each of us recognizes from himself, we know that, so long as no preponderating factor occurs in the imagination or the intellect, preponderation cannot take place.



[T64] Al-Rāzī, *Ma‘ālim*, 93.3–6

[*God’s command does not presuppose an ability to do otherwise*]

God the exalted knows that the unbelievers and sinners will not believe and that they will sin. Thus it is impossible for belief and obedience to proceed from them. Nonetheless, He commanded them to believe and to obey, and this command could not apply to them if they could not be deserving of punishment. Thus it is established that it is wrong to assert goodness and badness of the acts and judgments of God the exalted.

[T65] Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 199.5–8

[*“acquisition” is a meaningless compromise*]

Humans are either independent in making something enter into existence, or not. This is a case of affirmation and negation, with no middle between them. If the former is the case, then the Mu‘tazilite position is conceded. If the second is the case, then human [actions] are necessitated (*muḍṭarr*). For if God the exalted creates [acts] in humans then must surely arise, whereas if He does not, they cannot possibly arise. So human [actions] are necessitated and we are back with the original problem. By this analysis it becomes clear that “acquisition (*al-kasb*)” is an empty name.

[T66] Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, 84.11–24

[*divine omnipotence and the impossible*]

That which God the exalted knows will not happen is either such that, in itself, it cannot possibly happen—for instance combination of the opposites, or something’s being in two places at the same time, and so on—or, it is not impossible in consideration of itself, but of something extrinsic—for example, the existence of another world beyond this one, or before this one. [God] surely has no power over that which falls into the first class; there is no disagreement over this. As for what falls into the second class, namely, that which is impossible not in consideration of itself but of the fact that [God’s] knowledge is connected to its non-existence, or [in consideration of] some other [extrinsic factor], it is surely contingent in consideration of itself, as seen above. But the contingent, as such, is not incompatible with [God’s] power’s being connected to it. And [God’s] power, as such, can connect to something that is in itself contingent. For the contingent, as such, is not incompatible with [God’s] power’s

being connected to it. And [God's] power, as such, does not fall short of being connected to [the contingent], by any shortcoming or weakness that would belong to it. In light of this, [God's] power can be connected to the contingent, as such, and this is all that it means to be an object of power.

[T67] Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, 189.4–7

[*against the competition argument*]

You should know that this approach is feeble. The [Mu'tazilite] opponent has already ruled out that [the act] is an object of the Lord's power before the originated power is connected to [that object]. The fact that an act is contingent in itself does not in any way imply that the power has been connected to it from eternity. So [the opponent] need not acknowledge that everything that is contingent in itself is an object of the Lord's power.

[T68] Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, 191.13–192.14

[*divine omnipotence*]

*Correct view on this issue:* if the Lord had as the object of His power, and as falling under His power, not the human's act but only other things among the originated existents, then it would follow that God the exalted is deficient in comparison to the one who does have power over [the act], as argued above regarding will. And this is absurd.

[*knowledge argument*]

As we wish to show that creation cannot be ascribed to the human's act, *we say:* it must be the case that [the human] would bestow existence upon [the act] either (a) essentially or (b) through will. (a) But he cannot bestow existence upon it essentially, otherwise he would never stop performing that act, which is absurd and contrary to what we observe. Besides, it is contrary to both doctrines [sc. of the Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites]. (b) But he cannot bestow existence upon it through will either, since otherwise he could never bestow existence without [will]. However some acts may proceed from the human with us believing that it happens without his will, like when he is inattentive, unaware, and so on. To say that [the human agent] is exercising will in these situations is pure sophistry. If someone asked him, "did you will to do what you did?" he could only answer no. How else, given that an action by will on the part of the human calls for intention? The intention calls for some object of intention, [192] and

the object of intention needs to be an object of knowledge. But [the unaware agent] surely lacks knowledge of it. Even if he knows it in some respect, he does not know it in all respects, yet the [act's] proceeding from him is in accordance with the utmost wisdom and order, and does so in a perfect and consummate fashion. If [the human] bestowed existence upon [the act] by will, he would need to comprehend it with knowledge of all its states, since intention and will occur only together with knowledge.

It cannot be that the power of man be connected only to that which is known to him, while the power of the Creator is connected only to that which is unknown to the human, because the object of power for one of the two [sc. God or the human] may be complete only upon the realization of the object of power of the other one. From this it would follow that the act in itself could not possibly exist, as we learned while treating the question of [God's] unity. Besides, no one says this anyway.

So, if acts can proceed forth from humans in states like this [sc. unawareness, etc.], it should be said that they are created by [humans] without will, so it turns out to be false to take will as a condition for creation. But if will is not a condition for creation in relation to *some* acts, then neither is it a condition for creation for *any* acts, even if [the human] does know and will them, since neither is more appropriate than the other [that is, an act can proceed in either case]. And actually no one says this either.

From the falsehood of the consequent, then, follows the refutation of the antecedent, yielding the intended conclusion. What we have indicated is forced upon anyone who grants it to an originated power to have an effect (*ta'thīr*), either by bestowing existence upon an act, or upon any attribute additional to [the act].

[T69] Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, 193.16–194.5

[*motivation does not prove genuine agency*]

As for the occurrence of actions in accordance with motivations and goals, this is no indication that originated power is capable of bestowing existence, since cracks show and mistakes appear in the edifice of [the opponent], in that there are things that do occur in accordance with motivation, without being ascribed to the originated power, or indicating its capacity to bestow existence. For instance being quenched when one drinks, and sated when one eats, and

the arising of colors thanks to the art of dyeing, and so on. Then there are also things that occur without being in accordance with motivations and goals, for instance, the actions of the sleeping, the unaware, and the unconscious. Yet these are still ascribed to the originated power, according to their principles. Given that what they rely on is not sound, however you look at it, it bears no weight at all.

[*acquisition suffices to distinguish voluntary from forced motion*]

[194] As for the distinction we find between forced and voluntary motion, it is for this reason that we affirm “acquisition (*al-kasb*)” against the determinist, who denies it. He says that the originated power is not connected to the act at all. The nub of the disagreement and the subject of dispute here is whether making the distinction [between forced and voluntary actions] implies [that the agent’s power has] some effect (*al-ta’thīr*). In fact, the distinction arises simply through the connection of the power to one [kind of motion] and not the other, even if [the agent] has no effect in terms of bestowing existence [on his voluntary actions].

[T70] Al-Āmidī, *al-Nūr al-bāhīr*, vol. 5, 253.6–13

[*astral determinism traces all things to will of the spheres*]

All that is originated must be traceable back to the motions of the spheres. Furthermore, it has already been shown that these celestial motions are traceable back to the universal will belonging to the soul of the spheres. That will demands that each motion occur at its time, in the way appropriate to it, without addition or subtraction. Therefore, originated things are traceable in their existence back to the will belonging to the soul [of the spheres]. One cannot conceive of it proceeding from anything that lacks will, which is why [no originated thing] can proceed from the remaining sphere, which would necessitate things by its nature, since it has no will.

[T71] Al-Abharī, *Risāla fī ‘ilm al-kalām*, 112.6–113.3

[*determinism on Avicennan grounds*]

The truth on this question is that both power and act are to be traced back in a chain of dependence (*silsilat al-ḥajja*) to the Creator, the exalted, since both of them are contingent in themselves, and whatever contingent in itself goes back in a chain of dependence to the Necessary Existent in itself.

[113] The true position is determinism, since the Creator, the exalted either created everything on which the human's act depends, or did not. If He created [all of this], the act must necessarily follow, and the human is incapable of refraining from it. If on the other hand He did not create [all of this], then the act cannot possibly exist, since it is impossible that it occur without that on which it depends.

[T72] Al-Kashshī, *Ḥadā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq*, fol. 128v21–129r2

[*the absolutely non-existent cannot be a subject of God's will*]

The non-existent that has no existence at all cannot be an object of the will of God the exalted. Otherwise<sup>32</sup> it would exist. For [the Prophet], peace be upon him, and the entire community [of Muslims] say, “whatever God wills, is.” [The absolutely non-existent] however has no being (*kawn*) at all, either in the past or in the future. It follows that it cannot be an object of the will of God. Also, if the absolutely non-existent came to be through volition and will, then it would appropriate to say: “if God wills something to be, it is, and what God wills [129r] not to be, is not.” Given that one does not use this [expression] but instead uses the other one, this indicates that the non-existent that is perpetually non-existent eternally and forever is not among the objects of God's will.

[T73] Al-Ṭūsī, *Jabr wa qadar*, 14.14–15.10

[*agency vs compulsion*]

To consider this in another way: any agent is [an agent] either essentially or accidentally. The former is such that its act is entailed by its essence and nature, as when a stone [15] falls from above. The latter is the opposite of this, as when a stone is thrown upwards. Likewise, we call “agent” someone from whom an act proceeds not necessarily, but from which it may possibly do so, meaning an act may possibly come from it, as may the absence of acting. The former is called “necessitating (*mūjib*),” the latter “capable (*qādir*),” in keeping with the usage of the theologians; meaning that he can do, and can also not do. Furthermore, if doing and not doing is due to [the agent's] will (*khwāst*)—that is, if he wants to do something he does, and if he wants not to do something, he does not—he is said to act voluntarily (*mukhtār*). If by contrast he is willing,

32 Reading *wa illā la-wujida*.

or not willing, but his act or failure to act is not by his will, but instead by the will of someone else (or is brought about in some other way), so that regardless whether he wills or not, the act occurs, then [this person] is said to be “compelled (*majbūr*).”

[T74] Al-Ṭūsī, *Jabr wa qadar*, 25.6–26.1

[*acts are rendered necessary once both power and will are present*]

The necessity and impossibility that have been mentioned are not incompatible with choice (*ikhtiyār*). This is shown by the fact that whoever is “capable (*qādir*)” is said to be such that he can perform an act and cannot perform an act: that is, both acting and refraining are possible (*ṣaḥīḥ*) for him, and relate to him equally. When a preponderating factor gives preponderance to one option, that option occurs. Now, when that preponderating factor is his will (*irādat*), so that if he wants to do something he does, and if he wants not to do something, he does not, he is said to act voluntarily. Thereby we know that the voluntary [agent] has two attributes, namely power (*qudrat*) and will. Power is such that acting and refraining are possible alternatives for it, and neither [option] occurs just from it alone. Will is such that once its existence is added to power, there is preponderation of one option. This means that, through the existence of power and will, the occurrence of the act becomes necessary, while the occurrence of refraining becomes impossible; through the existence of power without will, the occurrence of the act is impossible, while the occurrence of refraining is necessary. This is the idea of pure choice [on the part of the agent], not incompatible with it.

[T75] Al-Ṭūsī, *Jabr wa qadar*, 26.6–13

[*compatibilism*]

*If they ask*: can someone have an intention (*qaṣd*) not to do something, together with the existence of power and will? *We say*: this question is self-contradictory, since no one can both intend not to do something and also will to do it. *If they put it differently, and say*: is refraining possible (*mumkin*), together with the existence of power and will? If so, then the act is not necessary, but if it is not possible together with the existence of power and will, then [the agent] is not acting voluntarily (*mukhtār*). *We say*: it is not possible. It does not follow that [the agent] is not acting voluntarily, since the voluntary agent is the one who does what he wills, in accordance with that which he wills; it is not someone

who, even as he wills to do something, can still possibly not do it, such that what he wills would not occur.

[T76] Al-Ṭūsī, *Jabr wa qadar*, 39.3–10

[*middle position on human action and divine foreknowledge*]

*Verification of this issue:* even though God's knowledge, may He be exalted, necessitates a concrete act, the proximate cause of this act is the power and will of the [human] individual. [God's knowledge] is not incompatible with the voluntary choice of the individual. [...]

[*lazy argument*]

[39.6] *If they say:* what use is it to make an effort? If God the exalted has determined something for someone, then even if he does not make an effort, it will still inevitably come to him. But if [God] did not determine it for him, then no matter how much effort he makes, it still will not come to him.

*The response* to them may be known from that which has preceded. Namely that God the exalted has determined it in such a way that it happen through the intermediary of the person's effort, so if he does not make an effort, it will not happen to him.

[T77] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 301.8–15

[*problem of foreknowledge*]

*He [al-Rāzī] said:* as for 'Abbād, he claimed that whatever God the exalted knows to be, is necessary, and whatever He knows not to be, is impossible. And the necessary and the impossible are not objects of power. *Response [also devised by al-Rāzī]:* this would imply that God the exalted has no power at all, since everything is either known [by Him] to exist or not to exist. *Furthermore, we say:* even though it is necessary in view of knowledge it is nonetheless contingent in itself, and thus an object of power. Also, because the knowledge that [something] happens follows upon its happening, which itself follows upon the power. And the posterior does not cancel the prior.

*I say:* since the posterior does not cancel the prior, so neither does it necessitate it. Rather, it is the prior that necessitates the posterior, at least when it is prior to it in a causal manner.

[T78] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 299.17–23

[*solution to competition argument*]

The proof that [al-Rāzī] mentioned indicates merely that there cannot be two productive agents (*mu'aththirayn*) for one and the same produced effect (*athar*), without showing that there cannot simultaneously be two [agents] having power over one and the same object of power. According to the upholders of the *sunna*, the correct view is that God the exalted does have power over every contingent thing, but does not produce them all; the human has power over some of them, without producing anything. Therefore both of them have power over one and the same thing, even as only one of them actually produces it. This is simply because the productive agent needs will<sup>33</sup> in addition to power, whereas all that is there for [the agent] to be powerful is power. On this reckoning, it is not impossible that there is another producer of contingents alongside God the exalted, albeit that this is shown on grounds different from those he mentioned.

[T79] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 327.1–6

[*against knowledge argument*]

*I say:* the bestowal of existence in itself does not require that the bestower of existence knows that upon which he bestows existence. Otherwise, one couldn't say that fire burns, and that sun illuminates. Their lacking knowledge of their effects, and [generally] accepting that something can bestow existence without knowing, does not undermine the proof that God the exalted is knowing. For those who prove that [He is] knowing do not infer knowledge from [mere] bestowal of existence. Rather, they infer this on the basis of the wisely chosen and consummate features [of created things]. But the claim that [any] particular intention requires particular knowledge can be refuted, giving the example that fire burns this [particular] wood, as it does so while having no knowledge of it.

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33 Reading *al-irāda* for the second *al-qudra*.



[T80] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 334.11–335.8

[*types of will, as a response to Mu'tazilite examples where God lacks power*]

[Al-Rāzī]: they [the Mu'tazilites] have several arguments. *First*: [God] commands the unbeliever to believe. The command indicates will [on God's part, yet the unbeliever still does not believe, so God wills something that never happens]. *Second*: obedience depends upon will. So if God the exalted were to will that the unbeliever should not believe, then the unbeliever would be obedient by disbelieving [which is absurd]. *Third*: it is obligatory to be satisfied with the decree of God the exalted. So if the unbelief were in accordance with God's decree, it would be obligatory to be satisfied with it. Yet satisfaction with unbelief is itself unbelief. [...]

[335.1] [Al-Ṭūsī]: *in response to the first we say*: the agent's willing of his own act is not the same as his willing that someone else perform some other act. Command indicates the second kind of willing, not the former, whereas the issue at stake is the first kind of will. The same goes for the *second argument*, that is, obedience depends upon the second kind of will, not the first. As for the *third argument* [...] the correct response is that being satisfied with unbelief, just in the respect that it belongs to the divine decree, is indeed obedience, and in this respect it is not unbelief.

[T81] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 340.20–341.1

[*choice is compatible with foreknowledge and unavoidable motivation*]

[*The Mu'tazilites*] said in response to the second proof: the obligation of Abū Lahab (see [T57] above) was only in respect of his being a voluntary agent (*mukhtār*). We are told (*al-akhbār*) that he would not believe only in respect with [God's] [fore]knowledge. So [fore]knowledge does not exclude voluntary choice. [...] [340.23] As for the act's being necessary when the motivation is necessary, and impossible in the absence of motivation, we stated numerous times that this does not exclude [341] choice (*al-ikhtiyār*).

[T82] Al-Ṭūsī, *Qawā'id al-'aqā'id*, 445.18–446.2

[*against Ibn al-Malāḥimī's appeal to the "more appropriate"*]

*Some of them said:* motivation makes the existence of the act “more appropriate” than its non-existence. *One may reply:* does this “appropriateness” allow that the act fails to occur, or not? If it does, then the appropriateness has no effect. If not, then the appropriateness is necessitation, and changing expressions does not change the meaning.

[T83] Al-Ṭūsī, *Af'āl al-'ibād bayn al-jabr wa-al-tafwīd*, 477.3–478.8

[*compromise, compatibilist view*]

The acts of humans divide into those that follow upon their power and will, and those that do not. An example of the first is when a healthy person eats, or walks, without performing these acts against his will. An example of the second is a person's falling downward from a higher place.

“Power (*al-quḍra*)” means soundness in the instruments of the act among the bodily organs. It also means the human's state at the moment when the act proceeds from him. The former [soundness in the organs] is both prior to the occurrence of the act and simultaneous with it; and this is what the Mu'tazilites mean by “power.” The second, by contrast, comes only simultaneously with the act; and this is “power” according to the Ash'arites. Doubtless, neither aspect of power is itself something over which humans have power. Instead, it is only over the causes [of these aspects], like the nourishment and healing that lead to the soundness of the organs, that they sometimes have power.

As for “will (*al-irāda*),” its cause is either knowledge of the beneficial; desire; or anger. None of these comes without awareness, and awareness too is something over which the human lacks power. Though sometimes, some of its causes may be an object of his power.

As for whether the act becomes necessary once both power and motivation arise, the truth is that it is indeed necessary. Otherwise the preponderation of one of the two options, either performing the act or refraining from it, would occur without a preponderating factor. This necessity does not, however, render the act involuntary. For “voluntary choice (*al-ikhtiyār*)” means that acting and refraining would both be in accordance with the will of the agent. So he chooses whichever of the two he wills. But at that point, the act must follow from power and will.

If we now focus on the causes of power and will, we find that they have their ultimate origin with God. When they exist, the act is necessary; when they do not, it is impossible. But if we focus on the act [itself], it comes from the human, in accordance with his power and will. For this reason, it should be said: “there is neither determinism nor full empowerment (*lā jabr wa-lā tafwīd*), but rather something in between.” Therefore voluntary choice is true, as is tracing [the act] back to God; the act is not complete with only one of the two.

[*against foreknowledge argument*]

*It has been said*, in favor of determinism, that whatever diverges from what God knows cannot happen, and this implies determinism.

*It was responded:* God the exalted has also known His own acts, eternally in the past and into the future. If determinism and necessitation followed from this in the human case, then it would follow in God’s case. So however you solve the latter problem, that solution can be used as a response for the former problem. *The correct response* is that the knowledge of something might not be cause for it. When someone knows that the sun will rise tomorrow, his knowledge is not a cause of the sunrise. If knowledge has no influence on the act, then the act is neither determined nor necessitated. But God knows best.

[T84] Bar Hebraeus, *Mnārath qudhshē*, vol. 9, 58.20–32

[*God is not the agent of evil human acts*]

We do not say that providence (*bṭilūthā*) by itself and in itself is the agent of that for which free will (*hērūthā*) is the agent. Nor is free will by itself and in itself the agent of that for which the providence is the agent. Rather, providence is the agent of rational actions by means of free will. Sometimes, providence provides help for free will in respect of good actions. Sometimes, free will turns its face away from providence and keeps its hands away from it, and thus slips into evil. This is like a sick person who, when he is led by the good treatment of a doctor, advances towards recovery. But if he refuses to submit himself to medical care and turns to the opposite, then his suffering grows and his torment increases. That is why it is improper to say that if it is the doctor who provides recovery, the sick person’s submitting to his care counts for nothing, while if the sick person’s submission [explains recovery], then the doctor’s attention counts for nothing.

[T85] Bar Hebraeus, *Mnārath qudhshē*, vol. 9, 108.30–110.9

[*God's foreknowledge and free will*]

*We say:* human free will, that is, being in charge of oneself, is nothing but a human's knowing that just as he could tell a lie, so he could refrain from doing so. Furthermore, when he willingly chooses to lie, he lies. Given that every human may have such a capacity, [110] and that every human knows that he necessarily has balanced options, how can anyone say that, if God has already known which human is going to lie, the human cannot but lie? For the human, for his part, is capable of both [lying and not lying], and God knows in advance what the human will do through his free will. It is not the case that whatever God knows in advance, [the human] is compelled (*qtīr*) to do. Otherwise he would lack the capacity to do the opposite. For that kind of compulsion is found neither in the nature of the agent nor in the nature of the act, since, just as the agent is capable of performing the act, so is he capable of the opposite of the act.

[T86] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥā'if*, 385.1–5

[*Isfara'inī and Bāqillānī*]

*Some scholars have said:* the effect is a combination of the power of God the exalted and the power of the human. This is a middle doctrine between determinism (*al-jabr*) and libertarianism (*al-qadar*), and is closest to the truth. Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā'inī adopted this view, because he held that the power of man has its effect due to a helper, namely the power of God the exalted. As did the judge Abū Bakr [al-Bāqillānī], since he said: the basic feature (*aṣl*) of the act, [that is], insofar as it is a case of motion and rest, is through the power of God the exalted, but [these cases specifically] being prayer, or adultery, is through the power of the human.

[T87] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥā'if*, 386.5–9

[*compatibilist response to claim that human acts go back to God*]

*Response:* the preponderating factor is the will of human. Though [the will] is traceable back to the power of God the exalted, it is nonetheless such that [the human will] is what preponderates. If the human is capable of acting and of refraining, and his will preponderates, then he is the one who produces [the action]. The combination of the human's power and his will, and the fact that

both may be traced to the power of God the exalted, does not exclude that both are productive; the fact that the act becomes necessary through them is not incompatible with voluntary choice (*al-ikhtiyār*).

[T88] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 392.9–394.11

[*senses of power and will; compromise, compatibilist view*]

Discerning the two positions, and verifying the truth of the matter, calls for first interpreting “power (*al-qudra*)” and “will (*al-irāda*).”

“Power” is found in theological discussions to have two different interpretations. *First*, what the Muʿtazilites say, namely that it is the soundness of the instruments of action among the bodily organs. On this interpretation, power is specific to humans. It is there before the act, simultaneously with it, and after it; and it is capable of acting and refraining from action. [393] *Second*, [the interpretation of “power”] ascribed to al-Ashʿarī, namely that it is the state (*ḥāla*) the agent is in when the act proceeds from him. On this interpretation, power can only be simultaneous with act, and is not capable of opposites. That is why al-Ashʿarī said that power is simultaneous with act. On this basis, the debate between al-Ashʿarī and others, as to whether power is attached to the moment of acting or not, and whether it is capable of opposites or not, is known to be merely verbal.

But the good, all-encompassing definition [of power] is that it is a potency (*quwwa*) through which the living being is capable of both acting and refraining from action.

As for “will,” it is the inclination (*al-mayl*) of the soul, as you have already learned.

Now that you understand this, *we say*: what proceeds from a human may be through his power and will, like walking voluntarily (*bi-al-irāda*); or it may be like the motion involved in trembling. We have certain knowledge that in the first case, [the agent] is capable of both acting and refraining from action, unlike the second case. One cannot help acknowledging the contrast between the two cases.

Now there is no doubt that power, when taken in any of the three [aforementioned] ways, is not [itself] up to the human’s power; rather it is up to the power

of God the exalted and His wishing to create in the human a power to act or refrain from acting. You have learned that will is the inclination of soul, and it must follow upon [395] an awareness of some benefit, whether real or supposed. Nor is the basic feature of “awareness” up to the power and choice of the human; but rather it arises through creation by God the exalted. If the power of the human and his will occur through the power of God the exalted (to say nothing of the fact that, as we have shown, both also require the power of God the exalted to persist (*al-baqā'*)), then the effect that proceeds from them [in fact] proceeds from the power and will of God the exalted, being [ultimately] an effect of the Cause of causes. But, from the perspective that the effect proceeds through the productivity of the human's power, and in accordance with his will, it is his effect. If one looks at it the first way, [the effect] can be traced back to God the exalted, but if one looks at it the second way, it may be ascribed to the human. Therefore, the productivity of human power and will is genuine, but so is its traceability to the power of God the exalted. It is through both that the act becomes complete. In the current inquiry this is the true position (*ḥaqq*), in accordance with reason, with what is passed down from the Book of God the exalted, and with the statement of the Prophet, peace be upon him, as well as with what is passed down from those who have strong foundation in knowledge: “there is neither determinism nor full empowerment (*lā jabr wa-lā tafwīd*), but rather something in between.” But God knows best.

[T89] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 285.14–16

[*compatibilism and religious obligation*]

God the exalted wants obedience from humans only by way of voluntary choice (*'alā sabīl al-ikhtiyār*), and this can be realized only by willing that which is obligatory. If God the exalted were to will the occurrence of obedience from humans without qualification, regardless whether it would be by choice or by determination (*ijbār*), then [obedience] would happen [no matter what].

[T90] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 286.22–287.1

[*if God's will needs no preponderation, why does human will need it?*]

Most of them allow that the Powerful can preponderate one of two options that fall under His power over the other one, without any [further] preponderating factor. This is how they answer the problem raised against them by the philo-

sophers (*al-falāsifa*). But I do not understand why this response would [287] be acceptable there [in God's case], but not here [in the human case].

[T91] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 287.8–12

[*solution to knowledge argument*]

The bestowal of existence does not imply knowledge. For acts may proceed from the agent by nature alone, as when burning proceeds from fire without knowledge. So denial of knowledge does not imply denial that existence is bestowed. Granted, bestowal of existence along with intention (*al-qaṣd*) does imply knowledge, but even here, “inclusive knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-ijmālī*)” suffices. This is what happens in cases of particular motions, between the start and termination [of the motion].

[T92] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 287.20–22

[*solution to competition argument: God is stronger*]

*We say*: whatever God the exalted wants, happens, because His power is stronger than that of the human. This is the preponderating factor.

[T93] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 288.12–20

[*repetition of action argument*]

[*Al-Ṭūsī*] *said*: in the case of some acts, doing what is similar is difficult, owing to the difficulty of comprehension.

*I say*: this is a response to another problem, mentioned by the early [proponents of determinism], namely that if we were the ones who act, then we would be able to do or not do anything exactly similar to an act we have performed, given the existence [in us] of power and knowledge. But the consequent is false, therefore the antecedent is too. *Explanation for the falsehood of the consequent*: we cannot write at a second time something exactly similar to what we have written the first time. Rather, there is inevitably some difference in the position of the letters and their size.

*Establishing the response*: some acts do proceed from us at a second time similar to what has proceeded from us the first time, as in many cases of motion

and action. But some are difficult for us [to repeat], not because it is impossible, but because we lack complete comprehension of what we do and do not do. So if we fail to grasp the size of the letters, similar ones will proceed from us only by chance.



## Good and Evil

In modern-day philosophy of religion, one of the most avidly discussed topics is the problem of evil. It poses a challenge for theists, namely that evil seems difficult to reconcile with the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good God. Actually two versions of the problem are treated in the current literature. The “logical” problem of evil contends that there is a straightforward contradiction between the existence of evil and the existence of God. The “evidential” problem allows that while some evil might be allowed to exist by God—for instance, to facilitate meaningful free will—the amount and nature of suffering in the world is overwhelming evidence against God’s existence.

The medieval philosophical traditions also had two versions of the problem of evil, which we might call the “justification problem” and the “causation problem.” The justification problem is the one that modern-day philosophers of religion worry about: given that God would seem to have the motive and ability to eliminate evil, why doesn’t He do so? The causation problem is: how can evil derive, however indirectly, from a good first cause? This version of the problem is similar to other questions familiar from Avicenna’s philosophy, for instance how multiplicity can come from Him given that He is purely one, or how matter or material things can come from Him even though He is immaterial.

Avicenna’s treatment of evil is complicated, in part because he seeks to address both problems.<sup>1</sup> A fundamental feature of his view, which he borrows from the Neoplatonic tradition, is the idea that evil is mere privation, a lack of some good, or of some perfection [T1]. A paradigm example would be blindness, which is simply the eye’s failure to have the power it ought to have. This

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1 On the topic see M. Rashed, “Théodicée et approximation: Avicenne,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 10 (2000), 223–257; S. Inati, *The Problem of Evil: Ibn Sinā’s Theodicy*, (Binghamton: 2000); C. Steel, “Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas on Evil,” in J. Janssens and D. De Smet (eds), *Avicenna and his Heritage*, (Leuven: 2002), 171–196; R. Fontaine, “ ‘Happy is He Whose Children Are Boys’: Abraham Ibn Daud and Avicenna on Evil,” in D.N. Hasse and A. Bertolacci (eds), *The Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin Reception of Avicenna’s Metaphysics* (Berlin: 2011), 159–176; A. Shihadeh, “Avicenna’s Theodicy and al-Rāzī’s Anti-Theodicy,” *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 7 (2019), 61–84; H. Erlwein, “Ibn Sinā’s Moral Ontology and Theory of Law,” in P. Adamson (ed.), *Philosophy and Jurisprudence in the Islamic World* (Berlin: 2019), 29–52; J. Kaukua, “The Question of Providence and the Problem of Evil in Suhrawardī,” in S. Rizvi & M. Terrier (ed.), *The Problem of Evil: A Challenge to Shi’i Theology in Islamic Philosophy* (Leiden: 2021).

move allows Avicenna to say that everything, that is, everything that *exists*, does come from God. All existents are the necessary consequence of His knowledge, and partake in His goodness, precisely by existing. This is what Avicenna means by “providence” [T2]. From all of which it is already obvious that evil is essential to only those things that are nothing by themselves, such as blindness. In other cases, when we do have *something* that is evil in relation to something else (such as fire burning someone’s clothing), the privations that we call “evil” are “accidental” [T1]. Avicenna explains that there is nothing bad about fire as such. Its burning is essential and thus good for it, but accidentally bad for something that falls into fire and burns. Even such obviously bad things as injustice are not anything bad by themselves. In fact, in relation to those who perform injustice, or to their irascible faculty, injustice might be something good. This account is further explained by al-Rāzī, al-Ṭūsī and Ibn Kammūna [T34, T54, T65].

On these grounds, Avicenna develops his solution to the problem of evil. Evil is an inevitable result of things pursuing ends that are good for them, but at cross-purposes to one another [T3]. Fire is essentially such that when something falls into it, it burns. It is not God’s fault that it happens. Even God would not be able to stop fire from burning, since it is metaphysically impossible to go against essential dispositions. It is nobody’s fault, not even an “act of God” as we sometimes say, but a metaphysical necessity. This solution was widely adopted by a few post-Avicennan authors, such as Bahmanyār, al-Khayyām, al-Suhrawardī, Ibn Kammūna [T9, T11, T46, T61]. To the worry that Avicenna’s position would undermine divine omnipotence, al-Shahrazūrī says that the idea of divine omnipotence is a fairytale for people who lack philosophical understanding [T70]. Al-Shahrastānī is not impressed by Avicenna’s solution to the problem of evil, though. Even if the burning is caused directly by fire, isn’t it still ultimately traced back to God [T24]?

Furthermore, argues Avicenna, good predominates over these accidental evils [T4], with essential goodness prevailing in the world as one would expect given the universal rule of divine providence. In addition to the obvious good we can see in this world, there is the prospect of reward in the afterlife. As for punishment and suffering in the afterlife, this is a just penalty for misdeeds and is not something to be blamed on God [T5], followed by al-Suhrawardī at [T48]. Also, the prospect of punishment is salutary because it provides a “deterrent” (*takhwīf*) against bad behavior [T5]. In fact, punishment in the afterlife is matter of “greater good.” More people are deterred from committing sins by the example of people punished for their sins than there are people punished. Notice that with these last points, Avicenna is shifting his attention from the problem of causation to the problem of justification. If all he sought to explain is how evils can be traced back to a good source, it would be enough to explain

that things are good insofar as they come from that source, that is, insofar as they exist. The point about the predominance of the good is required only to answer the question why God did not refrain from creating a world with so much privative and accidental evil in it. As noted by Avicenna and often by later authors, it would be a greater evil to refrain from creating the world if more good were thereby lost, than evil avoided [T3, T9, T10, T35, T63]. This, by the way, would be a possible response to the “evidential” problem of evil mentioned above. Yes, there is much evil in the world. But there is even more good, and one cannot have the latter without the former.

Though the privation theory of evil was not original to Avicenna, it was distinctive of him that he so clearly identified good with existence. His successors saw this as an account that could compete with those developed within the *kalām* tradition. Good and evil were at the center of disputes between the Mu‘tazilite and Ash‘arite theological schools. Leaving aside the subtle differences internal to the two school traditions, which are laid out in [T73], we can frame the disagreement as one between a rationalist account of good and evil, and a voluntarist account that traces good and evil to God’s commands [T27, T36, T58]. As al-Shahrastānī succinctly puts it [T27], the Mu‘tazilites held that “reason (*‘aql*)”<sup>2</sup> indicates the goodness and badness of acts, in the sense that God the exalted must reward and praise whoever does good, and must punish and blame whoever does bad, whereas the Ash‘arites said that “good” is whatever God commands and rewards, and “bad” whatever He forbids and punishes.<sup>3</sup>

Now, the Mu‘tazilites did not need to say that *all* obligations and prohibitions can be determined by reason. For instance it would be hard to believe that natural reason could discover the obligation to pray five times a day, or perform a pilgrimage to Mecca. (Even if we somehow figured out that prayer and pilgrimage are called for, why exactly five times? And why Mecca?) So we should be more careful and say, as Ibn al-Malāḥimī does in [T12] cf. [T73], that for the Mu‘tazilites *some* obligations can be known by reason, while others are

2 In this chapter we often translate *‘aql* as “reason”; in other contexts we have often rendered it as “intellect.”

3 For earlier views on good and evil in the Mu‘tazilite tradition see e.g. M. Heemskerk, *Suffering in the Mu‘tazilite Theology: ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Teaching on Pain and Divine Justice* (Leiden: 2000); R. El Omari, *The Theology of Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī/al-Ka‘bī (d. 319/931)* (Leiden: 2016); S. Vasalou, *Moral Agents and Their Deserts: The Character of Mu‘tazilite Ethics* (Princeton: 2008). Further reading on the debate between the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites on good and bad includes M. Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: Brill 1994); G. Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge: 2009); M. al-Attar, *Islamic Ethics: Divine Command Theory in Arabo-Islamic Thought* (New York: 2010).

imposed by revelation, for reasons explained at [T13]. Some Mu‘tazilites formulated it as the rule that the goodness or badness of a given action is due to an attribute or “aspect” that belong to it by its very nature [T18, T76].<sup>4</sup> A frequently mentioned case is lying, which is known by reason to be bad, so that reasonable people always prefer to tell the truth, all else being equal [T16, T29]. A clever twist on this is that, if we didn’t know lying to be bad, we could not trust in God’s revelation as a source of obligation anyway, since we need to know that God, being good, will not lie to us [T72, T77].<sup>5</sup> In favor of the Mu‘tazilite position, we may also point out a counterintuitive consequence of the voluntarist theory, namely that good and evil as we know them could have been reversed [T77]. God could have, for instance, made it good to lie and evil to tell the truth, or good to murder the innocent and evil to offer them help.

In favor of their divine command theory, though, the Ash‘arites pointed out that no type of action is in fact *invariably* good or bad. This shows that actions do not have their normative features as essential attributes, as the Mu‘tazilites believed. The fact that we find some things agreeable by nature, and others disagreeable, does not show that they have intrinsic moral value and disvalue [T39]. Indeed “naturally” good things are sometimes bad, and vice-versa. For example, lying may be beneficial if it achieves a desirable outcome [T28] or if one has promised to tell a lie and thus, ironically, needs to lie in order to be a truth-teller [T38]; see also the response to this scenario at [T78]. Lying and truth-telling are, in themselves, value-neutral [T31]. Against this line of argument, Ibn al-Malāḥimī denies that he and other Mu‘tazilites are only appealing to natural preference and aversion, since these are in fact distinct from the judgments of reason [T17, cf. T59].

If actions do not have their moral value intrinsically, as the Ash‘arites insist, then where does the value come from? At first glance the Aš‘arite answer is simple: it comes from God’s commands. But actually their position is more nuanced than that. Though they reject the grounding of moral judgments in real attributes of things, they do recognize the possibility of harm and benefit for moral agents. Already al-Ash‘arī allowed that “good” and “bad” can be used

4 See A. Shihadeh, “Theories of Ethical Value in Kalām,” in S. Schmidtke (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 384–407, esp. 392.

5 The idea that we use reason to establish the reliability of prophecy and revelation is found prominently in al-Ġazālī’s *Deliverer from Error* and also defended by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. For the former see P. Adamson, *Don’t Think for Yourself: Authority and Belief in Medieval Philosophy* (Notre Dame: 2022), ch. 3; for the latter see T. Jaffer, *Rāzī. Master of Qur’ānic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning* (New York: 2015), ch. 3.

to refer to that which is harmful and beneficial, in light of the inborn dispositions created in us by God: “what is bad is avoided for the imperfection and harm that it results in for one who does it, and the good and wise act is chosen because of the benefit and perfection that it results in for one who does it.”<sup>6</sup> So the reason it is “good” for us to follow God’s Law and bad to violate it is that this is *in our interests*. For any given agent, good and bad are always relative to the agent’s goals and are thus subjective [T6]. Al-Rāzī adopts a hedonist version of the subjectivist thesis, according to which good and bad always have to do with the agent’s present and prospective pleasure and pain [T40].<sup>7</sup>

Having grounded normativity in self-interest, the Ash‘arites face the difficulty of explaining cases of pure altruism, where one person helps another despite having nothing to gain from it. The Aš‘arites simply bite the bullet here, insisting that pure altruism does not really exist and finding reasons connected to self-interest to explain why a reasonable person would help another even without hope of praise or other reward [T7, T42]. They bite another bullet when it comes to a further puzzle that rationalists can pose: given that God has no goals and is not subject to His own commands, how can He be good? To this the Aš‘arites simply respond that God transcends good and evil [T6, T41]. If what He does is “more appropriate” this is on the side of the thing God makes, not in the sense of being more appropriate for God [T74, T75].

In light of their account of normativity and their strong commitment to divine omnipotence, which makes God the creator of all things including human actions, the Ash‘arites face a very specific version of the problem of evil. This would be a special case of what we have called the “justification problem”: given that God commands us to perform certain acts and avoid others, why has He created our bad actions and failed to create the good ones we should have performed but didn’t? For their full answer to this question, the reader should consult our chapter on Free Will, Determinism, and Human Action; for the importance of voluntary choice see also [T37] in this chapter. But in this context we can firstly repeat the point just made, that God is beyond good and evil so it makes no sense to accuse Him of failing to do what he “ought” to have done. That is why the Ash‘arites are willing to accept that even bad things do fall under God’s will [T8, T79]. This is denied by the Mu‘tazilites, consistently with their position that human agents can originate their own actions [T20]. An Avicennan version of the Ash‘arite view is presented by al-Shahrastānī, who

6 Report of Ibn Fūrak, quoted from A. Shihadeh, “Theories of Ethical Value in *Kalām*,” 399.

7 See further A. Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Leiden: 2006), and for al-Rāzī’s response to Mu‘tazilism, S. Çetin, “Hüsn ve Kubh Konusunda Fahreddin Er-Rāzī’nin Mu‘tezile’ye Yönelik Eleştirileri,” *Edebali İslamiyat Dergisi* 2 (2018), 81–110.

says that God bestows only *existence* on bad human actions. Since existence is good, as Avicenna held, this absolves God from blame [T21, T22].

These passages show how Avicenna's ideas about good and evil were integrated into this long-running and pivotal disagreement of the *kalām* tradition. For an even more explicit attempt to do this, we can turn to al-Shahrastānī in [T30] and al-Āmidī in [T50]. They see the "philosophers" as agreeing with the Mu'tazilite view, since the philosophers would allow reason to judge things as good without recourse to the religious Law. Comments made by al-Ṭūsī bear this out: he identifies practical reason (*al-aql al-'amalī*) as the faculty by which we determine what is good or beneficial [T53]. But other authors felt that Avicenna's views were basically irrelevant to the *kalām* debates, because of his determinism. Ibn al-Malāḥimī thought that, while Avicenna did have to deal with the problem of evil's *causation*, he really had no need to address its *justification*, since according to Avicenna God could not have done anything differently anyway [T14]. This point is repeated by al-Rāzī [T35], who is even more explicit in saying that Avicenna's account of "deterrent," which as we saw is part of his justification of God, is superfluous in his deterministic system [T43]. More generally al-Rāzī claims that "providence" must mean something quite different for the philosophers than it means for those who accept God's voluntary agency [T33]. True to form, al-Ṭūsī jumps to defend Avicenna at [T57].

Of course, a fundamental contrast between the Avicennan normative theory and those that emerged in *kalām* was that Avicenna defined evil as privation and non-existence, rather than as violation of God's Law or of reason. But as we already saw, the equation of existence with goodness came in handy for al-Shahrastānī in exculpating God. Other authors who argue in favor of this equivalence include Bahmanyār, 'Umar al-Khayyām, al-Ṭūsī, Bar Hebraeus, and Ibn Kammūna [T9, T11, T54, T62, T67]. Bar Hebraeus even combines the privation theory with an Ash'arite conception of good and evil as the beneficial and harmful [T66].<sup>8</sup> But there were numerous critics [T32], some of whom offered counterexamples: pain exists but is bad [T24, T35, T47], and demons likewise [T26], while for other things, like stones, existence is neither good nor bad [T15]. Al-Ṭūsī considers and responds to an interesting objection, namely that we sometimes say people, for instance those in agonizing pain, would be "better off not existing." This shows that non-existence is sometimes good rather than bad [T60]. Al-Āmidī raises the worry that Avicenna's theory may imply that evil is caused by God after all, since it is contingent and everything con-

<sup>8</sup> See further F. Benevich, "Bar Hebraeus on Evil," *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 73 (2021), 191–218.

tingent must be preponderated by God [T51]. Of course Avicenna would deny this, since what causes evil is the inevitable incompatibility of some essences with some other. This incompatibility cannot be traced back to God.<sup>9</sup>

Avicenna's claim is that evil arises only as an accident or inevitable by-product of essential goods. Again this view is discussed by a number of authors, including al-Khayyām, al-Shahrastānī, al-Rāzī, al-Suhrawardī, al-Ṭūsī, and Ibn Kammūna [T11, T22, T23, T34, T45, T54, T61]. What is bad from one point of view may be good from another [T52, T65]. And the great scheme of things, which is of course good, requires evils. For instance evil, or at least lesser good, is needed so that individuals and classes of things may be distinguished from one another [T64, T71]. Also, death and destruction are necessary, because each generation needs to make way for the next [T69]. In short, we live in the best possible world, because God has made the world in accordance with His perfect wisdom and knowledge [T70]. As al-Suhrawardī puts it, the world displays a "universal order" or "arrangement" that contains incidental, unavoidable evils that are not, as such, willed by God [T44, T46, T49].

It seems plausible that if the best possible world had more evil in it than good, God would not have created it. This is why Avicenna insisted that good outweighs evil in our world. Unsurprisingly many agree [T55, T56, T70]; see also the passages mentioned above where it is argued that more good would be lost than evil eliminated, if God failed to create the universe. But al-Shahrastānī did not necessarily agree, since he thought that humans are more often wicked than righteous in their use of free will. Still, the voluntary evils in question are "relative," not essential, and of course God's own acts are always good [T25]. That last point is a conclusion Avicenna could have reached from another direction: since God is pure existence and existence is goodness, God is the pure good. That sounds like something all authors in our period would want to endorse, but even here there is diversity of opinion, as al-Shahrazūrī suggests that intelligible substances other than God might claim the title of pure goodness [T68].

Texts from Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, Bahmanyār, al-Khayyām, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, al-Shahrastānī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Suhrawardī, al-Āmidī, al-Nasafī, al-Ṭūsī, Bar Hebraeus, Ibn Kammūna, al-Shahrazūrī, al-Samarqandī, al-Ḥillī.

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9 On the essential independence of things from God see also the chapter on Non-Existence in the present volume.

## Good and Evil

[T1] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt* IX.6, 339.13–340.13 [trans. Marmura, mod.]

[*evil as non-existence or privation*]

Know that evil (*al-sharr*) is spoken of in several senses. Thus, “evil” is said of what is akin to deficiency, namely ignorance, weakness, and deformity in physiognomy. “Evil” is [also] said of what is like pain and distress, which consist in an apprehending of something in virtue of a cause, not merely in the lack of a cause. (a) For the cause that negates the good, impedes the good, and yields its nonexistence, is sometimes a separate thing that is not perceived by that which is harmed, as when the clouds cast shade and prevent the sun’s shining on that which needs the sun to perfect itself. If that which is in need is capable of perception, it will perceive that it does not benefit, but it will not perceive that the clouds have intervened as part of it. It will rather [perceive it] inasmuch as it can see. But it is not inasmuch as it can see [340] that it is harmed, afflicted, or suffers some deficiency in this situation. It [is rather harmed] inasmuch as it is some other thing. (b) Then sometimes [the cause of evil] may not be separate, and may be perceived by someone who is impaired, as when someone who loses integrity (*ittiṣāl*) in an organ because of a rupturing heat. For, inasmuch as he perceives the loss of integrity through a power in that very organ, he also apprehends the harmful heat. So in this case, two perceptions are combined: one, along the lines described above, perceiving non-existent things, another, as also described above, perceiving existing things. This existing object of perception is not evil in itself, but only relative to this thing. As for being imperfect and impaired, this is not an evil merely in relation to [the thing] such that [the imperfection] would have an existence that is not an evil for [that thing]. Rather, its very existence is nothing but an evil in it, and is an evil in the very manner of its being. For blindness can be only in the eye, and inasmuch as it is in the eye can only be an evil, having no other aspect in terms of which it would not be an evil. But heat, for example, may become an evil relative to the one who suffers from it, but it has another aspect in terms of which it is not an evil. Thus, evil is in itself (*bi-al-dhāt*) privation, but not just any privation: only privation of what the thing’s nature demands, in terms of the perfections that belong permanently to its species and nature. But evil is accidentally (*bi-al-ʿaraḍ*) the nonexistent, or that which impedes perfection for what should have it.



[T2] Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 333.7–12 [trans. Inati, mod.]

[*providence and the best order*]

Providence is the First's comprehensive knowledge of the universe, and of how the universe must be so that it may have the best order, and of the fact that it is necessarily derived from Him and from His comprehension of it. Thus the existent corresponds to what is known, in the best order, without any intention or search proceeding from the First, the Truth. Therefore the First's knowledge of the manner of the befitting arrangement of the existence of the universe is the source for the emanation of good in the universe.

[T3] Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 333.14–335.4 [trans. Inati, mod.]

[*necessity of evil*]

Things that are contingent in existence include those whose existence can be entirely free of evil, disorder, [334] and corruption; those that cannot attain excellence without some evil's accidentally arising from them when motions cross and moving things clash; and also in [this] classification, there are things that are evil either absolutely or for the most part. If the pure good is the principle of the emanation of existence that is good and befitting, then there is necessarily emanation of the first type [of existent], for instance the existence of the intellectual substances, and the like. Likewise the second type emanates necessarily. For if great good failed to exist and were not produced to avoid a small evil, then great evil would result. Take for instance the creation of fire: fire would not provide its benefit or give its full help to perfect existence, without being such as to harm and damage whatever animal bodies happen to collide with it. The same goes for animal bodies. They cannot acquire their excellence without being such that they can be harmed by their states of motion and rest, and also the states of fire, for instance, that lead to coming together and collisions that produce harm. For their states and the states of things in the world [around them] lead them to make mistakes in their obligations which lead to injury in the afterlife, and concerning the truth. Or, [it may lead to] excessive and dominating agitation worked by desire or anger, which leads to injury in the affairs of the afterlife. The abovementioned powers would not be sufficient without being such that, when [335] collisions occur, error may accidentally befall them, and dominating agitation. But this happens to individuals that are fewer in number than those who are safe, and at times less frequent than the times of safety. This being known by primary providence, it is as if it is inten-

ded accidentally. Thus evil enters determination (*al-qadar*) accidentally, as if it were “pleasing,” one might say, accidentally.

[T4] Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 335.6–336.4 [trans. Inati, mod.]

[*predominance of the good*]

You may say that the majority of people are dominated by ignorance, or obedience to desire and anger. Why then is this sort [of evil] said to be unusual for them? Learn that the states of the body in its disposition are three: the state of the one who excels in beauty and health, that of one who is average in these two respects, and that of ugliness, sickliness, or disease. The first and the second [types of person] receive [respectively] an abundant or moderate portion of worldly and physical happiness, or they are [simply] saved. Similarly, the states of the soul in its disposition are three. First, the state of the one who has attained full excellence in mind and character, who will have the highest degree of happiness in the future life. Second, the state of one who has not attained this [level], especially regarding the intelligibles, yet whose ignorance is no impediment to the afterlife, even if he does not have a large store of knowledge that would be very [336] useful for the afterlife. Still this person is among those who are saved, and receive a portion of goods in the hereafter. Finally one who, like the ill or sickly, will be harmed in the next life. Both extremes are unusual, the middle being prevalent and predominant. If [the intermediate group] is added to the virtuous extreme, [the number] of people saved turns out to be abundantly predominant.

[T5] Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 337.9–338.11 [trans. Inati, mod.]

[*punishment and the Muʿtazilite view of our knowledge of good*]

Perhaps you will also say: if there is destiny (*al-qadar*), then why is there punishment? Consider the following answer. Punishment of the soul due to its sin is, as you shall learn, like the body’s disease due to its gluttony: it is a necessary consequence to which past conditions lead, whose occurrence inevitably gives rise to the occurrence of their consequences. It’s another story when it comes to the other kind of punishment, which has an external principle. Furthermore, if an external punisher is admitted, this too will be good, since [338] a deterrent (*al-takhwīf*) must exist among established causes, so that for the most part it is useful. Belief [in punishment] ensures deterrent. So even if it happens that, because of destiny, someone goes against what the deterrent and considera-

tion require, doing wrong and committing a crime, still there must be belief [in punishment] for the sake of the common end, even if it is not applicable to that person and not required by the Willing, the Merciful. If there were nothing here apart from the person afflicted by destiny, there would not be much common, universal utility in his particular destruction. But one should disregard the particular for the sake of the universal, just as one disregards the part for the sake of the whole. Hence a painful organ may be severed in order to save the whole body.

As for what we gather is said about injustice and justice, and about acts (*af'āl*) that are called unjust and acts contrary to these, and about the need to forsake the former acts and adopt the latter, all on the grounds that these are primary premises, [we say that] they are not of universal necessity. Rather, most of them are among widely accepted premises agreed upon for the sake of well-being (*al-maṣāliḥ*).

[T6] Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtisād*, 162.2–7; 163.1–7; 164.8–165.12 [trans. Yaqub, mod.]

[*Ash'arite definitions of "good" and "bad" as agent-relative*]

Indeed, what is specifically called "obligatory" (*wājib*) is that act the refraining from which leads to evident harm. If this harm occurs in the next life, I mean the hereafter, and is known through the revelation, we call the act "obligatory," and if the harm obtains in this world and is known through reason, in this case too the act might be called "obligatory." Someone who does not believe in the revelation might say it is obligatory for a hungry person who is dying of hunger to eat if he finds bread. He means by "eating is obligatory" that doing so it is preponderant over refraining from doing so, because of the harm that is caused by refraining from it. We do not forbid this convention according to the law. [...]

[163.1] As for the term "good" (*ḥasan*), its meaning is determined through a tripartite division of how an act may relate to the agent. First, [the act] may be suitable for him, that is, it serves his purpose; second, it may be contrary to his purpose (*gharad*); third, it may serve no purpose for him to perform it or refrain from doing so. This division is established by the intellect. That act which is suitable for the agent is called "good" for him; its being "good" means nothing other than its suiting his purpose. The act that is contrary to his purpose is called "bad" (*qabīḥ*); its being "bad" means nothing but its being contrary to his purpose. The act that is neither contrary to nor suitable to his purpose is called

“frivolity,” (*‘abath*); that is, there is no benefit in it at all. Someone who engages in frivolities is called “frivolous” and might be called “foolish” (*saḥīh*). Someone who does what is “bad,” that is, an action that is harmful for him, is [also] called “foolish,” and the name “foolish” is more applicable to him than to the frivolous. [...]

[164.8] This conclusively shows that good and bad, for all people, refer to two relational items that vary owing to relations, and not essential attributes (*ṣifāt al-dhawāt*) that do not vary by relation. It is surely possible [165] that a thing is good with respect to Zayd and bad with respect to ‘Amr, whereas it is not possible that a thing is black with respect to Zayd and white with respect to ‘Amr, since colors are not relational qualities (*al-awṣāf al-idāfiyya*).

Now that you understand the meaning, you should know there are also three usages for the term “good.” One may use it for whatever serves a purpose, whether the purpose is near at hand or far in the future. Or one may use it specifically for what serves a purpose in the hereafter; and this is what the revelation deems good, that is, it exhorts its performance and promises a reward for it. This is how our companions [i.e. the Ash‘arites] use it. [...]

[165.10] There is a third usage of “good,” as when it is said: “an act of God is good no matter what, even though God has no purpose with respect to Himself.” This means there are no repercussions for God or blame of Him because of the act, for He is the agent in His kingdom, in which no one else has a share.

[T7] Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtisād*, 166.4–9; 170.1–171.6 [trans. Yaqub, mod.]

[*against the absolute understanding of “bad”*]

A person might use the term “bad” for what is contrary to his purpose, even though it is in accordance with the purpose of someone else. But he pays no heed to the other person—everyone is by nature preoccupied with himself and places little value on everything else—and hence he judges the act to be absolutely bad. He might say that it is intrinsically (*fi ‘aynihi*) bad, but in fact his reason is that it is bad with respect to him, in the sense that it is contrary to his purpose, as if his purposes were the whole world with respect to him. Thus he imagines that what is contrary to his purpose is contrary in itself, and accordingly he relates badness to the essence of the thing and makes an absolute judgment. [...]

[*altruism objection and response*]

[170.1] *Someone might say:* your view comes down to the claim that good and bad reduce to what is suitable to, or contrary to, purposes. But we see that the reasonable person deems good that in which he has no benefit, and deems bad that in which he does have benefit. Regarding deeming something good: a person may see a human being or an animal about to die, and would deem it good to save him, even with a drink of water, although he does not believe in the revelation and does not expect a reward for it in this life, and it is not performed in view of people, so that cannot expect praise for it. In fact, one could stipulate that he has no purpose in view, and still he would prefer saving [the victim] over ignoring him, because he deems the former good and the latter bad. [...]

[171.1] Regarding the person who does not believe in revelation and yet prefers to save rather than to ignore a victim, the elimination of the harm that will befall a person is a part of human empathy, and is a nature from which it is impossible to detach oneself. He imagines oneself to be in the same predicament, and supposes that another is able to save him but refrains from doing so, and realizes that he would deem this bad. Then he goes back to himself and imagines that person who is about to die to be himself; by nature he feels aversion to what the person who is about to die thinks of him; and thus he eliminates this aversion from his soul by saving the victim.

[T8] Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtisād*, 107.12–108.5 [trans. Yaqub, mod.]

[*everything, even the “bad”, is the object of God’s will*]

Now you should know that, according to us, [divine will] attaches to all originated things, insofar as it has become apparent that everything originated was created by God’s power, and whatever power creates requires a will to direct the power to the object of power, and specify [the power] for it. Hence every object of power is willed, and every originated thing is an object of power, therefore every originated thing is willed. Evil, unbelief, [108] and sin are all originated things; therefore they are inevitably willed by God. [...]

[108.3] As for the Mu‘tazilites, they say that all sins and all evil deeds are committed against God’s will; in fact, He is averse to them. It is well-known that most of what takes place in this world is sin. So he is averse to more things than He wills. So, according to what they claim, He is closer to impotence and deficiency. May the Lord of the worlds be exalted over what these benighted men say!

[T9] Bahmanyār, *Tahṣīl*, 658.7–660.12

[*evil as clash of goods*]

As for the existence of different kinds of evil (*al-sharr*) in this world and how they enter into divine decree (*al-qaḍāʾ*), it is as I say: it is known that contingent quiddities have no causes (*sabab*) for their essences or for being contingent, nor for needing an cause (*ʿilla*) for their existence. Nor [do contingent quiddities have] a cause for being contrary (*al-mutaḍāddīn*) and hindering each other in existence. Nor is there a cause for the fact that everything originated is perishable. Nor is there a cause for the fact that the contingent falls short of the existence of the essentially necessary existent, or for its deficiency in comparison to the rank (*rutba*) [of the necessary existent]. Nor is there a cause of fire's burning, or for the burned thing's being susceptible to burning. For all these are constituents of quiddities and the nature of the elements, or among the concomitants of [this nature]. This is why one observes that the final ends (*ghāyāt*) of some existents harms other existents, or [659] corrupts them. For instance the final end of the irascible faculty harms the intellect even though it is good (*khayran*) in respect of the irascible faculty. You have learned previously about the necessities that follow upon final ends.

[*evil as privation and potentiality*]

Evil does not attach to anything whose existence at the utmost degree of perfection, and in which there is no potentiality. The reason is that evil is the privation of existence (*ʿadam wujūd*), or of the perfection of existence (*kamāl wujūd*), and all this [sc. privation] holds [only] insofar as something is in potentiality.

[*different degrees of good*]

There is a gradation of deficiency in comparison to the rank of the First. For instance, the deficiency of the Earth in comparison to His rank is greater than that of the Sun. All this is due to the difference between the quiddities in themselves. If the deficiency in all quiddities were alike, then the quiddities would all be one and the same. And just as there is gradation in the quiddities of species, so likewise in the quiddities of individuals that fall under the species.

[*absolute good and accidental evil*]

You should know that there is much evil in the natural world, yet it is not predominant. Furthermore, even though one conceives the concomitants of all final ends and [corresponding] necessities as evil in relation to some things,

they are not without good. One may know this on the grounds that they are concomitants of the absolute good. Good is decreed [by God] essentially, whereas evil is decreed accidentally. Whatever is decreed is predestined (*muqaddar*). By “accidentally” we mean that, if we relate [evil] to that in which there is a benefit for us, then it will be accidentally [evil]. Yet it is the same to say that everything is good and that everything is predestined, for it is all willed by the First. You know that He Himself is the final end for every existent and that everything relates to Him in the same way.

[*universal good and relative evil*]

Furthermore, if something is evil in relation to something else, this does not mean that it is evil in terms of the order of the universe. Rather it might [660] be good in relation to the universal order. Hence, there is no evil in relation to the universe, and everything that has been decreed is predestined. In general, even though each individual may be deficient in relation to another and each species deficient in relation to another, still it is perfect in itself. [Even] injustice, despite being evil, is good in relation to the irascible faculty.

[*the necessity of evil*]

It would be wrong to say that the First Governor could bestow existence upon a pure good that is free from evil. For this [sc. pure goodness] is necessary in absolute existence, but not necessary in each single existence. So [God] bestowed existence upon whatever could exist in that way, and bestowed existence upon whatever could exist without being free of evil. If He had not bestowed existence upon that which is not free from evil, this would be an even greater evil. Therefore the existence of this contrast is not without good. The evil in it is only in respect of the privation that harms it. If everything were non-existent, and there were no existence at all, then that would be more rightly called evil. If on the other hand He created everything free from evil, with one and the same state and attribute, then there would be only one quiddity.

[T10] Al-Khayyām, *Kawn wa-taklīf*, 143.2–6

[*the necessity of evil*]

*If someone asks, why did He create contraries and mutual hindrances in existence? We respond:* withholding a great good because of a small evil is itself a great evil. Neither universal true wisdom nor universal generosity distributes essential perfections to all existents in such a way that it would unjustly lessen the lot of any of them. Still, there is a gradation in nobility due to their

closeness and remoteness [to and from God]. This does not happen because of miserliness on the part of the True, the exalted, but due to the requirements of everlasting wisdom.

[T11] Al-Khayyām, *Jawāb ‘an thalāth masā’il*, 167.19–169.6

[*evil as privation*]

Contingent existents emanate from the sanctified existence in an order and arrangement. Then, there are among existents those that are necessarily contrary to each other, without anyone making them [to be such]. If such an existent comes into existence, contrariety comes into existence necessarily; [168] and if contrariety comes into existence necessarily, then privation (*‘adam*) comes into existence necessarily; and if privation comes into existence then evil comes into existence necessarily.

[*accidental evil*]

*Someone may say:* the Necessary Existent bestows existence on blackness and heat, so that contrariety comes into existence, since if A is the cause of B, and B the cause of C, then A is the cause of C.

He has said something correct and true, with no confusion in it. However the discussion on this topic must fit the purpose: namely that the Necessary Existent bestowed existence upon blackness, so that necessarily contrariety exists, and hence the Necessary Existent bestowed existence on contrariety among concrete things accidentally, not essentially. No doubt may be raised against this. He did not, however, make blackness contrary to whiteness. He bestowed existence on blackness not insofar as it is contrary to whiteness, but only insofar as its quiddity is contingently existent. Every contingently existent quiddity is brought into existence by the Necessary Existent, since existence itself is good. However blackness is a quiddity that cannot help but be contrary to something else. So whoever bestows existence on blackness insofar as it is contingently existent comes to bestow existence accidentally on contrariety. So evil is not related to whomever bestows existence on blackness in any respect, if the primary purpose—but God is exalted above having any purpose, so rather the true everlasting providence—is oriented towards the good. This kind of good, though, cannot be free of evil and privation. Hence, evil is related to Him only accidentally, but we are speaking here not about the accidental but the essential. [...]



[*predominance of good*]

[168.19] *There is another question* which is very simple for those who inquire well into metaphysics: why did He bestow existence upon something, knowing that privation and evil would follow upon it?

[169] *Response to this:* blackness, for instance, has a thousand goods but only one evil. Withholding from willing a thousand goods because of one evil is an enormous evil, given that the relation between the good of blackness and its evilness is larger than the relation of many thousands to one. This being so, it is clear that the evil that exists in the creatures of God, the exalted, is accidental, not essential and that evil is very little in the first wisdom, so it cannot be compared in quantity and quality to good.

[T12] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 135.4–12

[*reason and the Law as sources of obligation*]

The Muslims say, concerning [religious obligation and the Law], that God the exalted created those who are endowed with reason to have [religious] obligation, by which they mean that He, the exalted, required them to act out the necessary things which are hard [to achieve], but avoid the bad ones, which are hard to avoid. He recommended that they should do the recommended things, which are hard [to achieve], those being of two kinds, rational and legal (*‘aqliyya wa-shar‘iyya*). The rational ones are those whose judgments are grasped by reason. The rationally necessary is, for instance, the need to offer thanks in gratitude, reject whatever harms the soul, and make fair judgments over one’s servant, such as the need to return what was borrowed, or the paying of debts. The legal ones are for instance the need to pray, tithe, fast, go on the pilgrimage, and so on. As for bad [acts], the rational ones are injustice, lying, futility, demanding what is bad, and so on. The legal ones are for instance wicked usury, adultery, drinking wine, and so on. The rationally recommended are for instance showing benevolence towards others, while the legal would be for instance supererogatory prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage.

[T13] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 136.1–9

[*the purpose of religious obligation*]

[The Muslims] say that God, the exalted, created those who are endowed with reason to have [religious] obligation. The reason is that He, the exalted, would otherwise have created them for no purpose, so that their creation would be futile and bad, which is absurd. Therefore He must have created them for a purpose. This purpose cannot have to do with Himself, since nothing can benefit or harm Him, the exalted. So the purpose can only have to do with those who are endowed with reason. He cannot have created them in order to harm them without their deserving this or benefiting from it, since this would be terrible injustice. Therefore He can only have created them in order to benefit them and show benevolence towards them. The utmost benevolence is the reward, as we have described it. So He can only have created them for that. However, it is only good to perform the utmost benevolence for those who deserve it, since it would not be good to exalt [the creature] from the outset, given that it would involve bringing him to greatness, a greatness that would not be good unless it were deserved. Don't you see that it would not be good for us to declare people of low stature to be great, as if they were prophets and sages?

[T14] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 141.19–142.3

[*how the problem of evil is and is not relevant for the philosophers*]

Why does this question even arise for you [philosophers], given your principles? Don't you say that these things that come to be are necessitated through necessitating causes which cannot necessitate anything different from what they necessitate? They can only say yes. *We say*: then you have already freed yourself from such difficulties as, why is one [necessitated] thing nobler than another? Why is one thing base, another noble, [or] good and evil? According to your principles, the correct response should be that it could not have been otherwise. If something cannot be otherwise, one cannot ask why it did not come about in some other way. To seek for any aspect of wisdom, asking why did it come about in that way, is nonsense and superfluous, on your principles.

However, one can raise difficulties against you in another way, for which there will be no reply. *It may be said to you*: why is there, in the chain that goes back to the pure good, anything evil or [142] base? Did it proceed from something evil or base? If you say it proceeded something evil, then we force on you the

same difficulty that arose concerning the initial [evil]. And this implies that the whole chain would be evil and base. If on the other hand you say that [the evil] came forth from that which is purely good and noble, then we ask you: how can evil proceed from the pure good?

[T15] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, 112.17–113.5

[*against the equivalence of goodness and existence*]

*As for their statement* that good in its true reality is existence, and evil non-existence, this is a stupid idea that only the foolish would accept. *We say to them:* reasonable speakers of Arabic use “good (*khayr*)” for the beneficial and the fine (*ḥasan*), and “evil” for the harmful and bad, that is, that which brings no benefit for those who are capable of attaining<sup>10</sup> it, in cases where the harmful is unjust. (Don’t you see that bloodletting, cupping, and the arduous path towards seeking profit and knowledge are harmful, but not evil? One might call the harmful which is not unjust “evil,” but only in a wider sense.) What then do you mean by saying that existence is good in itself? Do you mean that existence is beneficial to the existent itself, or to something else? If you mean the former, this is absolutely false. For the existence of rocks is no better for them than their non-existence, since they do not benefit from existing. Likewise the existence of injustices and monstrosities such as insulting God, or futility, or unbelief in [divine] grace, or spurning knowledge, is not better than their non-existence. If on the other hand you mean the second, this is not [113] absolutely true either. For the existence of the intrinsically harmful and of ignorance, when they are futile, is not good for anybody, like if one for instance insults himself, or believes the heavens are below him and the earth above him. When they say that evil is non-existence, and that pain is the perception of non-existence, this too is absolutely false. For pain is something sensible, as evil for the soul. But sense-perception does not connect to non-existence, only to something existent, even if non-existence may accompany it. That is why if one person insults another unjustly he thereby causes him distress; no one would believe that there is a non-existence of something here, yet it is evil and harmful.

10 Reading *al-īhrāz* instead of *al-īhtirāz*.

[T16] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fāʾiq*, 149.11–150.17

[*God cannot do evil*]

This is shown by the fact that God the exalted knows the badness of the bad, knows He has no need of it, knows that the obligatory is obligatory, and knows He has no need to violate [the obligatory]. So it follows that He cannot do bad or violate the obligatory. [...]

[*all else being equal, we always choose the good*]

[150.7] Whoever is like this cannot do bad or violate the obligatory, since if one of us says to someone, “if you commit an injustice I will give you a dirham, but if you do justice, I will [also] give a dirham, and if you speak the truth I will give you a dirham, but if you lie I will [also] give you a dirham,” and if injustice and justice are equal for him in cost, and in respect of all goals apart from goodness and badness, and if he does not believe in the meriting of reward and praise for justice and truth, nor in the meriting of punishment and blame for injustice and lying (or if we suppose that he simply fails to think about this), then he will not waver between neither injustice and justice, nor between truth and lying, as he might waver between two just actions or two truths, the benefit of choosing both being the same. This is a matter of necessary knowledge. We say that [in this case] the person will not choose injustice or choose to lie. This is due to his knowledge that injustice and lying are bad, and he knows that has no need of them. If he believed that injustice and lying were good, or that there is some outweighing benefit in injustice and lying, he could choose them. So it stands that the reason why he does not choose [injustice and lying] is his knowing that both are bad and that he has no need of them. If this is so in our case, then all the more is it so for God the exalted, as explained above.

[T17] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 847.3–848.23

[*against al-Ghazālī: the rational basis of good and bad*]

*Then he [the Ashʿarite opponent] said:* by saying “good” we mean that which corresponds to nature, and we seek pleasure in it, and “bad” means that to which nature is averse, and which we disdain. [...]

[848.13] *We say to him:* on the whole, you rely on making the aversion of nature the criterion for deeming something to be bad, even if that act is not deemed bad from the perspective that reason is averse to it. But we have already shown the difference between deeming something as bad from the perspective of

nature, and doing so from the perspective of reason. We have shown that by “bad” we mean the latter, not the former. It suffices to refute his long-winded account to give an example of bad things which are not harmful to anyone. Someone might say that it is nature that is averse to them; we however show that it is reason that prohibits them. Take for instance ignorance and futile actions. Each person finds within himself that his reason prohibits believing that the heavens are below him, and earth above him. This is why no one believes such a thing if his reason is of sound condition. [Reason also] prohibits talking to rocks. Its command, prohibition, and blame apply to other cases like this which are prohibited by reason. But there is no harm for anyone in them. Someone might say that there is indeed harm, because one would inconvenience oneself by talking to rocks. To which one may say: if reason prohibited this because it is harmful, then if we assumed that there were some benefit in it that exceeds the harm, reasonable people would then deem it good, and not call whomever does it foolish.

[T18] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 851.2–7

[*badness as residing in aspects*]

Our masters used to say that [acts] are deemed bad due to the aspects (*wujūh*) that occur to them. This means that they originate, and there is either a negative or affirmative connection (*qarīna*) with their origination. Take for instance the origination of the harmful. Inappropriateness is connected to its origination. So long as it is not known or supposed to ward off some [further] harm, or have some legitimate goal, it is deemed bad. They express this by saying that it is deemed bad because of its “being unjust.” Along the same lines, if there is connected to the origination of belief the fact that what is believed is otherwise than is really the case, they express this by saying that it amounts to ignorance, and they say it is deemed bad because of its “being ignorance.” And likewise for all other cases of badness.

[T19] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 858.6–7

[*against divine command ethics*]

If [being forbidden by God] is what “bad” means, according to you, whereas good is that to which [God’s] command is connected, then in saying this, they run into the problem that the acts of God the exalted are not good.

[T20] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 248.7–12

[*Mu'tazilite position on whether God wills good and evil*]

The *Mu'tazilites*, who believe in originated volitions, say that God the exalted wills His specific acts in the sense that he intends their creation according to what He knows. His will comes just one instant before the result of His action. Concerning the acts of those who are under obligation, He wills that the good acts should happen, and the bad ones not. But what is neither good nor bad, neither required nor prohibited, is the “allowed (*al-mubāḥāt*).” The exalted Lord neither wills it, nor is He averse to it.

[T21] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 249.1–6; 250.4–14

[*Mu'tazilite argument that God does not will human acts*]

The *Mu'tazilites* say: if an eternal attribute is connected to [numerous] objects, the connection must be common, as the eternal is not specified by anything. So if [His] will were eternal it would connect to every willed act, both His own and those of His servants. Among the willed acts of the servants is Zayd's willing to move, while 'Amr wills to be at rest. So the Eternal would need to will to both volitions and both objects of volition. But whatever He wills must occur. This leads to the co-occurrence of two contraries at one and the same time. [...]

[*response: God wills existence only*]

[250.4] *Why did you say that willing two volitions entails willing two objects of volition, so that the co-occurrence of two contraries would follow? God the exalted only wills their volitions in respect of their existence, and their arising anew, but not in respect of their objects of volition. [...]*

[250.10] The secret is that there is only one respect in which the eternal will is connected, namely whatever arises anew and does so insofar as it is originated, and is specified with existence rather than non-existence, at a certain moment rather than another. The two volitions have in common that they arise anew, and [the volitions] are related to [the objects of volition only] insofar as they arise anew and are specified [as existing]. Neither contradicts the other in this respect, so the [divine] will is not connected with two contraries.

[T22] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 251.1–5; 252.1–253.19

[*the problem of evil*]

*The Mu'tazilites said:* it stands firm in our minds that whoever wills good is good and whoever wills evil is evil; that whoever wills justice is just and whoever wills injustice is unjust. If the eternal will were connected to everything that comes to be, then both good and evil would be willed. Therefore, being good, being evil, being just, and being unjust would be attributed to the one who wills [them]. This however is repugnant in God's case, praise be to Him! God the exalted said: "God does not will injustice for the servant" (Qur'an 40:31). [...]

[*response: God wills only existence, moral responsibility lies with humans*]

[252.1] The secret is that the eternal will is not connected to the acts of the human as the object of volition insofar as [the human] is obligated, either in the case of obedience or disobedience, of good or of evil. Nor is [the divine will] connected to [the act] insofar as it is an act of the human, and is [the human's] acquisition in the respect in which it is related to him. Volition of the act of someone else, insofar as it is this other person's act, is wish and desire. It is only connected to it insofar as it rises anew and is specified with existence as opposed to non-existence, and is determined in one way rather than another. In this respect [the object of volition] is described neither as good nor as evil. If the word "good" is applied to existence as such, this application means something other than what is disputed between us. The Creator, the exalted, wills existence as such, and existence as such is good. Therefore He wills good, and by His hand there is [only] good. As for the aspect that is related to the human, which is an attribute of his act in relation to his power, capacity, time, place, and obligation, in *this* respect it is not willed by the Creator, the exalted, nor is it an object of His power. Now, it being ascertained, by the preceding demonstrations, that God the exalted is the creator of the deeds of humans, just as He is the creator of all that comes to be, and given that He creates by choice (*al-ikhtiyār*) and will, not by nature or essentially, He is therefore willing and choosing that existence arises anew and that the existent is originated. Furthermore, existence as such is entirely good, and whoever wills [it] is good. As for evil, insofar as it is existent it already participates in good. In this respect it is good and willed [by God]. For this reason no pure evil is realized in existence. So He, the exalted, wills existence and wills good, but the human wills both good and evil.

[*accidental evil*]

This is why the philosophers (*hukamā'*) said that evil enters the [divine] decree and will only accidentally, not essentially, and due to [253] secondary intention, not primary intention. For according to them evil is either non-existence or the privation of a perfection of existence. [...] [253.8] The eternal will and lordly providence are connected with both items and classes [sc. both the perfect and the imperfect] together, but one [class] is connected by way of inclusion, implication, and accidentality. This is called a "secondary object of will and intention." The second [class, that is, the perfect] is connected by way of positing, foundation, and essentiality. It is called a "primary object of will and intention." For instance, you know that the universal intention for rain's falling from the sky is the arrangement of the world and the arranging of existence. This is good in an absolute sense. But if an old house that was about to fall down is destroyed by it or kills an old woman who was on the brink of death, this is evil relatively, not fundamentally, and by secondary intention, not primary intention.

[*universal good*]

The existence of universal good together with some particular evil is closer to wisdom than the [total] non-existence of good without the occurrence of particular evil. Its absence would lead to corruption in the order of all existents. This would be a great evil and terrible harm.

[T23] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 261.7–262.2[*evil is accidental, not absolute*]

Absolute evil has no existence. Likewise the essentially evil is no occurring thing, only something expressed verbally. If it were to occur, it would be absolute, universal, essential, existent evil. But if existence is realized for it then goodness has already occurred for it, due to its existence, since existence as such is good. So it is verified that absolute evil has no existence, except in verbal expression and the mind. [...]

[261.13] By contrast accidental evil does have existence, in a way. It only attaches to that which has something potential in its nature. This happens only on account of matter. Something attaches and accidentally occurs to [matter] in itself, in its initial existence, namely some feature that prevents [matter] from its proper aptitude for perfection, towards which it is oriented, so as to ruin



its mixture and make it recalcitrant in substance to the reception of specification, formation, and organization. So the creature becomes distorted and the structure defective, not because the agent failed but because whatever it acted upon failed to receive [the act properly]. This may lead to the fact that ruinous habits come forth from that structure. The animal soul may overwhelm [262] the human soul, so that the person brings forth wicked acts and false beliefs.

[T24] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 263.15–264.14

[*kalām response to philosophical views on evil*]

*The theologians (mutakallimūn) said:* we do not disagree with the views you have adopted concerning what the pure good is, from whence the pure good comes, or that the cosmic order is oriented towards perfection in existence. The disagreement between us concerns only the goods that attach to the acts of humans and their acquisition. For example false beliefs, vain ignorance, [264] ruinous habits, and base acts: do they occur in accordance with our will to the exclusion of the Creator's will, or they are willed by Him, the exalted? Whatever else happens in terms of base forms, dangerous animals, heavenly disasters, earthly blights, and their consequences in terms of anxieties, griefs, pains, and aches: we do not disagree whether they are good or evil. We do not [need to] say that they are goods or benefits, or that in every evil among them and together with every suffering and trial there is some benevolence, or that in every strife and disaster there is some benefit, or that there is some special [task] for every dangerous animal, or that every body brings both benefit and harm, or that every harm is benefit in relation to something else. Rather we force a more general problem upon you. According to you, all existence, whatever it includes, whether spiritual and corporeal, proceeds from the First in the aforementioned order as concomitants of something. But that which comes forth as concomitants is more like what happens by second intention than by first intention. What then is the difference between the evils that occur in generated things and that must come about accidentally, and the fundamental generation, in which generated things and their occurrence happen as concomitants? For there is then nothing in existence that must come about essentially, such that something else would then have to come about accidentally.

[T25] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 266.1–267.2

[*predominance of evil*]

*We say:* we see that the corporeal world is full of afflictions, trials, disasters, and strife, replete with calamities, maladies, misfortunes, and sorrows, shot through with ignorance and false beliefs. Most people are blameworthy in their character traits, are of mean disposition, and have an irascible faculty that overpowers the intellectual one, to the point that one can find in each century perhaps one person who may be said to have divine wisdom, which according to you is likeness to God. [...] [266.9] So how can you, dear philosophers (*falāsifa*), keep saying that there is no absolute evil in the world and that it is not realized for the most part? What you find in existence clashes with what you keep insisting. Just consider human souls and what is predominant in their states of knowledge and ignorance, fine and wicked character traits, true and mendacious statements, good and evil acts. You will then know that evil prevails and predominates in the corporeal world, especially in human souls. In general, whenever we find inborn nature and divine determination dominating human choice and acquisition, then good and righteousness predominate. But whenever we find human choice and acquisition dominating, evil and corruption prevail. So we come back to the point that there is no evil among the acts of God, since the only evil that exists in them is relative to one thing rather than another. Evil only enters human voluntary actions. [267] Again, insofar as they may be traced to God's will—may He be praised—they are good. But insofar as are traced to the acquisition of human, they acquire the name of evil.

[T26] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 265.8–12; 267.2–5

[*demons as pure evil*]

*We say:* you have affirmed an order in existence whereby you state that existence is primary and more apt in some existents, in others not. Why then don't you affirm a contrariety (*taḍāddan*) as well, so as to judge that existence in some existents is pure good and in others pure evil? You have already heard from the proponents of the religious Law that there are spiritual angels, which are entirely good, as well as demons, which are entirely evil.

[267.2] The religious Law may be adduced to establish the reality of demons and their leader, the cursed Iblīs. It is impossible to deny this, once one has affirmed the truth of the statements and reports of [the Law] on the basis of clear signs and astounding miracles.

[T27] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 370.5–371.9

[*Ash'arite divine command theory*]

The teaching of the people of truth is that reason [on its own] does not indicate whether anything is good or bad in respect of what God the exalted imposes as an obligation (*taklīf*) in the religious Law. This means that the acts of humans do not have intrinsic attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-nafsāniyya*) of being good or bad, such that if someone performs them or refrains from doing so, he would impose a necessity upon God to reward or punish. Indeed, something may be good according to the religious Law, even though something else just like it and equivalent in its intrinsic attributes may be bad. “Good” means that the religious Law lays down reward for whomever does it, “bad” that religious Law lays down punishment for whomever does it. [...]

[*Mu'tazilite position*]

[371.3] The dualists, transmigrationists, Brahmans, Khārijites, Karrāmites, and Mu'tazilites had a different view. They came to think that reason indicates the goodness and badness of acts, in the sense that God the exalted must reward and praise whomever does good, and must punish and blame whomever does bad. Acts have intrinsic attributes of being good and bad. When the religious Law lays them down as such, it is only informing us about them, not imposing them. Furthermore, there are some good and bad [acts] that are perceived to be such necessarily, such as [the goodness] of beneficial truth and [the badness] of lying without benefit.

[T28] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 371.17–372.11

[*Ash'arite argument: moral version of the Flying Man applied to truth-telling*]

*The people of truth said:* let us imagine a human who is created all at once, with intact inborn disposition and perfect intellect, without his having any moral character instilled in him, or being educated by parents, or brought up in the religious Law, or being taught by anyone. He is then confronted with two things: first, [372] that two is more than one, second, that lying is bad, in the sense that God the exalted should blame the one who does it. Doubtless he will not hesitate about the first, but will hesitate about the second. Whoever thinks both cases are alike in relation to his reason has departed from common sense and shows great contrariness. Or does he not accept that God the exalted is unharmed by lying, and goes unbenefited by truth? For both [true

and false] statements are on a par as far as obligation (*al-taklīf*) is concerned, so [the newly created person] cannot give preponderance to the first over the second by relying on his reason alone.

What this shows is that truth and lying, in their essences and true realities, are realized only in their essences as nothing more than these true realities. For instance truth is said to be a report of something as it is, whereas lying is a report about something being other than it is. We know that whoever perceives these true realities understands what it is for them to be realized, without its occurring to him that they are good and bad. Thus good or bad does not come into the essential attributes of either one, which are only realized as their true realities. [Good and bad] do not belong to them as being obvious to the imagination (*wahm*), as has been shown, nor do they necessarily attach to them in existence, since some true statements are blameworthy, like pointing out a prophet who is fleeing from a tyrant. And some lies are praiseworthy, such as refusing to point him out. So, being bad does not enter into the definition of lying, nor does it attach to it either in the imagination or in existence. [...] [373.2] It remains only for them to take refuge in the human custom of calling whatever harms them “bad” and whatever benefits them “good.” We have nothing against using the words like this, but their use differs with the custom of one group of people to another, from one time to another, from one place to another, and from one relation to another. Whatever differs in these associations and relations has no true reality in itself. Sometimes people deem the sacrifice of animals good, sometimes bad. It may be good in relation to a given people, time, and place, or may be bad. But we are here discussing [religious] obligation such that the good necessarily calls for reward, and no blame can be ever applied to it. The perception of this sort of thing is not excluded for reason. This is the approach of the people of truth, in the best way of affirming it and laying it down.

[T29] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 373.13–375.5

[*Muʿtazilite arguments*]

We [*the Muʿtazilites*] say: if a need occurs to any reasonable person, and he can satisfy it just as well by speaking the truth as by lying, so that both are completely equal in terms of attaining the goal, it is more fitting that he chooses the truth than the lie. If in his view lying had no attribute that required avoiding it, the truth would not be preponderant over it.

*They [the Mu'tazilites] say:* let us suppose someone who has been reached by no religious message, or is in the state of denying the religious Law, so that no preponderance is implied by [religious] obligation. This [374] notwithstanding, reasonable people would still deem saving a drowning person, or rescuing the dying, to be good, and injustice and enmity bad.

The following is even clearer. Let us suppose a discussion between two reasonable people, prior to the imposition of the religious Law, who are disputing about some issue, whether to deny or affirm something. There can be no doubt that they distinguish truth-telling from lying. Then, one of them denies what the other says as something bad, and affirms his own statement as something good. Consequently, the issue between them over this denial escalates into an actual quarrel. Each accuses the other of ignorance. Each demands that the other give up on their own claim and accept his own, and demands that he concede the point. So if goodness and badness were completely abandoned [in the absence of religious Law], then all disputation would be eliminated, and it would be possible to insist on or deny anything.

You may say that this is only possible by custom (*al-'āda*), but cannot have anything to do with obligation. But we say that it is not mere custom. Rather, sound reason is a judge between two people who are disagreeing over an issue, whether to affirm or deny it. Whatever is good according to reason is good according to divine wisdom. And whatever is good according to [divine] wisdom is necessary, with the necessity of wisdom, not of obligation. Nothing is necessary for God the exalted because it is an "obligation." Rather it is necessary for Him only insofar as His wisdom makes a determination or ordains it.

[T30] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 375.6–377.3

[*the philosophers' view that only knowledge is intrinsically good*]

The philosophers (*falāsifa*) added to [the points made by the] Mu'tazilites an argument and a clarification. *They said:* existence includes pure good, pure evil, and mixtures of good and evil. The pure good is what reason seeks for its own sake, while it rejects pure evil for its own sake. But the mixture [is sought after] in one respect and [rejected] in another. No reasonable person doubts that knowledge, both generally and specifically, is a praiseworthy good and to be sought, while ignorance, both generally and specifically, is a blameworthy evil, and not to be sought. Whatever is sought by reason is deemed good by reason-

able people, while whatever is avoided by reason is deemed bad by the many. Sound inborn nature (*al-fiṭra*) calls us to bring about whatever is deemed good, and reject whatever is deemed bad, regardless whether a lawgiver imposed it upon us or not.

Furthermore, praiseworthy traits and righteous characteristics such as abstinence, generosity, courage, and bravery are deemed good as acts, while their opposites are deemed bad as practices.<sup>11</sup> Perfection is state of humans achieved through the perfection of the soul in respect of two powers: true knowledge and good practice, [thereby] achieving likeness to God the exalted and to the higher spiritual things, insofar as one's capacity allows. Religious laws are imposed with the aim only of facilitating what is determined by the intellect, without altering it. Rather, given that particular intellects [376] may fall short of acquiring all intelligibles, and are incapable of leading the way to the universal benefits that encompass the whole human species, it was necessary according to [divine] wisdom that there be a religious law among the people. [...]

[376.14] [*The philosophers*] said: the Mu'tazilites erred in referring bad and good to the essential attributes of acts, but were right to make this determination in the cases of knowledge and ignorance. For acts differ in respect of individuals, times, and other relations, so [good and bad] are not intrinsic attributes that attach to them in such a way as never to be separated from them. But the Ash'arites erred [too], in eliminating [goodness] from knowledge, which as a species is never blameworthy, and [badness] from ignorance, which as a species is never praiseworthy. For [377] eternal happiness and misery are characterized by [knowledge and ignorance] and are restricted to them. One chooses or refrains from acts accidentally, not essentially, and they differ in relation to this or that individual and time.

[T31] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 378.16–379.19

[*response to the Mu'tazilite truth-telling argument, cf. T29*]

Their objection is incorrect. What has been mentioned as concerns the difference between knowing that two is more than one, and judging that lying is bad, is obvious and we have no quarrel with it. But [the rest] of what you mentioned [379] is not conceded. For the two options of truth and falsehood are

<sup>11</sup> Reading 'amaliyya as in MS F.

equivalent to the person who is in need. If he chooses truth, his choice is not something necessary; nor is the knowledge that he must choose it connected to [him] necessarily. If he is pleased to [tell the truth], it is due to some motivation, custom, or goal that brings him to this. But if someone considers truth and lying as being equivalent in terms of blame at some time, or punishment at another, then neither of the two will preponderate over the other owing to any feature it has in itself.

*[response to their argument from altruism]*

As for the fact that reasonable people deem rescuing a drowning man good, and enmity bad, which calls them to offer commendation for the former act, and to censure the latter act, and so on, we concede this. But we are here discussing the case of [religious] obligation, and whether it is incumbent upon God the exalted to reward and punish, even once He knows that neither harm nor benefit results from [the person's] action.

*[response to their argument from disagreement]*

As for two people disagreeing about whether to deny or affirm some topic dealt with by reason, prior to the imposition of the religious Law, where each of the two rejects the view of the other, this is conceded. But [again], the issue is about what is incumbent upon God the exalted, whether He is necessitated to issue praise or blame, reward or punishment, for that act. This is hidden from us. How do you know He is satisfied with an act and issues reward for it, but is dissatisfied with another act, and issues punishment for it? [...] [379.17] It is impossible to compare His acts to those of humans, since we see that many acts we deem to be bad are not deemed bad by Him, such as the infliction of pain upon wild animals, the destruction of crops and children, and so on.

[T32] Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 391.10–392.6

*[response to the philosophers]*

Their statement that existence includes pure good, pure evil, and mixtures of good and evil is the remark of someone who does not realize what good and evil are and what is meant by good in first place. According to you, good applies to every existent; so evil applies to everything non-existent. Hence your saying that existence “includes” pure good makes no sense. It is as if you said that existence includes existence, which is pointless repetition. Thus your statement is out of order. As for pure evil, pure evil is non-existent, so how can existence include non-existence? But the division is incorrect from the start, since the

question that has been posed concerns motions that are subject to [religious] obligation. It is good and evil with regard to [such actions] that is intended by “good and bad (*al-ḥusn wa-al-qubh*).”

You have granted to us that the [moral] status of acts cannot be known necessarily. [392] Reason is not guided to it by inquiry, because it differs in respect of various relations and times. So there remains only your statement that knowledge as such is praiseworthy, and everything praiseworthy is sought for its own sake, whereas ignorance is the reverse of this. Which is conceded. But when someone formulates a goal, does this impose necessity upon God the exalted to reward him, or not? Or if he should fail to formulate it, but rather pursues the contrary, does this make punishment necessary, or not? The dispute concerns [good and bad] only in respect of [religious] obligation, not in respect of the thing in itself and its form.

[T33] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 252r9–12

[*on providence*]

They claimed that the Exalted’s [knowledge] of how the arrangement of existence should be, in order that it may occur in the best and the most perfect way, is the cause of the emanation of that arrangement from Him. This knowledge is providence. Those however who argue for God’s being a voluntary [agent] claimed that providence is His creation of the created in the most beneficial way for it.

[T34] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 2, 548.12–20

[*evil as privation and relativity of evil*]

As for existing things, they are not evil essentially, but accidentally, insofar as they encompass the privation of necessary or beneficial things. This is indicated by the fact that, whenever we find an act being called “evil,” it is a perfection in relation to its agent. Its being evil is only in relation to something else. Injustice, for instance, proceeds from the faculty that is unjust when it dominates, namely the irascible faculty. For it, domination is a perfection, and a benefit of its innate disposition. This act is good in relation to it, since if it lacked it, then in relation to it, that would be an evil. [Injustice] is evil only in relation to the one who suffers from injustice when his possessions are taken away from him, and in relation to the rational soul, whose perfection consists



in mastery over this faculty. When that faculty gets away from the rational soul, the rational soul loses its mastery over it, which must be evil for the rational soul.

[T35] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 256r2–257r3

[*the predominance of good over evil, and hedonism*]

*How evil enters into the divine decree and an explanation that good is predominant:* [the philosophers] based [their solution] of this issue on the grounds that good is existence and evil is non-existence, as we have set forth in the chapter on existence. But on my view, this is a merely verbal analysis. If one means by “evil” the non-existence (*‘adam*) of something that should be, then [evil] is privative (*‘adamī*). But if one means by it pain and whatever leads or contributes to it, it is existing (*wujūdī*). There is no doubt that pain is an existing quality. For the most part, what people mean by evil is pain, and whatever leads to it.

Then, drawing out the implications of this principle, [the philosophers] went on to say that something is either pure good, pure evil, or good in one respect and evil in another respect. The pure good is that which cannot have non-existence, nor can any of its attributes. This is the existent that is necessary in itself in all respects. Its existence has already been established. Pure evil, by contrast, is impossible, since insofar as it is existent it will not be evil. As for that which is evil in one respect and good in another, it is of three kinds: [good and evil] may be equal to one another [in it], or good may predominate, or evil may predominate.

That in which good predominates exists necessarily, since foregoing a greater good for the sake of lesser evil is itself a great evil. Also, when we inductively investigate the states of existent things aside from God the exalted, we find that good predominates in them. In the case of separate substances, such as intellects and souls, there is no doubt that good predominates in them. As for bodies: the same goes for the celestial spheres, since they are far from being receptive to non-existence, disruption, alteration, or change in<sup>12</sup> any stable qualities. And good predominates in the elements too. Even if there is much sickness, there is more health; even if there is much pain, there is more pleasure.

<sup>12</sup> Reading *fī* instead of *wa-*.

*If someone asks: why is good not free from evil? We say: because this is impossible in itself. When [God] creates fire for the sake of its benefits, it necessarily follows it that it can burn the limbs of animals, and this is evil. So, if it is impossible in itself, the fact that [God] lacks power [to do otherwise] is no weakness. [256v] This is the summary (al-mulakkkhaṣ) of what [the philosophers] say.*

*Someone may say: the debate [over evil] is irrelevant for the philosophers (al-falāsifa), since according to them God the exalted necessitates through His essence and is not a voluntary agent. Asking why someone made evil instead of good applies only to someone who voluntarily chooses between acting and non-acting, not someone who necessitates.*

But even if we concede this, we have nevertheless shown that what is meant by “evil” is pain. So, if even one establishes that the Creator, the exalted, is necessary in Himself, one must still show that evil may be denied of Him, by giving an argument that pain cannot apply to Him. But [the philosophers] have not given such proof; they were content to leave us in the dark. As for the celestial bodies, we do not concede that non-existence is impossible for them. Even if we did concede this, their goodness would only be complete on the interpretation we have suggested, so one would need to establish that pains do not apply to them. But they have provided no proof for this at all. From the fact that they are incapable of receiving non-existence and change in their essences and their attributes, it does not immediately follow that they did not experience pain from the very beginning. As for the elements, we do not concede that good predominates in them, because according to this usage “good” means pleasure. We do not concede that pleasure predominates in the world of generation and corruption. For some people never experience pleasure at all. Also [some philosophers] claim that [pleasure] means nothing but the removal of pain. On this assumption, there are only two states: pain and its removal. Pain is not good, and its removal is something privative, so it is not good either. Then some of them were ingenious and found examples where pleasure may be affirmed, without any removal of pain. But such examples, even if they try to trick us into thinking they are in the majority, are actually small in number, assuming they are genuine cases. In which case one cannot settle on the view that good is predominant; rather what is predominant is pain and its avoidance. Pleasure is unusual. In which case we may pose again the problem that was already mentioned against them: evil predominates and even if it does not, then at least it is equal [to good]; if things are like this, undertaking to create was either foolish, or futile.

*As for their statement* that it is impossible to separate good from evil, *we say*: this is based on denying that [God] is a voluntary [agent]. Otherwise he would be capable of making a body that is hot when it would need some benefit from its being hot, and not hot if its being hot becomes harmful. You should know that [257r] there are only two ways to escape these problems. Either one says that [God] is necessitating and then the whole discussion is irrelevant. Or, one says that He is a voluntary [agent], while denying that one can apply good and bad (*al-ḥusn wa-al-qubḥ*) [to Him]. One should not ask about what is done by God the exalted.

[T36] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 346.4–13

[*the difference between the Muʿtazilite and Ashʿarite positions*]

The most important thing in this question is to clarify where the disagreement lies. *We say*: there is no disagreement about the fact that we understand by our reason (*bi-ʿuqūlinā*) that some things are agreeable to our natures, others repugnant. Pleasure, and whatever leads to it, is agreeable; pain, and whatever leads to it, is repugnant. There is no need for religious Law to understand these agreeable and repugnant things. Also, we know by our reason that [knowledge] is an attribute of perfection, and ignorance an attribute of deficiency. The disagreement is only about the fact that some acts are connected to blame in this life and punishment in the afterlife, while other acts are connected to praise in this life and reward in the afterlife. Is this due to an attribute that is referred to the act itself, or is this not the case, and instead purely the judgment of religious Law? Or is it due to the judgment of those who have understanding? The Muʿtazilites said the reason for these judgments are attributes that are referred to the acts, but our doctrine is that it is nothing but a judgment of the religious Law.

[T37] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 347.12–16

[*the link between freedom and responsibility*]

If the acts of humans are either necessary or random, then talk of things' being good and bad by reason must be false. It is obvious why this would be false according to our doctrine. It would also be false on the Muʿtazilite doctrine, because either way voluntary choice is undermined. If there is no voluntary choice then there remains neither good nor bad.

[T38] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 348.14–18; 349.10–15

[*the relative badness of lying*]

If lying were morally bad because it is lying, then all lying would have to be bad. Then a lie that would facilitate the liberation of prophets and messengers (peace be upon them) from facing unjust execution, or any sort of harm, would be bad. But clearly this is not so. This indicates that the reason that lying is bad is not that it is lying. [...]

[349.10] If an unjust man says to someone: “I will kill you tomorrow,” then good would be either that he does kill him—which is false straightaway—or that he does not kill him. If he does not kill him, then his saying “I will kill you tomorrow” turns out to be a lie. So if lying were bad, then refraining from killing would imply the bad, and whatever implies the bad is itself bad. Thus refraining from the bad would be bad. Since this is false, we know that lying cannot be judged to be bad absolutely.

[T39] Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, vol. 1, 349.16–22

[*against the Muʿtazilite appeal to intuition*]

*Objection from the opponents:* we know by the evidence of reason that injustice is bad and benevolence good. This knowledge is not acquired from the religious Law. Someone who rejects the religious Law will still have this knowledge, which indicates that this knowledge is acquired from reason. *Response:* this kind of good and bad come down to what nature wishes and rejects. There is no debate as to whether this is known by reason. The disagreement is only about the fact that the act is connected with blame and punishment, or praise and reward. Is this on account of an attribute that subsists in the act? What you have mentioned does not show this.

[T40] Al-Rāzī, *Maʿālim*, 91.9–92.8

[*rational hedonism*]

We know necessarily that there are things which we like and those which we dislike. Now, it need not be the case that everything that we like is liked only because it results in something else, and that everything that we dislike is disliked because it results in something else. Otherwise either a circle or a regress would follow, and both are false. So it follows conclusively that something exists

that is liked for itself, not due to something else, and something that is disliked for itself, not due to something else. Upon consideration, we know that what is liked for itself is pleasure, delight, and avoidance of pain and grief. Anything else is liked because it results in one of these things. As for that which we dislike for itself, it is pain, grief, and avoidance of pleasure and delight. Anything else is disliked is disliked due to something else. Having understood this premise, you should know that our teaching is that good and bad are established in this world (*al-shāhid*) by the requirement of reason. But they are not at all established for the true God, the exalted. And there are several ways to show that they are established in this world by the requirement of reason.

*First*, pleasure, delight, and what results in one or both of them, are in that respect judged as good by the self-evident requirement of reason. But pain, grief, and what results in one or both of them, are judged as bad. In that respect, they must be avoided, by the requirement of inborn nature, unless this respect is outweighed by another. In which case this judgment [that the painful is bad] is undermined. For instance, [92] even though dissolute life brings a sort of pleasure, reason still prohibits it. It does so simply because it believes that it will be punished with pain and grief that is greater [than the pleasure]. This yields evidence for the view (*jiha*) that good and bad, what is wished and what is dreaded, are nothing but what we have mentioned.

*Second*, those who say that deeming a thing good or bad is due to the religious Law, interpreted the bad as follows: punishment arises from doing it. So we say to them: do you concede that reason requires that we beware punishment? Or do you say that this necessity too is established only by the religious Law? If they opt for the first, they have thereby conceded that good and bad are established in this world through the requirement of reason. But if they opt for the second, then the necessity to beware that punishment is only because of a further necessity. This [further] necessitation would also mean the imposition of punishment, and this yields a regress in the imposition of such punishments, which is false. So it has been established that reason judges good and bad in this world.

[T41] Al-Rāzī, *Ma'ālim*, 92.10–13

[*good and bad do not apply to God*]

You should know that, as we have established that deeming good or bad is nothing but obtaining the beneficial and avoiding the harmful, and that this can only be established by reason in cases where benefit and harm are possible, and that God is exalted above this, it thus follows that one cannot establish good and bad in His case. If however the opponent means something else by deeming good or bad, not obtaining the beneficial and avoiding the harmful, then he must explain it to us, so that we can inquire whether it can be established in the case of God the exalted, or not.

[T42] Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 3, 66.18–69.20

[*Mu'tazilite arguments against consequentialism, with replies*]

*The Mu'tazilites said:* the proof that considering [an act] good or bad is distinct from considering it as useful and harmful is that something may be bad while being beneficial, or good while being harmful, which requires that we distinguish between them. This may be shown in several ways.

[67] *First:* injustice is beneficial for the unjust man, even as he sees, being of sound reason, that injustice is bad. *Second:* take a person who writes a poem that is composed from flawless words, in a nice script, and reads it out in fine voice, but the poem includes abuse of angels, prophets, and righteous men. Listening to these flawless words and perfect combinations read out so finely is pleasurable, yet sound reason judges it as bad. *Third:* a useful lie is useful, even as sound reason denounces it as bad. *Fourth:* if someone sees a sick, blind person facing death in a desert with no one [else present], his reason will call him to show benevolence to this sick and blind person. Here, sound reason deems this benevolence to be good, but by showing benevolence he must reduce his own property and take trouble upon himself. Here, sound reason calls for performing this act of benevolence to that sick person,<sup>13</sup> even though there is no benefit for him in it at all. After all, giving over property to [the blind man] is a reduction in [his own] property, which is harmful. [Furthermore] that the sick, blind person does not take any awareness of him, so that the passerby cannot

13 Deleting the second *fa-hāhanā ṣarīh 'aqlihi yad'ūhu ilā fi'l dhālika al-iḥsān* as dittography.

expect to be mentioned by him with praise and gratitude. And there is no one else in this desert, such that one could say that he only showed benevolence to him so that onlookers could praise him. Then too, the passerby might be an atheist who denies God and the afterlife. So one cannot say that he undertook this benevolence because he was wishing for a reward. Here then, sound reason judges that this benevolence is good even though it is without any sort of benefit.

Through these examples it is obvious that reason makes judgements about good and bad that are distinct from judgments about the beneficial and the harmful.

[68] *Those who deny deeming good and bad [based on the judgment of reason] responded:* everything you have mentioned comes down to seeking the beneficial and avoiding the harmful.

*As for the first argument*, namely their statement that the unjust acquires benefit from injustice even as his reason judges it to be bad, *we say:* if the unjust man judged injustice to be something good, then it could not be that he would avoid injustice against himself. His spirit would become a target for murder, and his property a target for plunder. He must judge injustice as bad when it comes to his own welfare and property, in order for his spirit and his property to be preserved from loss and ruin. *As for the second argument*, which was the well-composed poem including abuse against angels and prophets, *we respond:* the judgment that it is good goes against the welfare of the world. This is shown in two ways. First, if we allow that abuse and insult, then there remains no place in the hearts for God's command and prohibition. This must yield disorder and confusion, and lead people to praise the vicious among them over the virtuous. Second, the noblest of existents is God, praise be to Him; and the one who is the most gracious to those who are in need is God the exalted. If insulting Him were not prohibited, then the virtuous could not petition for the avoidance of the harmful, which is opposed to the welfare of the world. *As for the third argument*, which was their statement that a useful lie is useful, even as reason determines it to be bad, *the response is:* to allow lying goes against the welfare of the world. For if we allow lying, then given that what we hear is a basis for formulating many goals in acting and refraining from action, if in these situations [what we hear] appears to be a lie, any deeds based on it will then be wasted. So the heart of the person who would perform the act will be enfeebled, and his whole life will be wasted. All this is contrary to the welfare of the world. [69] *As for the fourth argument*, which was showing bene-

volence to a blind and sick person who is in a desert where there is no one else, *the response is*: in this case, there is a wish [on the part of the benevolent person] for welfare, and in several respects. First, the human is formed in such a way that whatever he sees to happen to someone else of his kind, he envisages as happening to himself. When this individual sees the sick person in such a situation, his estimation and imagination straightaway envisage this situation as happening to himself. Thereupon his nature inclines towards trying to free [the sick man] from that misfortune. If he did not do this, it would pain his heart. So his performance of that act is required in order to satisfy the sympathetic fellow-feeling from his heart, in which there is great welfare. Second, one of the things laid down in consideration of preserving the welfare of the world is that people wish to show benevolence, in the hope that if this sort of situation happened to them, someone would make an effort to show mercy to them. Since this idea is in consideration of the welfare of the world, people inevitably have a consensus to deem it as good, and deem it bad to refrain from it. Because people have become acquainted with this consensus and agreed upon it, and continuously follow it from the beginning of life to its end, these attitudes are inevitably settled in their hearts and their minds.

So we have established that all these examples mentioned by them do not leave the realm of caring about what brings welfare and destruction, through a single intermediary or many. So that which we said has been established: good and bad only mean trying to acquire what is beneficial and avoid what is destructive. And so long as one agrees that it is absurd that this motivation arise for God the exalted, talk of motivations based on good and evil is absurd in the case of God the exalted. So that settles the discussion of this point.

[T43] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 562.5–12

[*against Avicenna's theory of punishment as deterrent, cf. T5*]

*First*, this response is based on the idea that there must be a deterrent (*takhwīf*). But just as it might be asked, if all is predetermined, why is there punishment? So one can ask, if all is predetermined, why is there deterrent? Since a negative or positive response would be the same in both cases, one cannot make one of them a premise for the other.

*Second*, this would be true only if the damned were fewer in number than the saved. But according to the doctrine of the Muslims, they are more in



number than the saved. For the people of Islam are fewer than the unbelievers, and all unbelievers are condemned. If he denies this, then he has disagreed with the commonly held position of Islam, even though his whole purpose with this answer was to go along with what they say. Rather the correct response would be to say that the question why is there punishment if there is predetermination is a spurious one, since punishment also falls under determinism, not outside it. If this is so, then it would be wrong to look for a reason.

[T44] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 466.17–467.5 [trans. Kaukua, mod.]

[*the necessity of evil*]

Were it not for opposition, there could be no generation and corruption, and were it not for generation and corruption, infinite individuals could not exist. Elemental species can only occur [467] through interaction (*tafāʿul*), and some opposition is necessary for interaction. So it stands that, were it not for opposition, there could be no eternal emanation that is constantly renewed, no infinite amount of rational souls would occur, the elemental world would be obstructed from [producing] life, and most of what is possible would remain in sheer non-existence.

[*universal good*]

When that which bestows existence upon evil regarding an individual is considered from the perspective of the universal arrangement (*al-niẓām al-kullī*), it is good to the extent that existence is able to include goodness and arrangement, which outweighs the [evil] in it.

[T45] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 467.8–16

[*particular evils as incidental*]

*Let it not be asked:* why did He not make this class [of existents] free from evil? Since that would be absurd. For one cannot make something be other than what it is. If He did not make this class, then there would be limitation on the first class [of best existents], and this class would not arise. One cannot make water anything other than water, or fire anything other than fire. It is impossible for fire to touch a garment without burning it, provided there is nothing to hinder the burning. If you consider the situation of someone whose garment

was burned by fire and the extent to which he has [thereby] been harmed by [fire], and the extent to which [fire] was useful for him over the course of his life, you will find that they are not even comparable. This is the case in relation to one single individual, but what about the case where something is useful for the whole species but would be harmful for that individual alone? It would be good in relation to the arrangement of the species, just as one might amputate a limb for the health of a body. If you consider the universal arrangement, there is no evil.

[T46] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārīf, Ilāhiyyāt*, 467.17–468.9; 469.4–8 [partially trans. Kaukua, mod.]

[*incidental evils are not willed by God*]

One might go on at length about this issue [of how evil comes to be in the world] if one imagined that the world is only created for the sake of humans. If one however applies reason and inquiry to this issue, on which so much has been said, one will realize [468] that if [God's] volitions were random, in which case there would be no universal rules that have been imposed from eternity and until eternity, then human affairs, animals, and so on would not be as they are. The Giver of the Decree (*al-qādir*)—whose volitions the common folk and the practitioner of medicine, who emulates the wise [sc. Abū al-Barakāt], suppose to arise anew to provide well-being (*maṣāliḥ*)—has not decreed that man escape blinding, or that his bodily temperament be preserved, or that widows never be neglected, or that guardians of privacy not be regularly violated, or that young orphans not be left unnursed and unfostered, which would afflict both the orphans and [their nurses], or that manifold diseases not be sent down, or that there be no false religions with all their dogmas, blind adherents, and plundering. If He decreed that [all this] not be made, through volitions that arise anew—as [Abū al-Barakāt] said, “He chooses it, so it is; it is, so He has chosen it”—why has He not willed what is in the best interest (*maṣlaḥa*) for this individual? If this is how the volitions are, then Zayd's blindness or the length of 'Amr's life are unimportant for the universal arrangement. [...]

[469.4] *If someone says: He did what He wanted and one should not ask why, we say: why should one not ask why? Because the tongue is damaged, or because inquiry is prohibited (ḥarām), or because argumentation leads nowhere concerning it? All these options are wrong. If one opens the door of “one should not ask why” for topics of rational debate (al-ma'qūlāt), then whenever one wants*

to have an argument—as it might be, whether the world requires [a preponderating factor] for the specification of its contingent aspects, or whether one should affirm or deny divine attributes, and so on—the opponents can always say, “one should not ask why.”

[T47] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 472.5–8

[*against the privation account of evil*]

Whoever says [that evil is privation] should bear in mind that compound ignorance necessitates the increase of pain in the afterlife. Both compound ignorance and the pain that arises from it are something existing (*wujūdī*), and are evil. If it were only evil because of the absence of perfection—which is knowledge and faultless dispositions—then compound ignorance would not increase pain insofar as it is compound.

[T48] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 473.13–18

[*automatic retaliation*]

You should know that there is more happiness than suffering. Besides, the ranks of people in the afterlife are just like their ranks in this life; and happiness and suffering does have ranks. Therefore, if the preceding is clear, then no one should even ask why there is punishment if everything is predetermined, since wicked dispositions and obnoxious manners necessitate pain all by themselves, without any authority or source of retribution from outside. If a sickly person stops following his diet and sicknesses take hold of him, this happens not because some censorious doctor inflicted retribution on him; rather, it is one of the consequences to which his ravenous appetite drove him.

[T49] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 106.11–16 [trans. Kaukua, mod.]

[*on providence*]

As for providence, nothing happens because of it. As for arrangement (*al-niẓām*), it is concomitant to the marvelous order and the relations that follow from the things separate [from matter] and their reflected radiations, as stated above. This providence is what they used to refute the principles of those who subscribe to the luminous realities that have talismans [i.e. material images], but it is itself wrong. Once it has been refuted, the order of the

barriers (*al-barāzikh*) ought to be due to the order of pure lights and their illuminations, which are included in the causal descent that is impossible for barriers.

[T50] Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, 203.4–205.10

[*different theories of good and bad*]

The Mu‘tazilite view is that the goodness and badness of the good and the bad are essential attributes. The philosophers (*falāsifa*) agreed with them on this, as did those who deny prophecies. But there was disagreement among these groups concerning how the perception of this [good and bad] occurs. The Mu‘tazilites and philosophers said that one sometimes perceives [good and bad] rationally, sometimes through the religious Law. Among the things perceived by reason some are self-evident, for instance the goodness of knowledge and belief (*imān*), and the badness of ignorance and unbelief; and also [what one perceives] through inquiry, like the goodness of a truth that is harmful, and the badness of a lie that is beneficial. By contrast, what is perceived through the religious Law is for instance the goodness of displays of obedience, and the badness of doing things that are prohibited.

[205] As for those who deny prophecies, they only admit the perception of [good and evil] by reason, with no reported religious Law.

As for the People of Truth, according to them good and bad are not essential attributes that belong to a subject of inherence. Rather the description of something as good or bad holds only because the religious Law deems it to be good or bad, by allowing it and laying down a reward for it on the one hand, and prohibiting it and laying down a punishment for it on the other. Beyond this, reason deems it good in consideration of certain extrinsic features and separate notions among [its] accidents, as the result of goals and connections. But these vary along with various associations and relations. So the good is nothing but that which is allowed, or that whose performance is praised, in accordance with the religious Law; or that with which a goal is associated. And likewise for bad, but the opposite.

[T51] Al-Āmidī, *Rumūz al-kunūz*, fol. 114v7–115r1

[*the source of evil is matter*]

What is like this [sc. pure evil] does not proceed from pure goods. Rather, it must be traced back to that which is connected to matter, and prevents it from the disposition of receiving its perfection, like when the semen in the womb is affected by certain causes that prevent it from having a mixture that is suitable for the reception of the perfection of its innate nature; or [evil] may be connected to something that incidentally occurs to matter in terms of causes that prevent it from receiving perfection. [...]

[*evil must trace back to God*]

[114v16] *Someone might say*: the claim that evil does not come forth from pure goods is simply to assert what is at dispute, without any proof. Furthermore, pure evil is neither necessary of being, since otherwise it could not be accidental to instances of matter; nor is it impossible of being, since otherwise it would never be realized, being impossible. So [evil] is contingent, and so must have a preponderating principle. This preponderating principle is either the Necessary Existent or something contingently existent. If it is the Necessary Existent, which is pure good, then pure evil has come forth from it. If however it is something contingently existent, then it is either good, or evil, or good in one respect and evil in another respect. If the first option is the case, then evil has [again] come from good. If the second option is the case, then there must be a [further] preponderating principle for it, but this cannot go on as an [infinite] regress. So, if [the regress] stops at the Necessary Existent, evil [again] would come forth from Him. Finally, if the third option is true, then evil either comes forth from it in terms of its good aspect or in terms of its evil aspect. You have already understood what applies to both options, from the first and second options [in this dilemma]. So the third option [115r] must be such that what is evil in it would go back to the Necessary Existent, according to the foregoing argument. This means the coming forth of evil from good, and there is no way around it.

[T52] Al-Nasafi, *Sharḥ Asās al-kiyāsa*, 312.12–17

[*evil may always be relative*]

It is not impossible that one and the same thing be good in one respect, and evil in another respect. If this were the case, we could not make an unqualified judgment whether [a given thing] is good or bad. Nor is it impossible either that it

be good in relation to some individuals, and bad in relation to other individuals. And the same goes for the predominance of good or evil in [a given case]. The truth about this sort of question is that it is [merely] verbal, and depends on the traditional report that the word “good” means existence while “evil” means non-existence, whether according to general linguistic usage or according to another [specific group of] people.

[T53] Al-Ṭūsī, *Qawā'id al-aqā'id*, 453.1–6

*[moral good and evil are established through practical intellect]*

*The philosophers (ḥukamā')* said: inborn reason (*al-'aql al-fiṭrī*), which judges self-evident things such as the whole's being greater than the part, does not make judgments concerning the goodness or badness of an act. It is practical reason (*al-'aql al-'amalī*), which governs the well-being of species and individuals, that makes judgments about this. This is why one sometimes judges the goodness of a thing, or its badness, in light of whether it is beneficial. They called whatever is demanded by practical reason, but which is not mentioned in any religious laws, “the judgments of the unwritten religious Law,” whereas they called that of which the religious Law speaks “the judgments of the written religious Law.”

[T54] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 3, 936.4–938.1

*[evil as accidental and privative]*

One must verify the quiddity of evil before moving on to the [present] object of inquiry. I say that evil is applied to privative features insofar as they are not productive, such as the lack of whatever one ought to have, like death, poverty, and ignorance. But it is likewise applied to existing things, such as the existence of whatever entails that someone oriented towards perfection is prevented from achieving it. For example the cold that harms fruits, or the clouds that prevent the bleacher from doing his job, or blameworthy acts like [937] injustice and adultery, or base character traits like cowardice and avarice, or pains and griefs, and so on.

Upon inquiring into this, we find that cold in itself, insofar as it is a certain quality, or in relation to its cause that necessitates it, is not evil. To the contrary, it is a perfection. It is evil only in relation to fruits, because it corrupts their temperaments. What is essentially (*bi-al-dhāt*) evil is the fruits' lack of the

perfections that [ought to] belong to them. Cold becomes evil only accidentally, because it entails this. And likewise for clouds. Injustice and adultery too, insofar as they are features that come forth from, as it might be, the irascible and desiring powers, are not evil. Rather, in this respect they are perfections of those two powers. They are evil only in relation to the victims of injustice or the political order, or in relation to the rational soul that is too weak to subdue the animal faculties. So the essential evil is the fact that one of these things lacks its perfection. [Evil] only applies to the causes of [this lack] accidentally, by leading to it. The same goes for character traits which are the principles of [injustice, adultery, etc.]. Likewise pains are not evil insofar as they are perceptions of things. Nor are they [evil] insofar as these things exist in themselves, or come forth from their causes. Rather they are evil only in relation to the one who is pain, who lacks the integrity of an organ that should maintain it.

From this it results that, in its quiddity, evil is the privation of existence, or the privation of the perfection of an existent, insofar as that privation does not suit it or does not produce in it [what it needs]. Existents are not evil insofar as they are existents. They are only evil in relation to things deprived of their perfections, not essentially, but because they lead to that privation. So evils are items that are associated and relative to specific, concrete individuals. In themselves and in relation to [938] the universe, they are not evil at all.

[T55] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 3, 939.3–5

[*the predominance of good*]

As for the three remaining divisions, namely pure evil, the cases where evil predominates, and the cases where it is equal to that which is not evil, these do not exist. For both real and relational existences among the existent things are inevitably larger in number than relational privations, which arise in the aforementioned way.

[T56] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 3, 943.12–944.11

[*against the predominance of evil*]

There has been a supposition (*wahm*) that most people are miserable [in this life], to say nothing of the next world. This entails the predominance of evil among the human species, which is the noblest of generated species.

[944] The Master [sc. Avicenna] dispels this supposition by saying that the existence of the ignorance which is the opposite of certainty (that is, compounded and deep-rooted ignorance) is rare in comparison to the existence of certainty. The common and widespread kind is simple ignorance, which does no great harm in the afterlife.

The same goes for the two posterior faculties [i.e. irascible and appetitive]. For the existence of evils that are *opposite* to the virtuous dispositions are rare, in comparison to their existence. What is common and widespread are character traits that *fall short* of the extremes of virtue or viciousness. In these states, souls are like bodies in respect of the extremes of beauty and health and ugliness and sickness, or the condition in the middle between them. Further, it is clear that the middle state is predominant over the other two. Therefore evil is not predominant.

[T57] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 3, 953.7–954.5

[*response to al-Rāzī T43 on punishment as deterrent*]

*I say to the first point* [namely that the deterrent would be irrelevant in a determinist system]: determinism (*qadar*), in the sense relevant in the teaching of the philosophers (*ḥukamā'*), is the necessity of particulars' being traceable to their multiple causes. This is to be distinguished from determinism in the sense relevant in the teaching of the Ash'arites among the theologians, since they say that there is no agent and no producer other than God.

*The response* mentioned by the Master [sc. Avicenna] is in keeping with his principles: the human act is, according to him, traced back to his power and his will, both of which are [further] traced back to their own causes. The deterrent (*takḥwīf*) is one of the causes of willing to act well. Thus the occurrence of the deterrent among the causes that entail good is indeed necessary, even while it is determined. Its exercising causation is correct, according to what the Master mentioned, and is not in contradiction to its being determined, since everything that is determined is caused, according to him.

But according to the principles of the Ash'arites, so long as the deterrent has no effect, it exercises no causation at all, just as the excellent commentator [al-Rāzī] said. On their view, the discussion of determinism should be abandoned, because they entirely abandon causation. Which is why they say, [954] "ask not about what He does."



*To the second point:* the Master did not wish to follow the way of the theologians who simply insist on what they declare to be the case. Rather he wants to follow the way he spoke on this issue in his metaphysical books. And in the Revelation, one comes across no judgment that the damned are more numerous than the saved. To the contrary, one can find passages contrary to that judgment.

[T58] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 339.3–10

[*the nature of the disagreement within kalām*]

[Al-Rāzī] said that “good (*al-ḥusn*)” and “bad (*al-qubḥ*)” may mean the agreement and aversion of nature, or the fact that something has the attribute of perfection or of deficiency. These are both rational notions. But they may also mean that which necessitates reward and punishment, or praise and blame. These are imposed by the religious Law according to us [i.e. to al-Rāzī and the Ash‘arites], as opposed to the Mu‘tazilites.

*I say:* the Mu‘tazilites do not disagree with what he mentioned. Rather, the difference lies in a different meaning of “good” and “bad,” namely that certain acts necessitate praise or blame in accordance with *either* reason *or* the religious Law. The Mu‘tazilites argued that according to this meaning, the judgment that justice and truth are good, and injustice and lying are bad, is necessary (*ḍarūrī*). This is why both those who acknowledge the religious Law and others, who do not recognize it, are all in agreement about this. But the people of the *sunna* [i.e. the Ash‘arites] deny this.

[T59] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 341.14–16

[*natural value does not align with rational value*]

According to [the Mu‘tazilites], it is incorrect to explain [good and] bad in terms of the occurrence of agreement or aversion. The reason is that frequently what is agreeable is bad. For instance, when someone who needs something extorts something from someone who does not need it. This is agreeable for him, but it is bad. Then too, frequently what provokes aversion is good. For instance, restraining the unjust man from injustice through various kinds of schooling. This will provoke aversion [in him], but it is good.

[T60] Al-Ṭūsī, *Ajwibat masā'il Bahā' al-Dīn al-Mayāwī*, 19.7–20.2;  
22.7–24.3

[*objection to the intrinsic goodness of existence, with reply*]

The philosophers (*ḥukamā'*) suggest to us that existence is goodness (*khayriyya*), the perfection of existence is the goodness of existence, and evil has no essence but is rather the privation of substance or the privation of the well-being of substance. [...]

[19.11] *But someone might say*: “would that I did not exist!” In fact even the most excellent of the prophets, may God pray for him and his family, is reported to have said: “would that the Lord of Muhammad had not created Muhammad!” [...] [19.16] If someone is found to be in pain and suffering, people say, “it would be better for him not to exist.” [20] And all who considered [this] said: this is a primary judgment, judged by reason to be self-evident. But if this human did not exist, there would remain nothing, so of which thing is one saying that it would be good for it not to exist? [...]

[22.7] [*Response*]: if someone in pain wishes for his own non-existence, this is because the privation of good is an effect of the existence of evil, as already stated. [He wishes for non-existence] not under all circumstances, but only while he is focusing on the pain and nothing else. This is impatience, and those who have perfected themselves in patience guard themselves against it. If he were to focus on good things, either present or expected, then he would be a thankful servant [of God], satisfied and happy with those goods. Wishing for non-existence is still not absurd, though, because he is not seeking after restfulness, pleasure, or perfection that he would achieve while being non-existent. Rather, he seeks only liberation from pain. Whenever someone does not know how to be liberated from intense pain, he finds it by seeking his own non-existence, to render his pain non-existent. [...]

[23.10] As for when common people saying of someone who is in pain, “it would be better for him not to exist,” this means that if the person in question, who is suffering from pain, were not existent at all, so that he would not suffer from pain, then that would be better for him than his being existent while in pain, since the privation of pain is better than his existence. But to relate goodness to him while he is non-existent, by saying “better for him,” is in virtue of imagination (*tawahhum*), not reason. For imagination (*wahm*) may reckon that the dead man might take pleasure after his death being remembered as a good person, or on account of having a righteous

son, or good descendants, and the like. It is as if they are imagining themselves as taking such pleasure after dying. In a similar way the imagination may reckon that in this case that someone suffering from pain would be at rest from his pain once he is non-existent. It ignores reason's judging that existence and non-existence are mutually exclusive, just like its judgment that death excludes perception. This and other, similar cases are false, imaginary judgments.

*The upshot of the inquiry, having achieved verification on these issues, is to say: "non-existence is better than existence for someone in pain" is a false, imaginative proposition. If one instead says, "the absolute non-existence of someone in pain is better than his existence," then it becomes a proposition of mere false belief. For whoever says this passes this judgement only because his reason testifies that the privation of good is better than the existence of evil, but he fails to know about the goods, both actually and potentially existent, for the one who suffers from pain. If he understood about the actual and potential goods of the one who suffers from pain, and understood that they are preponderant [24] over that evil which is the existence of pain, he would not pass that judgment. For his reason also judges that the existence of a great good together with the existence of a lesser evil is better than the non-existence of the great good along with the non-existence of the lesser evil. For otherwise, divine wisdom would not require its existence like this.*

[T61] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 475.1–10

[*evil as the uncaused consequence of essences*]

The evil in the world does not detract from the providence of the Necessary, even if it falls under the divine decree. For there are states that have no independent cause, nor are they produced by anyone other than the agent of the quiddities to which they are related. It is known that contingent quiddities have no causes for their essences or for their being contingent. Nor does their need for a cause (*illa*) for their existence itself have a cause (*sabab*). Nor is there a cause for their being opposed to one another and hindering one another in existence. Nor is there a cause for the fact that the contingent falls short of the Necessary Existent in itself, or for its inferiority to His rank. The same applies to the fact that fire burns and cotton is susceptible to being burnt by it. For both belong to the constituents of the quiddities and the nature of contingency, or are among its concomitants. Likewise a given goal of certain existents may be

harmful for certain others and corruptive of them, such as the goal of the irascible power which is harmful for reason, even though it is good in respect of that power [itself].

[T62] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 475.13–476.7

[*evil as privation*]

[Evil] is nothing existing, but rather is privative. If it were existing, it would either be evil (b) for itself or (a) for something else.

(a) If for something else, then this is either (a<sub>1</sub>) because it induces privation for this other thing, or for certain of its perfections, or (a<sub>2</sub>) it is not because it induces privation for this [other thing]. (a<sub>1</sub>) If it does induce privation, then evil is nothing but the privation of that thing or of that which is a perfection for it. (a<sub>2</sub>) If on the other hand it does not induce privation, then one cannot conceptualize it as an evil for that for which it was supposed as an evil. For we know that it disrupts neither the thing itself nor the existence of any of the thing's perfections, in any way. Hence, its existence does no harm to that thing.

(b) What if, on the other hand, it is evil for itself? This too is false. For the existence of something results in neither the privation [476] of itself nor the privation of any of its own perfections. Even if it did result in these, the evil would be that privation, and not [the thing] itself. But in any case such a result is inconceivable, because by their very natures things seek their own perfections, not the privation of [these perfections] insofar as they are perfections.

[T63] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 476.14–19

[*why there must be evil*]

It is impossible for these goods and whatever is similar to them to be free from evil. Even though the good that is free from evil is necessary for existence in absolute terms, it is not necessary for each case of existence. What was able to exist in this way [sc. without evil] has been made to exist, but so has that which could [only] exist while being affected by evil. If the latter had not been made to exist, this would be a greater evil, since the existence of this type of thing is not without good. The evil in it is only in respect of the privation that finds a way into it. If it were entirely non-existent, that that would truly be evil.

[T64] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 477.15–18

[*evil accounts for variety between humans*]

There is no way for humans to exist without the existence of opposed powers, and these cannot be in balance such that none of them dominates the others. Otherwise all individuals would be one and the same. This means that the states of certain humans brings them into complications that do harm in respect of the return (*ma'ād*) and the truth; or else they escape from the desire and anger that cause harm both to this person and to others.

[T65] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, 477.20–478.1

[*evil acts are perfections for those who do them*]

We find no case where we call acts “evil” but that [the act] is a perfection for its efficient cause. It might be that it is evil in respect of the recipient, or in respect of some other agent that is prevented from acting by itself upon that matter. The evil whose cause is a deficiency and shortcoming that befalls the natural disposition (*jibilla*) is in fact not good in respect of anything, nor [does it happen] because an agent produced it. On the contrary, it [occurs] because the agent did *not* produce it. [478] It is related to the Necessary only in an accidental way.

[T66] Bar Hebraeus, *Mnārath qudhshē*, vol. 9, 20.10–18

[*mixture of Ash'arite and Avicenna's definition of evil*]

We say that good, insofar as it is good, is beneficial, while evil, insofar as it is evil, is harmful. If evil were existent in the nature of acts, God—may His goodness be praised—would be found to be an efficient cause of a harmful cause, which is absurd. God created things insofar as they are, and insofar as they are good, not insofar as they are not good. Thus, goodness is something created and something natural which is implanted in the nature of acts. When those acts are performed against the law they are called bad from the perspective of the law, not from the perspective of nature. [...] The fact of existing for any act is its existence (*īthūthā*), whereas evil is non-existence (*laythāyūthā*). If evil were existent in the nature of acts then one and the same act would be found to exist and to not exist at the same time. This is absurd.

[T67] Bar Hebraeus, *Mnārath qudhshē*, vol. 9, 28.4–9; 30.21–24

[*defense of privation theory*]

*They say:* every nature is desired by whoever benefits from it, and is avoided by whoever is disturbed by it. Being at rest is good for [whoever is disturbed], whereas being disturbed is bad for him. If disturbance, which is evil, were non-being, and had a privative nature, how would anyone avoid non-being? Moreover, how can anything that does not exist be disturbing, harmful, or cause suffering? Therefore, evil is not by nature non-being.

*We say:* disturbance is nothing more than the privation of rest. Avoiding disturbance is nothing but being restored to [a state of] rest. Therefore, whoever avoids [disturbance] is not really avoiding it, but is simply restoration to [a state of] rest.

[T68] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 612.18–613.1

[*pure good as the intelligible entities*]

The first class, the totality of which is absolutely good and in which there is no evil at all, are entities that occur as complete in existence and are in need of nothing that ought to belong to them. Nor are they mingled with anything that ought not belong to them. They are actual in all respects. For instance the intellects and so on, and likewise celestial souls. For, even though there is something potential in them, they are never hindered in their emergence from potentiality to actuality. The existence of this class is necessary, as you learned from the rule of the contingency that is more noble and more base: the existence of [613] the more noble is necessary whenever the more base exists.

[T69] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 614.1–4

[*evil in generation and corruption is required for the persistence of the human species*]

You should know that all the kinds of evil exist only in the world of generation and corruption, on account of the opposition that occurs in it. But they are few in comparison to the goods in it. If, on account of the opposition, neither generation nor corruption were to occur in this world, then there could not exist an infinite number of souls, and likewise of individuals.

[T70] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 616.10–23

[*the popular idea of God's omnipotence*]

The giver of the religious Law forbade mentioning the secret of determinism (*sirr al-qadar*), because unveiling it would lead the common folk to imagine that God the exalted has weakness. If someone says that God the exalted has power only over contingents, but not over the impossible, or that He does not have power to create fire that does not burn, or that He cannot create anything resembling Himself, then they would suppose that He is weak. So it is better to tell them that He has power over everything, so that they glorify [Him] in their souls and honor [Him] in their hearts.

[*against the predominance of evil*]

As for the theologians, who are prohibited from the secrets of true knowledge and never got beyond the circle of supposition (*wahm*) and imagination, they are the ones who pay attention only to the world of generation and corruption. So they claim that there is more evil in existence than good, and suppose that the world was created only for the sake of man, who is the paragon (*khu-lāṣa*) of existence. They exalted [man] above the angels (may God's blessing be upon them all). But you have already learned that there is evil only in the world of generation and corruption on account of the aforementioned opposition. It is in only a few animals, in comparison to the world of generation and corruption, which in its turn is insignificant and paltry in comparison to existence [as a whole]. Besides which, health and well-being predominate in animals. Damage through evils occurs to them only rarely, as has been explained.

[T71] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 617.4–12

[*necessity of evil*]

Why does the second class, the one in which good predominates over evil, not exist in such a way that evil does not attach to it at all, so that the only thing that exists would be unadulterated good, all by itself?

*Response:* if this were the case, then the second class would be the same as the first, the one in which there is no evil at all, whereas the second class is the one in which there is more good than evil. If it were wholly free from evil it would be the first class. So if you ask, "why doesn't this class exist in such a way that evil does not attach to it at all so that it rather would be good in its entirety?" this

would be like asking, “why isn’t the second class the first class, and why wasn’t the second class made as something other than itself? Why was fire, which is one of the particular cases that fall under this [second] class, or some other particular cases to which evil is attached, not something other than themselves?” All of which is invalid.

[T72] Al-Shahrazūri, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 620.14–621.5

[*there can be no better world*]

So from this you understand that existence cannot be more perfect (*atamm*) than it is. If it could be more perfect than it is, then it would be necessary for its existence to come from divine generosity, as “He is not a withholder of the unseen” (Qur’ān 81.24). The truth is rather that the bestowal of existence upon a more perfect world is something impossible and absurd, and no one has power over it. If there is no such thing as power over it, then one cannot be weak concerning it. Weakness applies only when something is contingently existent in itself; if the cause falls short of bestowing existence upon it at all, or falls short of bestowing upon it a more perfect and more flawless existence, then this would be weakness. Understanding this principle dispels many doubts. [...]

[*God has no goals and cannot be compared to humans*]

[621.4] The worst of the mistakes and delusions of [the theologians] was their drawing analogies between the acts of the Necessary in itself and human acts, and positing goals for His act and His creation, like the goals of humans.

[T73] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥā’if*, 464.3–465.3

[*the debate over good and bad, cf. T36 and T58*]

Good and bad may be used in three senses. First, something’s being suitable for a nature or in conflict with it. Second, something’s having the attribute of perfection or deficiency, such as knowledge or ignorance. Third, something’s being connected to present praise and future reward, or present blame and future punishment. There is no disagreement as to whether good and bad are rational on the first two interpretations. But there is disagreement about it on the third interpretation.

The Ash’arites said that [good and evil] are by the judgment of religious Law alone. The Mu’tazilites, Karramites, and Brahmans said that they are rational



as well, that is, [good and bad] are due to the essence of the act or one of its attributes. But the intellect is sometimes able to perceive it independently, as with the goodness of justice and badness of injustice, and sometimes not independently, as with the goodness of fasting on the last day of Ramadan and the badness of fasting on a feast day. Nevertheless, so long as the religious Law imposes it we know that if neither of them had special characteristics on account of which this is good and bad, then the religious Law would not impose it.

Furthermore [the Mu'tazilites] disagreed with each other. The early Mu'tazilites said that [good and bad] are due to the essence of act, such as the goodness of truth and the badness of lying. But the later ones said that [good and bad] are due to an attribute, since truth is only good if it is beneficial and lying [465] bad only if it is harmful. And some of them said that good is due to the essence but bad is due to an attribute. The Jubbā'ites among them said that good and bad are a matter of perspective (*bi-al-i'tibārāt*). If hitting orphans is considered from the perspective of educating them, then it is good; but if it is considered from the perspective of injustice, it is bad.

[T74] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥā'if*, 466.10–467.12

[*Mu'tazilite argument from prophecy*]

If good and bad were due to the religious Law then whatever God the exalted does would be good. Then it would be good on His part to bring forth miracles from a liar, in which case prophecy could not be established on the basis of miracles. Also, prior to the establishment of prophecy we would not be able to judge that lying is impossible for God, so there would remain no trust in prophecy.

[467] *They responded*: the goodness of something does not make it necessary that it occur; also, it could still be bad in respect of the religious Law. But this calls for further inquiry, as the opponent had said that there would be no *trust* in prophecy, not that it would *occur* or fail to do so.

*The truth on this issue*: the acts and judgments of God the exalted are connected only to that which is best and most appropriate, either in itself or in relation to another. For, if they were connected to something that is not best and most appropriate, then it would be deficiency to make this thing happen, it not being more appropriate, or would even be foolishness, and this is absurd for

the Powerful and Wise, the exalted. If on the other hand it were most appropriate for Him, then He would be deficient in His essence, and would be perfected by and in need of [this thing], since bad aspects deter from acting and one only does [something] when one needs it. This too is impossible for God the exalted. Then too, how can it be applied to the Powerful, Wise, and Sufficient that He would refrain from the more appropriate and do what is worse? Again, it would eliminate trust in prophecy, and the promise and the threat. This is my own view on this issue.

[T75] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 470.2–6

[*the sense in which God does the more appropriate*]

The truth on this issue is that God the exalted is powerful, wise, and knowledgeable. He must either act or not act, and He chooses the more appropriate and better from the two options. Refraining from what is more appropriate without necessity or need for such a powerful [agent] is deficiency, and is impossible. The appropriateness in question is not relative to God the exalted, but to the bare facts (*naḥs al-amr*) and to humans. From this perspective, the act is not in conflict with perfection; to the contrary it is nothing other than perfection, whatever would vary from it would be nothing but deficiency and frivolity.

[T76] Al-Ḥillī, *Taslik al-naḥs*, 163.3–6

[*types of good and bad as attributes*]

If an act has no attribute (*ṣifa*) additional to its origination, then it is like the motion of someone who is absent-minded or asleep. If it does have [such an attribute], then it may be good: if it has no attribute additional to its goodness, it is allowed; if it has an additional attribute and if blame follows from not performing it, it is obligatory; otherwise, it is recommended. Or it may be bad, in which case its performance by a knowledgeable agent deserves blame.

[T77] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 281.9–23

[*reason is needed as a basis for the religious Law*]

[*Al-Ṭūsī*] said: both [good and bad] would be undermined absolutely, if they were established only by religious Law.

*I say:* this a second way to argue that good and bad are rational. *Exposition of this:* if [good and bad] were established only by the religious Law, then they would in fact be established neither by the religious Law nor rationally. Everyone agrees that the consequent is false, so likewise the antecedent. *Explanation of the hypothetical premise:* if we did not know the good and the bad of things rationally, we would not judge lying as bad, so we would allow its occurrence on the part of God (He is greatly exalted above this!). So if He informs us that something is bad, we cannot conclude that it is bad, and if He informs us that something is good, we cannot conclude that it is good. This is because of allowing lies, since we would allow that He commands the bad for us, and prohibits the good for us, so that on this assumption we would deny His wisdom, may He be exalted.

[*divine command theory would allow good and bad to be reversed*]

[*Al-Ṭūsī*] *said:* otherwise there could be reversal.

*I say:* it has occurred to us, in interpreting this argument, that if good and bad were not rational then there could be a reversal of good and bad, so that whatever we imagine to be good would be bad, and vice-versa. Then large communities might believe it to be good and praiseworthy for someone to damage them, and blame someone who helps them, just as we believe the reverse of this. Since every reasonable person knows this is false, we conclude that these judgments [of good and bad] come down to determinations of reason, not to commands and prohibitions in the religious Law, or to [mere] customs.

[T78] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 282.10–22

[*lesser evil response to lying examples, cf. T38*]

[*Al-Ṭūsī*] *said:* doing the lesser of evils, so long as liberation is possible.

*I say:* this can provide a response to the doubts raised by the Ash'arites. The first of these was that, if lying were bad, then the lie that leads to liberating the prophet from the hands of an unjust man would be bad. The consequent is false, since the liberation of the prophet is good, therefore the antecedent is likewise [false]. The second was their example of someone who says "I will lie tomorrow."<sup>14</sup> If it is good for him to tell the truth by keeping his promise, then

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14 Deleting *lā*.

it follows that it is good for him to lie [tomorrow]. But if it is bad for him to do so, then the truth is bad and lying is good.

*The response* to both problems is one and the same. For liberating the prophet outweighs telling the truth, and not doing so is worse than lying. Thus it is obligatory to perform the lesser of the evils. Namely the lie, since it includes a great benefit that outweighs the truth. Again, [the person who says “I will lie tomorrow”] is obligated not to lie tomorrow, since if he does lie tomorrow, he will do something that is bad in two ways, namely the decision to lie and its performance, but good in only one way, which is the truth [of his promise]. Whereas if he refrains from lying, then he refrained from both lying and from deciding to lie. Here there are two good aspects, [decision] and act, and only one bad aspect, namely lying. Also, one can avoid lying in the first example by dissembling (*al-tawriyya*).

[T79] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 283.7–14

[*whether God wills the bad*]

People differed on this point. The Mu‘tazilites said that God the exalted does not do what is bad, nor does He violate that which is obligatory. But the Ash‘arites disagreed, and led evils back to God, may He be exalted above this! The argument for the Mu‘tazilite view is that God is motivated to do what is good, and has nothing to dissuade Him from doing so. But He does have something to dissuade Him from doing what is bad, and lacks motivation to do so. He has power over all objects of power, and given the existence of power and motivation, the act follows necessarily. The reason we say this is that God the exalted is self-sufficient, and it cannot be that He is in need. And He knows the goodness of the good and the badness of the bad. It is known necessarily that, whenever someone knows what is bad and is sufficient without it, he does not produce what is bad. Whereas if someone knows what is good, has power over it, and is free from all sorts of corruption, then he bestows existence upon it.



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**Peter Adamson**, Ph.D. (2000), University of Notre Dame, is Professor of Late Ancient and Arabic Philosophy at the LMU Munich. He has published monographs on the philosophers al-Kindī and al-Rāzī and edited many books, including *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

**Fedor Benevich**, Ph.D. (2016), LMU Munich, is Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. He is the author of *Essentialität und Notwendigkeit: Avicenna und die Aristotelische Tradition* (Brill, 2018) as well as of multiple articles and chapters on Avicenna, post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy, and *kalām*.

