

# Mental Existence Debates in the Post-Classical Period of Islamic Philosophy: Problems of the Category and Essence of Knowledge

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**Abstract:** The debates on the idea of mental existence is one of the issues in which the tension between the basic principles of Avicennian ontology and his epistemology is most evident. The question of mental existence, which developed into a *problématique* as a result of Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī's efforts to trace Avicennian philosophy's intimations, possessed a character that expanded through different prospects and perspectives following both the arguments advanced in support of this idea and the major challenges that the Avicennian theory of perception and knowledge met. It thus became a target for criticism in due course. This study takes as its subject matter the most significant criticism against the idea of mental existence and the perspectives that attempt to settle the ensuing problem in this context.

This particular criticism and the pursuit of a solution is a notable part of the mental existence debates that were current from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries. The criticism mainly concerns the tension between the mental form as knowledge and its equivalence with the external object in terms of essence. Accordingly, mental form is a knowledge and an accident in the category of quality. If the object of perception is a substance and the mental image is its equivalent in essence, then the mental image also has to be a substance, which requires the form to be both a substance and an accident.

This article, which pursues the trail of the mental existence debate by means of this criticism, tackles the following matters: (i) the media and channels that conveyed the mental existence debate that took shape after al-Rāzī's interventions, (ii) the nature of the relation between knowledge and mental existence, and (iii) those suggestions that address the criticism and solutions concerning the category of knowledge.

**Keywords:** Mental existence, knowledge, form, post-classical period, the category of knowledge.

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Theory of mental existence, which is related to knowledge's being and essence vis-à-vis epistemology and the notion of perfection vis-à-vis axiology, could emerge only with the distinction of existence and essence as well as a theory of an immaterial soul. But we shall note that it does not suffice on its own, for it needs a field where the requirements of existence and essence are distinguished. Therefore, it would not be incorrect to suppose that the history of thought waited for Avicenna (d. 428/1037) so that the proposition of mental existence would be topical; however, it would take more time for mental existence to become problematized and turned into a *problématique* with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210). From this point of view, one has to distinguish between the conception of mental existence and the question of mental existence as a *problématique*. Thus, the question of mental existence is a bundle of problems that was formed and developed alongside a theory with certain ontological and epistemological principles.

The non-emergence of mental existence as a *problématique* until Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī could be regarded as the result of the theses and implications of Avicennian ontology and epistemology being subjected to philosophical inquiry only through following its course. Al-Rāzī's critique of the philosophers' theory of perception and occurrence (*huṣūl*) forms the kernel of mental existence debates. It marks the last quarter of the fourteenth century as the thinkers who were linked with philosophical approach via al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), such as al-Abharī (d. 663/1265), Najm al-Dīn al-Kātibī (d. 675/1277), Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shirāzī (d. 710/1311), Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥilli (d. 726/1325), Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 766/1365), Ibn Mubārakhshāh (d. 784/1382) on the one hand, and those who were situated within speculative theology via Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, such as Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233), Qāḍī al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286), Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 749/1349), Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355), al-Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390), and others – all of whom inherited these debates.<sup>1</sup>

The main sources that fed this question within the philosophical perspective are the media that conveyed the debates over the commentaries of Avicenna's *al-Ishārāt* (al-Ṭūsī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and others) via Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī (*al-*

1 For a study that follows the traces of the question of mental existence in al-Kātibī and especially in al-Abharī, see Heidrun Eichner, "Essence and Existence. Thirteenth-Century Perspectives in Arabic-Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fi al-ḥikma* and the Arabic Reception of Avicennian Philosophy," in *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics*, ed. Dag Nikolaus Hasse and Amos Bertolacci (Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2011), 123-52.

*Muḥākamāt*) and the literature of commentaries and glosses following al-Ṭūsī's *al-Tajrīd*. As it was articulated within the literature of the theological perspective that developed out of works like *Ṭawālī' al-anwār*, *al-Mawāqif*, *Sharḥ al-Maqāsid*, and *Tasdīd al-qawā'id*, the debate reached out to al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413), who would combine both strands in his work and take his place among the prominent thinkers who would be cited in later debates. In its later course, the glosses of al-Dawwānī (d. 908/1502) and al-Dashtakī (d. 949/1542) of 'Alī al-Qūshjī's commentary on *al-Tajrīd* are noteworthy not only for transmitting the debate, but also for making contributions in their own right.

By the sixteenth century, all of this accumulation was conveyed in two lines of thought. The first line consists of thinkers like Kamālpāshāzāda (d. 940/1534), Ṭāshkubrīzāda (d. 968/1561), and Galanbawī (d. 1205/1791), who provided the issue of mental existence with a systematic edifice and a framework with distinct approaches. It also expanded with the emergence of new topics.<sup>2</sup> The second line that introduced new depth to this debate comprises Mullā Ṣadrā and his acolytes. The commentary on al-Ṭūsī's *al-Tajrīd* by 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Lāhījī (d. 1072/1661), one of the thinkers who can be located within the latter line, unifies the three strands (i.e., those coming from al-Rāzī-al-Taftāzānī-al-Jurjānī, al-Dawwānī-al-Dashtakī, and Mullā Ṣadrā) that he received. The question of mental existence, which is developed and enhanced with novel prospects during this historical course, is a prominent example of the debate on a particular theory flourishing to such an extent that it gradually becomes a full-fledged corpus related to epistemology and a philosophy of the mind.

The critique of the category of knowledge, articulated against the thesis of mental existence that encountered several challenges, is closely linked to the argument "that one thing that is placed with its essence in the mind necessitates that the mind be qualified by it" and conceptualized in the form of occurrence and

2 For instance, the argument concerning the imagination of the non-existent and the relevant discussions led to the separate treatment of the problem of predication (*ḥaml*) and "a proposition's entailment of its subject." Kamālpāshāzāda, "Risāletü'l-vücûdî'z-zihni," ed. Mehmet Aktaş, "Kemalpaşazâde'nin Zihni Varlık Risâlesi: Tahkik ve Değerlendirme" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Marmara University, 2014), 20-33; Ṭāshkubrīzāda, *Al-Shuhūd al-'aynī fī mabāḥith al-wujūd al-dihni*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid Kāmil (Köln: Manshūrāt al-Jamal and al-Kamel Verlag, 2009), 43-65. Likewise, there is a separate section for the arguments concerning real (*ḥaqīqī*) propositions (Ṭāshkubrīzāda, *Al-Shuhūd al-'aynī*, 67-73; Kamālpāshāzāda, "Risāletü'l-vücûdî'z-zihni," 34-35; 43-46). The concepts of mind, external, and thing-in-itself also have detailed treatments (Ṭāshkubrīzāda, *Al-Shuhūd al-'aynī*, 103-15). Moreover, the most critical counter-argument that the "mental form is both a substance and an accident" also is treated separately in epistle form (Abū Ishāq al-Nayrīzī, *Risāla fī taḥqīq ḥaqīqat al-'ilm*, Süleymaniye Library, MS Ayasofya 2284: 1b-29a).

qualification. The origin of this argument rests on al-Rāzī's inquiries concerning the concepts of occurrence and impression (intibā'). The critique, which was advanced within the context of "whether the mental image representing knowledge is an accident or a substance" and the subject matter of separate treatises<sup>3</sup> that emerged as a result of debates in order to surmount this problem, is the greatest challenge that the thesis of mental existence had to confront.<sup>4</sup> The main axis of this study stands on the debates over this critique.

Even though we may mention certain studies on the debates concerning the relation between knowledge and mental existence in the second classical period of Islamic thought (the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries) and pertinent approaches as standpoints, no unitary study has ever been dedicated to this issue. While Moiz Hasan's dissertation *Foundations of Science in the Post-Classical Islamic Era: The Philosophical, Historical and Historiographical Significance of Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's Project* pursues the lead of works like *Tajrīd al-i'tiqād*, *Hikmat al-'ayn*, and *al-Mawāqif* on which al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī penned commentaries and glosses to the mental existence debate, he omits any discussion of knowledge as a category.<sup>5</sup> Some brief references to this particular debate and some of the approaches appear in the section on mental existence contained within *Universal Science: An Introduction to Islamic Metaphysics*.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the main standpoints and a brief mention of the debate on the category of knowledge are present in the article "İslam Düşüncesi'nde Zihni Varlık (Vücüd-ı Zihni) Anlayışının Bilgi Felsefesi Bağlamında Değerlendirilmesi" [The Assessment of the conception of mental existence (*wujūd al-dhihni*) in Islamic thought with respect to epistemology]; however, the approaches are not subject of the study.<sup>7</sup>

3 For example, see al-Nayrizi, *Risāla fī taḥqīq ḥaḳīqat al-'ilm*, 1b-29a.

4 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya fī 'ilm al-ilāhiyya wa-l-ṭabī'iyya*, ed. Muḥammad Mu'taşim Billāh al-Baghdādī (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-'Arabī, 1990), 1:458; al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāsid*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umayra (Beirut: 'Ālam al-kutub, 1989), 2:307; Mullā Şadrā, *al-Hikmat al-muta'āliya fī al-asfār al-'aqliyya al-arba'a*, 3:303 (Hereafter *al-Asfār*).

5 Moiz Hasan, "Foundations of Science in the Post-Classical Islamic Era: The Philosophical, Historical and Historiographical Significance of Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's Project" (Unpublished PhD diss., Notre Dame University, 2017), 149-79.

6 Mahdi Ḥa'iri Yazdī, *Universal Science: An Introduction to Islamic Metaphysics*, trans. John Cooper (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 86-94.

7 Ahmet Pirinç, "İslam Düşüncesi'nde Zihni Varlık (Vücud-i Zihni) Anlayışının Bilgi Felsefesi Bağlamında Değerlendirilmesi," *Amasya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1, no. 2 (2014): 146-48.

## I. The Essence of Knowledge and Mental Existence

According to the theory of mental existence, the mind apprehends externally present beings through abstraction. Thus, this theory contains two foundational elements, namely, the idea of essence and the theory of an abstract soul. As such, the idea of mental existence depends on the exposition of these two ideas:

- i. The beings present in the exterior preserve their essences in the mind, that is, the external being's essence is the same as that of the being in the mind (the principle of *the conservation of essences*).<sup>8</sup>
- ii. There are rules and properties that apply to the external being but not to mental existence (the principle of *the variation of existence*).

Having juxtaposed the definition of knowledge as a mental form with this framework, the meaning of mental existence has to be clarified before its relation to knowledge can be presented. Hence, a discussion of which meanings appear on the semantic map of the concept of mind and which states of perception it corresponds to will be asked and followed by focusing on the relation between *form* and *knowledge*.

### a. The Concept of Mental Existence

The schools of Islamic thought agree on the indefinability of existence. Thus, what would evince the meaning of mental existence is the one attributed to the mind rather than to existence. It may be observed that the basic meanings of “mind” in post-classical debates are<sup>9</sup> (i) the faculty of perception itself, (ii) the soul that is endowed with this faculty, (iii) the soul combined with internal and external senses, and (iv) the first principles (*al-mabādi' al-'āliya*).

Given that “mind as the power of perception” refers to a faculty, that is the common meaning that the utterance entails.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, mind can be regarded as “a power that equips the soul with the processing of acquiring concepts (conception) and judgments (assent).<sup>11</sup>” In this aspect, it has a content that needs to be understood in reference to the knowledge that emerges as the soul's quality with the refinement of mental existence.

8 Avicenna expresses this principle thus: “The essence is preserved whether in respect to mind's apprehension or external existence.” See, *al-Shifā': al-Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. Georges Qanawāti, Sa'īd Zayd, and İbrāhīm Madkūr (Tehran: n.p., 1943), 1:140.

9 Tahānawī, *Kashshāf iştīlāhāt al-funūn wa-l-'ulūm*, ed. Rafiq al-'Ajam (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1996), 1:830.

10 Muştafā Shawkat el-Istānbūli, “Fī taḥqīq al-farq bayna al-dhihn wa-al-khārij wa-nafs al-amr,” *Majmū'at al-Fawā'id* (İstānbūl: Maḥmūd Bey Maṭba'ası, 1318/1902), 6.

11 Tahānawī, *Kashshāf iştīlāhāt al-funūn wa-l-'ulūm*, 1:830

The appellation of mind to the soul itself means that it is being named after the aspect of perception and that only intellection (*ta'āqūl*) is meant by it. Attributing this meaning to mind forms one of the fault lines between Avicennian philosophy, which makes a sharp categorical distinction between intellectual and sensory perception and the theological line of thought.

The subject that undertakes all forms of perception (e.g., sensation, imagination, estimation, and intellection) is the soul that is combined with both the internal and external senses. This meaning attributed to mind led to the debate whether it is the soul itself or the soul's means of perception that perceives the universal and particular forms.<sup>12</sup>

What is meant by first principles are intellect and soul. The intellect, object, and subject of intellection are identical in separate intellects due to the fact of their being. Since their knowledge is immediate (*ḥuḍūri*), their styles of perception and cognition do not contain the acquisition of forms and their knowledge cannot be regarded as a quality. Therefore, the inquiry concerning the critique of mental existence vis-à-vis the category of knowledge will not discuss the separate intellects. One can also suppose that the "knowledge by forms" applies to the soul for, according to the thesis of mental existence, the soul receives the forms of external beings by abstracting them from material accidents and thus both apprehends and comprehends them. These acquired and imprinted forms have a mental existence.

Taking this entire semantic map into account requires that the separate intellects and the knowledge by presence be disregarded, because the thesis of mental existence contains the ideas of realization, impression, and form. Even though the soul is, in essence, akin to intellect, its knowledge of external beings is acquisitive rather than direct, for it occurs through the form's reflection and impression in the soul. However, the forms of particular material beings originate in the senses and those of the universal beings in the soul, because according to Avicennian epistemology the soul does not perceive the particulars directly. The third meaning expresses this universal cognition, for "mind," as a power of knowledge acquisition (i.e., conception and assent), technically does not refer to mental existence because those who refute mental existence accept conception and assent without any metaphysical implication, as well as knowledge as a quality of the soul. Mind, in the sense of the perception of internal and external senses, together with intellection does not necessarily refer to mental existence. Therefore, the discussion's focal point is the link between mental existence at the axis where intellection resides and knowledge is the soul's quality.

12 Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Mahdī (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya, 2004), 1:109; Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 2:1377.

## b. Form and Knowledge

Avicennian philosophy defines knowledge as the “realization of form in the mind,” and mental existence as containing the idea that the external object takes place with its essence in the mind. This made the relation between knowledge and mental existence contested, with respect to both universality-particularity and the category of knowledge, which led some to a view that the idea of mental existence originates from the philosophers’ definition of knowledge. In his commentary on *Ḥikmat al-‘ayn*, Ibn Mubārakshāh (d. 784/1382) suggests that the debate on mental existence originates from the definition of knowledge, that the philosophers who define it as the realization of form in the mind accept mental existence, and that the theologians who define it as the relation between knower and known refute it.<sup>13</sup> Al-Jurjānī holds that the preference for the definition of knowledge cannot be a justification for accepting or refuting the idea of mental existence.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the presence of form in the definition of knowledge and the interpretation of knowledge as the realization of form is not a reason for accepting or refuting mental existence, but rather a consequence of it. In other words, one can posit that those who accept mental existence define knowledge as the realization of form and that those who refute it prefer other definitions.

Al-Jurjānī conveys form’s meanings as “a quality that takes place in the mind and a conduit and mirror for the imagination of the object that it was related to” and “the known discerned in mind.”<sup>15</sup> So we may speak of three things: the form (*ṣūra*), knowledge (*‘ilm*), and known (*ma’lūm*). Form is what the object of perception forms in the mind. As the human being knows the object by means of this form, which engenders the disclosure of the object’s essence in the mind, it is also regarded as knowledge. The known is basically the object itself, which is subject to knowledge, for what perceives the object is the knower and what is subject to perception is the known. When the object is perceived, either its meaning or a meaning of it is subject to knowledge. The form, which is abstracted from the object of perception and present in the mind, functions as a conduit of this meaning, and knowledge/knowing takes place when the meaning is disclosed by means of this form. Al-Siyālkūti points out that the form in the soul, the locus of knowledge,

13 Ibn Mubārakshāh, *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-‘ayn*, ed. Muḥammad Jān al-Karīmī (Qazān: Sharīf Jān-Ḥasan Jān Maṭba‘ası, 1319/1901), 18-19.

14 Al-Jurjānī, *Hāshiyā ‘alā Lawāmi’ al-asrār* (İstānbül: Ḥācī Muḥarrem Efendi Maṭba‘ası, 1303/1886), 27; *Hāshiyā ‘alā Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-‘ayn*, ed. Muḥammad Jān al-Karīmī (Qazān: Sharīf Jān-Ḥasan Jān Maṭba‘ası, 1319/1901), 19.

15 Al-Jurjānī, *Hāshiyā ‘alā Lawāmi’ al-asrār*, 119-20.

is the conduit of meaning via the expression “the essences that are conserved in forms, which subsist in their receptacles” (*al-māhiyyāt al-mahfūza fi tilka al-ṣuwar al-qā’ima bi-l-mahāll*).<sup>16</sup>

For those who pursue the idea of mental existence, form as knowledge and *res cogitatum* are the same thing in essence but vary in aspect. One aspect is the form’s presence in the soul, and the other is that the form is the essence of *res extensa*. For those who refute mental existence, the mental form is an accident, its being is external, and therefore the objects have no mental existence *sensu stricto*. In this condition, what is universal is not the form but the meaning that is known by means of it.<sup>17</sup> For instance, the form of the human being is different from the human being in the exterior in essence and is only an exemplar (*mithāl*) of it. The meaning that is known via this form is the concept of the human being. When we say “the human being is present in the mind,” the exemplar that exists in that mind has a relation in particular with the essence of the human being, and the said exemplar is the knowledge of the human being, not other beings, because of that relation. In other words, the said form engenders the unfolding of the human being’s essence in the mind thanks to this relation. In this interpretation, the meaning of humanity is not a mental form present in each individual and equivalent in essence to them when abstracted from the individuals and apprehended by the mind, but rather a common meaning that emerges with the allotment<sup>18</sup> of the relation of the mental exemplar with the individuals in the exterior. Accordingly, universality cannot relate to intellectual forms that are exemplars of the external object because this exemplar cannot be a predicate to the individuals in the exterior. What is a predicate to the individuals in the exterior is the essence and concept of what is known by means of this exemplar.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the mental form is not a universal in this interpretation; rather, what is universal is the concept and meaning that are known by means of it.

The mirror metaphor, which is frequently employed to explain the mind’s conception task,<sup>20</sup> can be utilized to discuss both the dual aspects of the form and

16 Al-Siyālkūti, *Hāshiya ‘alā Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Sa‘āda, 1325/1907), 33.

17 al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjāni, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* (İstanbul: Dār al-ṭibā‘at al-‘āmira, 1266/1850), 280.

18 The lots (*hıṣṣa*) are respective individuals obtained by attributing a general concept to each and every individual. See al-Siyālkūti, *Hāshiya ‘alā Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 2:159; Tahānāwī, *Kashshāf*, I, 679.

19 Al-Jurjāni, *Hāshiya ‘alā Lawāmi‘ al-asrār*, 120; idem, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 280.

20 Al-Jurjāni noted the benefits of taking into consideration the difference between a thing that is subject to imagination and a means for reflection on another thing in several logical and linguistic issues. He also penned a separate treatise (*Risālat al-mir‘āt*), in which he took up this matter. For the places he used the mirror metaphor in this context, cf. *Hāshiya ‘alā Sharḥ al-Tajrid*, MS Damad İbrahim Paşa 785:



the problem of the category of knowledge and mental existence. Thus, the person looking into the mirror sometimes turns to the form in the mirror and concerns itself with it, studying its state. At this juncture, the mirror, its purity, brightness, and other similar qualities are disregarded. The mirror is used as an instrument to examine the image, and the image is attained by means of the mirror. In this situation, what is really subject to examination is not the mirror but rather the image in the mirror, for at this point there is no intentional turn to the mirror. Thus, the onlooker will be ignorant of the mirror's state and cannot make any judgment about it. Sometimes the person consciously and intentionally turns to the mirror and examines the mirror itself. Neglecting and disregarding the images in the mirror, its qualities are observed.

Likewise, the mind sometimes intentionally turns toward a concept. Thus, it could reflect on the concept itself, rather than the state of things for which it was a predicate. Sometimes the mind makes the concept a means for reflection on the particular objects for which it was a predicate, like a mirror. In this way, it may come to know the qualities and attributes of the particulars. For example, someone who supposes that "possibility is the counterpart of necessity" makes the concept and the essence of possibility a subject matter of thought. On this point, it does not use possibility as a means to a predicate about the possible beings who are individuals. However, when it says that "contingent beings depend on a necessary being," it transmits an attribute of possibility (i.e., dependence) to the particulars. In this second case, it employs the concept of possibility as a mirror in order to imagine the contingent beings and judge them in this respect.<sup>21</sup> The first is called "the knowledge of one aspect," and the second is "the knowledge by one aspect"<sup>22</sup> for the possibility, an aspect of contingent beings, is the subject of inquiry without recourse to the particulars in the first case, whereas in the second case contingent beings are subjects to the conception with respect to their contingency.

We can apply this metaphor to the discussion of category. Thus, let's imagine a house with windows on three sides. Three mirrors looking outside stand in front of the mirrors. In different shapes and forms, these mirrors have nothing in common aside from being mirrors. Let's assume that each mirror is turned toward multiple

69b-70b; *Hāshiyā 'alā Lawāmi' al-asrār*, 156; *Risāla Ḥarfiyya*, Hacı Selim Ağa Library, MS Kemankeş 341: 55a; and *Risālat al-mir'āt*, Süleymaniye Library, MS Ayasofya 04868: 43a-43b. Hasan Chalabî mentions the same metaphor in his gloss on *al-Mawaqif*. See Hasan Chalabî, *Hāshiyā 'alā Sharḥ al-Mawaqif* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'āda, 1325/1907), 6:6.

21 al-Jurjānī, *Hāshiyā 'alā Sharḥ al-Tajrid*, 69b-70a.

22 Idem, *Risālat al-mir'āt*, 43a-43b.

beings present on the outside. For instance, the first one overlooks human beings, the second one plants, and the third one animals. Now, each mirror reflects the beings that it overlooks, thus containing a multiple attribution in itself. Each singular being has an attribution in the mirror. However, this multiplicity does not subvert the unity of the mirror. Thus, these mirrors have a single being with respect to their presence inside the house independent of the particular being that they reflect. Their relation to each other is like the relation of the singular individuals to each other. Just as the single individuals cannot be predicates to each other, so these are in the character of singular objects that cannot be predicates of each other. Therefore, while the mirrors are particular beings with respect to being objects like the other items inside the house, they assume multiplicity vis-à-vis the objects outside that they were overlooking. Once we apply this metaphor to the concepts of human, plant, and animal, the house stands for the human mind and the three mirrors for the concepts of human, plant, and animal present in the mind. These concepts reflect some of the external individuals like the mirror, acting as predicates to them. In this respect they are universals. However, this relation of these individuals to the concepts neither multiplies the concept nor disturbs the unity of itself. They are particulars with respect to being mental forms independent of the individuals for which they are predicates.

Inasmuch as this metaphor may serve as an explanation for a mental form being universal in one aspect and particular in another, it is appropriate for describing it as being both an accident and a substance, because when the mind begins thinking the form and imagines it in its essence (i.e., holds it in regard of its essence but not as an instrument of another), it may behold it as an accident whose existence resides in the mind.<sup>23</sup> It is doubtful that this metaphor, which may be employed to further clarify the issue in the mind, secures a resolution, for these questions still have to be answered: If the form is an accident and a quality in the second aspect, does this not mean that it is not in the category of quality itself? In the first aspect, in which category does the form belong? If the relevant two aspects belong to a single form, and knowledge and known are one with respect to their essence but different in attributes according to the essentialist approach, then why is knowledge in the category of quality but the known, which is one with it in essence, is in the same category in essence with respect to its external object?

23 Al-Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyā 'alā Sharḥ al-Tajrīd*, vr. 70a. al-Taftāzānī points out that the two aspects of the form need to be considered to resolve the problem of form being both a substance and an accident, both a universal and a particular. See al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 2:306-07.

### c. The Background of the Problem and the Main Standpoints

Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzi's efforts to present the implications of Avicennian thought as regards the nature of perception and knowledge, as well as his critique of mental existence, left a legacy of three notable, interrelated debates to posterity: (i) what the realization of the form in the mind means, (ii) the problem of mental existence and the category of knowledge, and (iii) the problem of the identity of the knower and the known.

Clearly, the concept of form stands in the axis of these debates, for form leads to the debate of *realization* with respect to its mental existence, the debate of *identity* with respect to the relation between the form that intellect and the one that is subject to intellection, and the debate of *category* with respect to the link between form and knowledge. Tracing a thread of these issues in Peripatetic philosophy in general, and Avicennian thought and texts in particular, is neither the aim of this article nor within its limits. Such topics are covered in studies that present the course of the relevant debates in the case of Avicenna.<sup>24</sup>

This study seeks to exhibit the course of the second debate in the aftermath of the thirteenth century and the pertinent approaches. But first, let's look at the outline of the question's transmission.

Avicenna's statements in *al-Shifā'* III.8, which hold that the soul's knowledge is an accident, stands at the focal point of the debate on the category of knowledge. This appears to contradict both the idea of mental existence and the notion of perfection and the passages where he accepted the idea of identity. If the idea of identity is refuted, then the relation between soul and form that occurs in the soul following the process of abstraction through internal and external senses has to figure either as matter-form relation or as substance-accident relation. Thus, the soul is the receptacle or subject of the form in itself.

One cannot suppose that the soul is a receptacle for the intelligible just as matter is for form, because that would make the soul a compound entity. If such was the case, then we would have to speak of the intelligible as having combined with the soul that engenders a third entity's coming into being, just as the object

24 For example, see Ömer Türker, *İbn Sinâ'da Metafizik Bilginin İmkamı Sorunu* (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010), 32-82; İbrahim Halil Uçer, "Özdeşlikten Temsile: İbn Sinâ'ya göre İnsani Nefs'te Bilin-Bilinen Özdeşliği Sorunu," *Nazariyât: İslam Felsefe ve Bilim Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 4, no. 2 (2018): 1-54; Ömer Mahir Alper, "Avicenna on the Ontological Nature of Knowledge and Its Categorical Status," *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 2, no. 1 (2006): 25-35; Mervenur Yılmaz, "İbn Sinâ'da Bilginin Kategorisi" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Marmara University, 2015).

comes into being as the form is combined with the matter. However, according to Avicenna, intellection expresses the soul's perfection while maintaining itself in essence. Moreover, this condition also requires intellection by those natural objects that possess form. However, one of the basic propositions of the idea of mental existence is the difference of the realization of the intelligible form in matter and in the soul. On the other hand, form resides in its receptacle (i.e., matter), and matter qua being subsists on form. Since the soul is an abstract substance in essence, we cannot speak of it, qua being, as subsisting on intelligible form. Hence, it would be impossible for the soul to be form's receptacle. The alternative, that the soul is a substance and knowledge is an accident in it, is also problematic because the soul fulfills its perfection by conjunction with intelligible forms passing through the stations of actual intellect, intellect in habitus and acquired intellect in the course of apprehension. However, accidents neither actualize nor fulfill their subjects. Also, accident is part and parcel of the compound, even though it is not a part of its subject. Intelligible forms in the soul are in no way part of the soul, which is simple in itself.<sup>25</sup>

Subsequently, if knowledge is presumed to be an accident, then it follows that what occurs in the soul is only an exemplar and shadow of what is subject to intellection, which means denial of mental existence. In that case, either knowledge is not to be defined as the realization of the intelligible in the soul and mental existence has to be denied, or if the definition stands, the view of identity has to be adopted and knowledge has to be non-accidental. Therefore, refuting identity on the one hand and accepting mental existence on the other, as well as accepting mental existence and the proposition that knowledge is an accident, appear to be irreconcilable positions.<sup>26</sup>

Given the difficulty of their composition, Avicennian commentators like Naşır al-Din al-Ṭūsī and Quṭb al-Din al-Rāzī, while not abandoning the opinion that knowledge is the realization of form, employed the notion of the exemplar, preferring interpretations that suggest dismissing the metaphysical aspect of the idea of mental existence which means the exact correspondence of the image formed in mind to the external object in terms of essence, and containing it on a logical plane. Those who embrace a view similar to Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī keep their distance not only from the idea of mental existence, but also from the supposition that knowledge is the realization of form, thereby repeating the suggestion that

25 For the details of the discussion, see Mervener Yılmaz, "İbn Sînâ'da Bilginin Kategorisi," 118-21; 147-48; Türker, *İbn Sînâ'da Metafizik Bilginin İmkânı Sorunu*, 65-68.

26 Türker, *İbn Sînâ'da Metafizik Bilginin İmkânı Sorunu*, 64.

only predication can be demonstrated in terms of knowledge. Some others like al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, ‘Alī al-Qūshjī, al-Dawwānī, al-Dashtakī, and Mullā Şadrā tried to resolve the category problem within the bounds of theory while keeping the thought of retaining the idea of mental existence.

#### **d. Solution Attempts outside the Boundaries of the Theory**

The problem concerning the category of knowledge basically arises from the tension between the presumption that knowledge is an accident in the category of quality, having defined knowledge as form, and the supposition that form is equivalent in essence to the external object. Therefore, the necessity of categorical equivalence for the form and the external object that are equivalent in essence contrasts with the fact of the assumption that knowledge is quality and accident. In this case, the questions of why form is present in the categories of both substance and accident, as well as both universal and particular, emerge. According to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, who employs this argument against mental existence where relevant, this is a significant objection<sup>27</sup>:

There is a strong objection stated in this matter. Thus, knowledge is form that corresponds to what it is the subject of, that realizes in knower. If the subject of the knowledge (i.e., the external object) is an essence (*dhāt*) by itself, the knowledge of it is proper to it and of its kind. One is common with another kind in its nature, if only it is common with it in genus. But [in their opinion] substance is the genus of what is subsumed under its category. In this case, a mental form is a substance. No substance is an accident. Thus a mental form is not an accident.<sup>28</sup>

If the form in the mind is equivalent in essence to its external object, then it has to be a substance in case that what is subject to knowledge is also a substance. However, form is an accident because it exists in the mind. A thing that exists as a subject cannot be a substance. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī opines that the responses

27 For the relevant places where Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī took up this argument with respect to universality and the category of knowledge, cf. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith*, 1:458-59; 2:377; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fi al-mantiq wa-l-ḥikma*, ed. İsmail Hanoğlu, “Fahredden Er-Rāzī’nin ‘Kitabü’l-Mūlahhas fi’l-mantik ve’l-ḥikme’ Adlı Eserinin Tahkik ve Değerlendirmesi” (Unpublished PhD diss., Ankara University, 2009), 370-72; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mantiq al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, ed. Aḥad Farāmarz Qarāmalikī (Tehran: Intishārāt-ı Dānishgāh-ı Imām Şādiq, 1381/1961), 29-30; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ ‘Uyūn al-ḥikma*, ed. Aḥmad Hījāzī Aḥmad Saqqā (Tehran: Mu’assasat al-Şādiq, 1373/1953), 2:296-97; 3:16-17, 101-02; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt*, ed. ‘Alī Riḍā Najafzāda (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āşār va Mafakhir-i Farhangī 1383/1963), 2:221, 238-39, 291-92.

28 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith*, 1:458.

following the definition of the substance cannot be a remedy.<sup>29</sup> That he does not conceive of perception and knowledge as either forms or a realization of forms indicates that he regards knowledge not as just a quality. As a matter of fact, the goal of his critique of mental existence is not to obtain a certain solution concerning the essence and category of knowledge, for he expressly states that one cannot give a true definition for knowledge.<sup>30</sup> That is why, despite his refutation of the supposition that “knowledge is impression and realization of form,” it would be premature to view his comments concerning knowledge, which vary between predication and attribution, as contradictory. Because they do not comprise statements on the essence of knowledge, which is said to be impossible to know, but rather only the employment of elements in knowledge that emerge as a result of an abstraction process in order to formulate a definition. For instance, al-Rāzī sets form as a condition of knowledge, arguing that knowledge cannot be just predication if it is the imagination of non-existent things. Thus a form has to occur in the mind, and knowledge is the relation between the mind and this form.<sup>31</sup>

However, he counts four approaches to knowledge in *al-Maṭālib* (i.e., pure relation, a true attribute, a relative attribute, and a negative attribute) and favors the first one.<sup>32</sup> Because he is aware that the thesis lying at the basis of his critique, “it is necessary that the truth of a thing is present in all of its kinds and it has to be present everywhere this truth is attested,” also applies to the approach of pure relation, but this approach does not apply to all kinds of knowledge, he accedes to the presence of form, for example, in the imagination of that which is non-existent.<sup>33</sup> Even if one presumes the realization of knowledge by form, al-Rāzī supposes that form cannot be the knowledge itself but only a condition of it.<sup>34</sup> Although he does not categorically dismiss form’s presence in certain kinds of knowledge or certain phases of intellection, he argues that knowledge is neither the form itself nor its realization on the grounds that the only certain element of knowledge is relation, and what is beyond it cannot be proven.

29 Ibid., 459.

30 Ibid., 450.

31 Ibid., 446, 450; al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 2:218. At the conclusion of the chapter on theories of sight, al-Rāzī accedes that there must be a form in soul in the perception of imaginary forms, but declares his hesitancy as to whether there is a need for form in the perception of a thing with extension. Idem, *al-Mabāḥith*, 2:320.

32 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-‘āliya min al-‘ilm al-ilāhi*, ed. Aḥmad Hījāzī Aḥmad Saqqā (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1987), 3:103.

33 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith*, 1:450.

34 Al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib*, 7:81.

Al-Rāzī, who regards relation as a *sine qua non* of knowledge, reserves separate headings for and criticizes the ideas of impression, active intellect, and identity.<sup>35</sup> In consideration of the construction of knowledge on the two fundamental concepts of abstraction (*tajrīd*) and identity (*ittiḥād*) in the Peripatetic school, we can interpret his refutation of the Avicennian theory of abstraction (i.e., the mind's reception of the object's form and essence by mind) as being not only a logical process, but one that also includes the identity of mind with form in a metaphysical sense. Then, is it not possible to explain the epistemological process without identity but just abstraction, namely, mind taking the form of an extended object? Al-Rāzī replies that this is not possible, because the idea of knowledge as impression makes sense only when joined with the idea of the "identity of intellect with intelligible form." In that case, one who supposes that knowledge is impression itself must also agree with identity, because the latter is necessary in order to distinguish the presence of blackness in the mind and in the object. Hence, if you refute identity, according to al-Rāzī, you should agree that knowledge is something beyond impression.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, noting the *problématique* of the relation between knowledge and mental existence and making an argument out of it, he supposes that meanings and mental images are not abstract in the sense that the philosophers used the term, even though they occupy a different plane than external beings and qualities.<sup>37</sup> Conveying the holistic idea of human being to knowledge, he criticizes the notion of the abstract soul following from the soul's acts and argues that perception and epistemic process, as acts of the soul, exhibit a complex structure and cannot be independent of particulars. Holding the opinion that this contradicts the notion of mental existence, which presumes a strict, categorical distinction between mental and material existence and illustrates perception and knowledge as a vertical process where soul is detached entirely from the particular, al-Rāzī's statements from *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* lay bare his real concern:

It is true that 'the animate without the condition of validation' [i.e. the natural universal] exists. Because one that is in the exterior is a part of something, therefore it also has external being. But 'the animate on the condition of negation' [i.e. the abstract quiddity] does not exist. It is clear that it has no external being. Neither does it exist in the mind, for we deny mental existence. Even if we allow for it, we do not accept that the quiddity is abstract in the mind, because its abstractness devolves from its attachments. Thus, the abstract [quiddity] with the register of abstractness in itself

35 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith*, 1:442-49.

36 Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 2:229.

37 Idem, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, 216; al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith*, 2:377.

is not abstracted from all attachments. Then, notwithstanding the difference between considering the quiddity in itself and considering it with conditions, the quiddity can never be abstract. Thus, the notable proposition that the quiddity is abstract in the mind is proven false.<sup>38</sup>

Removed from metaphysical assumptions and located on a logical plane, these statements clearly indicate that, in the case of al-Rāzī, the problem does not lie with accepting mental form. It also shows on what grounds theologians refute mental existence. Noting that abstract quiddity exists neither in the exterior nor in the mind, al-Rāzī argues that it cannot be abstract even if it had been present in the mind. Hence, since “being in the mind” and “abstractness” are attachments to quiddity, we cannot speak of quiddity as being abstract without it being abstracted from these. Therefore, while quiddity in itself is distinct from quiddity considered with some conditions (i.e., the abstract quiddity and realised quiddity) in aspect, quiddities are not abstract in the mind. We see that al-Rāzī carefully distinguishes between the logical and metaphysical planes, because while he accepts the said segments of the essence each as an aspect, he refutes its metaphysical implications. The most visible example of this is his statements that appear a few pages later on, suggesting that the parts of the quiddity are one in the exterior but can be distinguished in the mind.<sup>39</sup> Because genus and differentia are analyzed as parts of quiddity therein, and this section carries no metaphysical intimation. This state of affairs is a clear example of removing metaphysical implications from the theory of mental existence.<sup>40</sup>

Against Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s substantial critique, thinkers of the Avicennian perspective like al-Ṭūsī and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī made comments that would lessen the theory’s severity by employing the concepts of form, exemplar, and essence independent of their metaphysical implications. Al-Ṭūsī states that the concept of representation (*tamaththul*) that Avicenna used in definition of perception in *al-Ishārāt* III.7 contains both the perception that does not need abstraction (*intizā*) and the perception that is carried out by abstracting the forms of corporeal beings, as well as the statement that the object of perception resides with itself in the

38 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, 221.

39 Ibid., *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, 224.

40 According to Bilal Ibrahim, when al-Rāzī speaks of “quiddity in itself, he consistently ties the notion to intentional terms, such as *i’tibār*, which underscore the mind-dependence of the distinction.” Cf. Bilal Ibrahim, “Freeing Philosophy from Metaphysics: Rāzī’s Philosophical Approach to the Study of Natural Phenomena” (Unpublished PhD diss., McGill University, 2013), 268-69.



former and with the exemplar in the latter.<sup>41</sup> Commenting on these statements, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī sets forth such a scheme:

- i. The perception of corporeal beings.
- ii. The perception of abstracts.
  - ii.a. The perception of abstracts excepting the perceptive subject.
  - ii.b. The perception of abstracts not excepting the perceptive subject.

The perception of corporeal beings (i) is carried out by means of the forms taken from extended beings in the exterior. The perception of abstracts, except for the perceptive subject (ii.a), takes place with the realization of forms; however, there is no need for abstraction here. The perception of abstracts, not excepting the perceptive (ii.b) subject, occurs by itself due to their presence in the soul. Having noted, like al-Ṭūsī, Avicenna's use of the word "representation" to incorporate all of these meanings, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's account leads to the following conclusion:

- i. The perception of corporeal beings is both realized and abstract.
  - ii.a. The perceptive subject's perception of abstract beings, excepting itself, is realized but not abstract.
  - ii.b. The perceptive subject's perception of itself and its qualities is immediate.

What Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī says about the perceptive subject's perception of abstract beings, excepting itself, is consistent with Avicenna's statements in *al-Shifā'* III.8. There, he suggests that they do not have a form that will be abstracted from them and that only exemplars and effects can be in the soul, since they cannot, by themselves, be in the soul. But the questions of what to make of the exemplars and effects of abstract intelligibles in the exterior, and what is meant by their perception to be fulfilled by realization, are also valid for Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Leaving aside this issue, let's focus on "whether the perception of the material objects outside the perceptive subject was carried out through a form that is equivalent to their essences or through an exemplar" and the questions of the category of knowledge via the following statements of al-Ṭūsī:

The essence of a thing is what is [acquired from] itself without [recourse to] the accidents external to that thing [s essence] and realized in the mind. For this reason, the word *māhiyya* (quiddity) derives from *ma huwa* (lit. "what it is," whatness), for that responds to it. That being the case, the word of the person saying "the intelligible [form of] sky

41 Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt* (Qom: Nashr al-balāgha, 1393/1973), 2:310.

[that is in the mind] is not equivalent to the sky that is in the exterior” means that the [form of the] intelligible sky that is abstracted from attachments is not equivalent to the sensory [i.e., subject to sensation] sky that is present with those attachments. Thus, if that person means by nonequivalence to be abstract or not, the person is right. The person is wrong if what is meant is the nonequivalence of the concept of sky itself between the abstract [sky] and the one that is present with [material] attachments. Based on that, like the man of wisdom [Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī] who says that this means the nonequivalence of the [form of the] intelligible sky with the [externally] present sky in terms of the its whole intelligibility, that is, when it is subject to intellection, the person added the expression that the [form of the] intelligible sky is not equivalent to the [externally] present sky with respect to its whole essence. And what you hear is this nonsense, for besides the equivalence of the [form of the] intelligible sky and the [externally] present sky, it is the thing itself. (...) The [form of the] intelligible sky cannot be the essence of the sky when regarded as an accident residing in any soul. However, it gets to be its essence with respect to being a form that is realized in the mind and corresponds to it.<sup>42</sup>

The passage lends cues that support al-Ṭūsī’s employment of the term on a logical plane. Some of these cues are the mention of the meaning of quiddity as the answer of the question “What is it?” as well as the supposition that the concept of the sky is equivalent to the sky in the exterior, and the interpretation of “whole essence,” (*tamām al-māhiyya*) cited from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s objection, as the “whole intelligibility” (*tamām al-ma’quliyya*). While al-Rāzī objects to ‘essence’ in a metaphysical sense, al-Ṭūsī criticizes him for taking it to a logical plane. Pointing out the issue’s categorical dimension, al-Ṭūsī contends that it is an accident, as it resides in the soul, and also an essence of the external object, as it is a mental form. Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī suggests that this is a reply to the criticism that “an accident has to be a substance in case the form of the intelligible sky is the sky’s essence, which is impossible”, and conveys al-Ṭūsī’s answer as follows: “The intelligible sky present in the mind has two aspects: The first is its residing with the soul, and the second is that it is a form that corresponds to the sky in the exterior. While it is an accident vis-à-vis the former, it is the sky’s essence to the latter.”<sup>43</sup>

As relayed in the last section below, which focuses on the approaches, this stance reflects the perspective that views the form in two aspects so that it can resolve the problem of the category of knowledge while retaining the idea of mental existence. However, al-Ṭūsī and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s use of the concepts of form

42 Ibid., 3:281-82.

43 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Muḥākamāt bayn sharḥay al-Ishārāt: Sharḥ Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-Tanbihāt* (Qom: Nashr al-balāgha, 1393/1973), 3:282.

and essence in a logical sense is a departure from the idea of mental existence, which is a metaphysical statement that subsumes the mind's reception of the object's essence by being abstracted from its external being.

Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, who suggests that what is realized in the soul is not the truth of the material beings but rather their exemplars,<sup>44</sup> indicates the contention that any answer incorporating the form's two aspects would give rise to the question of how the form could be a universal, following from its realization, which presents itself in mental determinations, in a certain soul. In this case, one could not qualify the form in the mind as a universal for possessing mental existence while deeming it an accident for residing with the soul, because, he opines, one cannot speak of the presence of a form present in the mind that would be same as the individuals when present in the exterior. That the universal meaning is common to all individuals in the exterior just means its valid predication to them.<sup>45</sup> Thus, for instance, the form of animateness obtained from the individual human being in the exterior and realized in the mind is not a form that would be same as the individual animate being when present in the exterior; rather, it would be one in existence with the individual in the exterior, but different from it in terms of conception in the mind.

Reviewing Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's statement, al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī writes that such a perspective means asserting that it is not the essences of beings, but rather their forms and exemplars, which are in fact different from them, that come into existence in the mind. He argues that a fraction of people embrace this view, which accedes to the mental existence of beings only in a metaphorical sense, but that it is of no consequence because, according to the verifiers (*muhakkikūn*), what exists in the mind is the essences of beings and their presentation of themselves as shades.<sup>46</sup>

Thinkers who take a similar stance to that of al-Ṭūsī and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the status of intelligible form in the question of mental existence, among them Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī and Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, propose a solution that can be considered ad hoc in theory as regards the issues of identity and the category of knowledge. In this context, the theory of exemplar/meaning that they espoused, as well as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's more extensive theory of correlation, are alternative approaches to the thesis of mental existence.

44 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Muḥākamāt*, 2:312.

45 Kutbüddin er-Rāzī, *Tümeller Risâlesi ve Şerhleri: Risâle fî Tahkiki'l-külliyât: (eleştirmeli metin-çeviri-tpkbasım)*, ed. Ömer Türker (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2013), 23.

46 Al-Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyā 'alā Lawāmi' al-asrār*, 120.

## II. The Category of Knowledge and Mental Existence

Clearly, the desire and effort to determine the essence of knowledge drove the debate on the category of knowledge. The experience of knowledge readily attested to by everyone in everyday life does not mean that its truth and essence are also readily available. Once a human being perceives something, he or she perceives it by actually experiencing the emergence of a new state, not by the annihilation of something but rather the formation of one that was previously absent in his or her self. This can only take place by the aforementioned thing's detachment from another and its coming into being.<sup>47</sup> But when this statement is scrutinized, it raises different definitions and explanations like the fable of the blind men groping the elephant. In the experience of knowledge that is actually attested to, those who focus on the link between the knower and known place knowledge in the category of relation. Those who accede to the latter as a condition of knowledge but argue for the formation of an image/form in our mind place it in quality, whereas those who take note of the perceived things' influence on the intelligent subject place it in affection.

The question of the category of knowledge is part and parcel of the most significant critique of mental existence with respect to the thesis that the perception of a thing runs through the presence of its essence in the mind. The debate originating from Avicenna's statements about knowledge being an accident in III.8 of the *Metaphysics*, basically arises from the mental form's reference both as an accident to the knowledge defined as form by the philosophers and as an essence to that which is equivalent to the external object in essence:

As for knowledge, there is an objection to [the thesis] that it is an accident. Accordingly, one can say: Knowledge consists of the forms obtained by being abstracted from beings. These are forms of substances and accidents. Even if the forms of accidents can be accidents, how can the forms of substances be accidents? Substance is a substance by itself, and therefore it is a substance the essence of which is not a subject. Whether in respect of rational apprehension or external existence, its essence is preserved in both states.<sup>48</sup>

In his reply to this objection, Avicenna utilizes the example of a magnet to suggest that externally a substance's not being a subject of anything forms the essence of the substance. Hence the form, being a subject of something when it is in the mind, does not contradict the definition of substance when it is in the

47 Al-Siyālkūti, *Hāshiya 'alā sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 6:2; Taftāzāni, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 2:300.

48 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā' al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 1:140. For a similar discourse, see Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ta'liqāt*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Badawī (Qom: Maktabat al-i'lām al-Islāmī, 1984), 73. For an analysis of this issue, see Ömer Türker, *İbn Sīnā'da Metafizik Bilginin İmkânı Sorunu*, 50-66.

exterior. For the quality of not being subject of anything is also valid for the mental form. The definitions of accident and substance are given at the level of quiddity. In other words, once we take note of a thing freed from its being in the exterior or in the mind, it is a substance if it has an essence that in case it is present in the exterior requires it not to be a subject of anything, and it is an accident if it has an essence that impedes it from being a subject of anything. But adding a qualifier like “in case it is present in the exterior” to the definition of substance raises several additional questions. The following statement is like an account of this debate:

Philosophers divided the possible being into parts of substance and accident. They defined the substance as “being present not as a subject of.” [Thus] a problem arose from their point of view: [This definition] necessitates that the substances in the mind not be substances, because they are not a subject of anything. However, whether related to intelligent apprehension or external being, a substance is what it is. [In order to overcome the problem,] they spoke as such: [What is meant by definition is] the substance’s not being in a subject when it is present in the exterior. That is, we do not mean by substance a thing that [actually] came into being in the exterior and is not a subject of anything. On the contrary, whether it is present in the exterior or not, when substance exists it is not a subject of anything. In that case, it also incorporates the intelligible form of the substance that comes into being in the mind.<sup>49</sup>

What is meant by “the intelligible form that is not a subject of anything when it is present in the exterior”? Given the definition of substance in terms of essence, while it suffices to say that it is not a subject of anything, why is the said phrase added to maintain the mental form’s substantiality? When the external object’s essence is received in the mind, we cannot treat it as an ‘essence in itself’, because it is present in that mode of existence then and thus has to exhibit the qualities necessitated by its being there. In this case, the mental form will be an accident, and what we call an ‘essence in itself’ will be an aspect. In other words, it would only mean ‘considering the form freed from mental accidents’. That being the case, the supposition that the mental form is a substance will lose its validity, lift the ‘essence in itself’ from its metaphysical context, and turn it into a pure meaning and concept.

On the other hand, if what is meant by “the mental form that is not a subject of anything when it is in the exterior,” is, for instance, the universal form of humanity common to many individuals being carried from the mind to the exterior, and let it be as an individual that is not a subject of anything, then it is the universal becoming the particular by itself. If what is intended is that the form, which is a

49 Al-Siyalkūti, *Ḥāshiyā ‘alā Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 5:8.

quality of the soul, is a substance when it is in the exterior, then the mental form has to be a quality that would turn into substance when in the exterior, given that form is in the category of quality in this sense. If what is meant by it is just an assumption, then one could make this assumption for each quiddity.

In addition, this allows those who defend the 'idea of exemplar' to establish a relationship between the exemplary form and the external being similar to this. Accordingly, one can then say that a human image on the wall, for instance, can be a substance when it is in the exterior. Those who defend mental existence, despite all of these questions and problems and attempt to surmount the criticism by locating the form in the category of quality, propounded several views. They are al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, 'Alī al-Qūshjī, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Dashtakī, al-Dawwānī, and Mullā Ṣadrā, all of whom lived between the 14th and 18th centuries.

### **a. The Variance of the Aspects**

Some of those who support the view of mental existence counter that something can be both a substance and an accident in different aspects, since accident is not a genus. Thus accident is a predicate in one of nine categories, but not a part of their essences, rather a requirement for them. In that case, the mental form of an external substance can be a substance in terms of essence and an accident in terms of being, for the accident will not be its genus. Hence, the accident is a predicate to the mental form with respect to being, not to its essence. The mental form is an essence that is not a subject of anything when in the exterior. This form does require a subject, namely, a mind, but requiring a subject in the mind does not contradict that this is not the case when it is in the exterior, for a substance is, by definition, not a subject of anything in the exterior. That the form of substance in the mind is an accident for residing with mind does not categorically make it an accident, for an accident is not the genus of any of the nine categories and thus is not incorporated by the essence. So, given its non-incorporation, it is attached to the form by means of its presence in the mind, not its essence. Then, "the mental form is a substance" means that it is a substance that is not a subject of anything when present in the exterior, whereas "the mental form is an accident" means its being in the mind. Thus, why is the substance, which by definition is not a subject of anything when in the exterior, not a subject of anything when in the mind? Therefore, there is no state in which a thing is a substance and an accident in a single aspect.<sup>50</sup>

50 al-Jurjānī, *Hāshiyā 'alā Lawāmi' al-asrār*, 120; al-Jurjānī, *Hāshiyā 'alā Maṭāli' al-anzār*, ed. Ḥasan Mujtabāzāde (Qom: Intishārāt-ī Rā'id, 2015), 1:468.

In this response to the critique, what lies at the basis of the possibility of a thing being both a substance and an accident is the supposition that an accident is not a super-genus. Since an accident cannot be a genus, the mental form could be a substance with respect to its essence and an accident with respect to its being. But the argument can be formulated in another way, by substituting *quality* for *accident*: ‘Hence, the knowledge that the philosophers defined as a mental form is an accident that resides with the soul and in the category of quality. The beings present in the exterior maintain their essences in the mind. Therefore, if a being is a substance in the exterior it is also a substance in the mind. In that case, the mental form would be a quality on one hand and a substance on the other, which would mean that a thing can be both a substance and a quality in a single aspect.’

Note that the answer above will not be satisfactory if the argument is formulated in such a manner, because in the way put above it is founded on the supposition that an accident is not the genus of its subcategories. But, this formulation is based on knowledge qua quality. Therefore, while one can explain mental form (i.e., knowledge) being both substance and accident by that it is a substance vis-à-vis its essence and an accident vis-à-vis its being, it cannot, as such, be both substance and quality in the same manner. Because, just like substance, quality is the super-genus of its substrates, so one cannot say that a mental form is a substance with respect to its essence and a quality with respect to its being. To state that knowledge is both a substance and a quality would mean to suppose that it occupies two super-categories simultaneously with respect to its essence. However, this is impossible because, as stated earlier, categories differ in terms of their essence. Therefore, the first answer given, namely, that an accident is not a super-genus, will not apply to the second formulation. As both are super-genus and included in the essence, one cannot suppose that the form is a substance in its essence and a quality in its being.

## **b. The Distinction of Realization and Subsistence**

According to ‘Alī al-Qūshjī, who attempted to overcome the criticism that the mind has to be qualified with what occurs in it and the category of knowledge by making a distinction between *realization* (*ḥuṣūl*) and *subsistence* (*qiyām*), one can argue that the presence of attributes like warmth and coolness in the mind does not necessitate that the mind to qualified by them, since such attributes are related to external being. However, the same answer has nothing to say about when the essential requirements like duality and impossibility are used to qualify the mind. In this case, when being single and double is present in the mind, the mind has to be

qualified by being single and double as well because a thing being single and double means that it contains within itself the presence of singleness and doubleness.

Similarly, when the impossible non-existent is present in the mind, the mind also has to be qualified by impossibility.<sup>51</sup> From this point of view, the answer concerning warmth and coolness will not be convincing. That is, it cannot be said that 'the qualification of a thing by being single and double has anything to do with the attributes concerning its external being. In addition, the qualification of the non-existent with impossibility applies to its external being, not to its mental form', because being single and double are attributes of an quiddity with no external being. Again, impossibility is not an attribute of the non-existent's external being but rather of its essence, because the non-existent has no external being.

The solution here, in al-Qūshji's opinion, is to distinguish between realization and subsistence in the mind. In that case, just as a thing's presence in place and time (realization) does not necessitate that the space be qualified by that thing, its presence in the mind also does not necessitate that the mind be qualified by that thing. Thus, what necessitates a thing to be qualified by another thing is not its realization, but rather its subsistence. Since things like warmth and coolness, as well as being single and double, are not realized and subsist in the mind, it is not necessary for the mind to be qualified by them.<sup>52</sup>

Clearly, this approach has several drawbacks. For instance, for an object to be qualified with whiteness, the whiteness has to be attached to it and form unity with it in the exterior with respect to its being. In Qūshji's terms, the object is qualified with whiteness through the realization of whiteness in the object. The principle of predication for whiteness to the object is the presence of the whiteness as an accident in it. Therefore, whiteness does not consist solely of a concept that the mind derived from the object. However, it is impossible that concepts like necessity, possibility, and duality would be in the object, just like whiteness.

Whenever 'four' exists, it would be qualified by evenness as a token of its essence. Its evenness is not specific to a mode of being, hence its being suffices. Once given the 'four'ness, which is qualified by the thing in itself, the mind derives the concept of evenness from its essence and predicates it in the mind. Thus, while

51 'Ali al-Qūshji, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Zārī'i Ridāyī (Qom: Intishārāt-ı Rā'id, 1393/1973), 1:128.

52 'Ali al-Qūshji, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, I, 130. Some philosophers use the concept of realization for both and regard the realization in the mind as adverbial (ẓarfī) and the subsistence in the mind as qualificatory. See al-Siyālkūti, *Ḥāshiyā 'alā Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 6:8.



one can say that object's being white is the realization of the whiteness in it, one cannot say that the 'four', being even, is the realization of the evenness in it. This applies to the concept of contingency as well. Regardless of whether the essence is in the mind or in the exterior, it is qualified by contingency, because contingency<sup>53</sup> is the necessity of its essence, and that which is necessary for the essence never abandons it. However, no necessary element needs to be realized in the object to make contingency a predicate to the essence, for it can be derived from the object's essence. On the other hand, Qūshjī's analogy between the realization of a thing in time and space, as well as the realization warmth and coolness in the object, is problematic, given that time and space are modes of being and not the object itself. Thus one cannot speak of the oneness of the object itself in terms of time and space with respect to the essence, whereas the object cannot be qualified as hot unless warmth is one with the object in its being.<sup>54</sup>

With respect to the problem of category, what lies at the basis of the criticisms against the philosophers is the supposition that the mental form and knowledge are one and the same. According to Qūshjī, if a distinction is made between the two, both the thesis that the external beings are present in the mind with their essence is maintained, and the problems following the supposition of equivalence between the mental form and the extended being in terms of essence will be avoided, because what started the problem was that the mental form is knowledge and knowledge is an accident in the category of quality. Making a distinction between the mental form and knowledge will alleviate such an impediment. Thus, when the concept of animate is present in the mind, for instance, there is the issue of two beings there: (1) the concept of the animate present in the mind, so that it is a known, an universal, and a substance. Because substance means an essence that is not a subject of anything when present in the exterior, and (2) the knowledge present in the soul, that is particular and an accident. From the perspective of the proponents of exemplars, what is present in the mind is the concept of the animate, the exemplar of which is in the mind, for in their opinion the presence of one thing in the mind means the presence of its exemplar in the mind. This thing that is present in the mind is universal, a substance, and known. As the knowledge that subsists in the personal soul in the exterior is particular, an accident, and a quality of the soul, no issue arises. The objection holds from the point of view of those who suggest that

53 What is meant by this contingency is the essential contingency.

54 For a criticism of this approach, cf. Kemalpaşazâde, *Risaletü'l-vücûdî'z-zihni*, 57-60; Mullâ Şadrâ, *al-Asfâr*, 1:282-84; 'Abd al-Razzâq al-Lâhijî, *Shawâriq al-ilhâm fi sharh Tajrid al-kalâm*, ed. Akbar Asad 'Alizâda (Qom: Mu'assasat al-Imâm al-Şâdiq, 2012), 1:210-16; Mir Zâhid al-Harawî, *Sharh al-Risâlat al-ma'mûla fi al-taşawwur wa-l-taşdiq*, ed. Mahdi Shari'atî (Beirut: Dâr al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 2004), 120.

beings are present in the mind with their essences, not their exemplars, for they have no issue with that knowledge that has external being and is in the category of quality since they suppose that only the concept of animate (i.e., the known) is present and subsists in the mind. According to al-Qūshjī, the fact of the matter is thus: When the concept of animate is present in the mind, a quality of the soul that subsists in the mind emerges. This quality is the said concept's knowledge, and it is an accident and particular since it resides with the soul and is therefore present in the exterior. What is present in the mind, however, is the concept of animate that is realized in the mind, and it is universal, a substance, and a known.<sup>55</sup>

He conveys that there is one thing in the mind for the proponents of mental existence, namely, it postulates the equivalence of knowledge and known in essence. However, the proponents of the idea of exemplars postulate an exemplar and the meaning related to it. In his opinion, we do not need to confront the problem of one thing being both a substance and an accident, for we do not speak of one thing when we say that the exemplar is present in the mind and the meaning subsists therein. This gives the impression that he attempts to solve the problem according to the perspective of exemplars. However, it cannot be supposed that its proponents distinguish between exemplar (*knowledge*) and the concept (*known*) in the manner that he suggested. For the proponents of the theory, only the exemplar of the extended object exists in the mind, and universality is sustained only by its predication to individuals, whereas al-Qūshjī notes the existence of two things in the mind and suggests that the known in the mind is both universal and a substance. Thus, according to this approach, there are three things in the course of knowledge acquisition: the extended object (*cognitum per accidens, ma'lūm bi-l-'araḍ*), the form that is obtained from this object and is present in the mind (*cognitum per se, ma'lūm bi-l-dhāt*), and knowledge (*scientia, 'ilm*). So while the extended object and the mental form are equivalent in essence, they are distinguished from the knowledge that subsists in the soul in terms of essence.

In other words, the essences of the form that is apprehended immediately and the object in mediated apprehension are different. But knowledge, an accident that subsists in the soul, and the object in immediate apprehension are different in essence. Since the form that is immediately apprehended does not subsist in the soul, it is neither an accident nor a quality, but is rather universal, present in the mind, and equivalent in essence with the extended object. Then, what is the relation between this form that is immediately apprehended and universal and the knowledge that is particular and an accident? In this approach, we acquire knowledge of the extended

55 'Alī al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd*, 1:131-32.

object by means of the immediately apprehended form; however, the knowledge in the soul by means of the form is different from the aforementioned form. Therefore, even though the form that is realized in the mind is different from the knowledge that subsists in the soul, it is object's knowledge nonetheless.

Al-Qūshjī's perspective causes a rupture in the process of apprehension itself by distinguishing the mental form from knowledge, even if the connection of essence between the mental form and the extended object is maintained. That is to say, since the knowledge that subsists in the soul is different from the extended object as well as the mental form in terms of essence, it becomes harder to suggest that the knowledge that subsists in the soul is the knowledge of the extended object. The distinction he makes between knowledge appears to be a veritable difference. In other words, his choice to distinguish them categorically is the main source of the problem, for the question here is the existence of two things in the mind through the course of the conception. This means that the pertinent distinction is not relative. In al-Qūshjī's perspective mental existence is accepted, for he opines that the essence of the mental form and the extended object are equivalent. On the other hand, the distinction he makes between realization and subsistence conjoins him to the proponents of the theory of exemplars at a point, for even if the mental form is equivalent in essence to the extended object in this approach, what he dubs "the knowledge" is a kind of exemplar, because the knowledge that subsists in the mind is different in essence from the extended object.

All of these are the problems that al-Qūshjī encountered, depending on the link that can be established between the form present in the mind and the knowledge subsisting in the soul. But the question as to whether he really viewed form and knowledge as different in essence or that this is the impression given by his manner of discussing the topic requires a more advanced inquiry.

### **c. The Theory of Transformation**

Şadr al-Dīn al-Dashtakī tries to surmount this problem by supposing a transformation in the category, when they are to be subject of knowledge, in the mind they are no longer in the category that they are placed in the exterior. Regardless of the category in which they are listed within the exterior, the forms of all beings are in the category of quality when in the mind. Therefore, a thing cannot occupy both categories in terms of its essence.<sup>56</sup>

56 For a description, analysis, and criticism of al-Dashtakī's approach, cf. Mullā Şadrā, *al-Asfār*, 1:315-23; 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Lāhijī, *Shawāriq al-ilhām*, 1:217; Mir Zāhid al-Harawī, *Sharḥ al-Risālat al-ma'mūla*, 121-22.

The idea that a thing's essence cannot be spoken of unless it exists in the exterior or in the mind lies at the basis of this approach. Thus, the quiddity is only itself *per se*, neither present nor non-existent. Therefore, quiddity is neither a substance nor an accident, for it is not located in any category. Since substance and accident are categories of being, locating quiddity in a category depends on its existence. And so unless a thing exists, we cannot speak of its quiddity. This means the anteriority of being to quiddity in this particular aspect. That is to say, if a quiddity cannot be spoken of until it exists, and if it can be spoken of only when it exists, then it means being is anterior to quiddity in terms of essence. If a thing is not an individual in being, then it is nothing and so has no essence. Thus, if it depends on the extended being of the quiddity to become a substance in the exterior and occupy that category, changing the category of this quiddity is possible depending on its being in the mind. For instance, if the human being, which is in the category of substance when it exists, transforms and thus is transferred from the extended to the mind, its category may also change. In that case, it is possible that the form of human being that is a substance in the exterior would be an accident in the mind. Therefore, if quiddity *per se* is nothing, it can be a substance in the exterior and an accident in the mind.

While this approach agrees that the extended being is present in the mind with its essence, it tries to overcome the problem about mental existence that a thing being both a substance and an accident by means of the categorical transformation in the extended object. That is, if quiddity *per se* being neither present nor non-existent is a substance when it exists in the exterior, a transformation in essence occurs with its mental exists, and so it lies in the category of quality. Thus, a mental form maintains its ipseity through transformation. So the supposition that beings are present in the mind in essence is retained. However, this approach faces certain problems. If the category of an extended object changes when it is present in the mind, its essence also changes. Then, given the change in essence in addition to the difference in being between the mental form and the extended object, how shall we judge it to be the essence of the extended being? There has to be a common point between the extended object and the mental form so that we can speak of a transformation. In other words, how could the mental form represent the extended object even if there is a categorical transformation?

#### **d. The Accidentalness of Qualia**

al-Dawwānī attempts to solve the problem via the supposition that philosophers do not place knowledge in the category of quality. In his opinion the theory of transformation problematic, for it involves the change of truths. Change and transformation only mean that the matter possessing a form takes up another form,

that a subject exhibiting a quality acquires another attribute. Therefore, it is out of question for a mental form that is a quality to turn into *res extensa*, for how can a single thing possess one essence when present in the exterior and another when present in the mind? If the essence varies, how can the object's ipseity be maintained? Moreover, such a supposition necessitates the demonstration of a matter's being that is common to both form and object despite the transformation. If this cannot be done, one could not speak of a single thing that is a substance in the exterior and a quality in the mind. Hence, the view of knowledge as a quality, in al-Dawwānī's opinion, may stem from the similarity between mental states and extended things.<sup>57</sup>

According to him, whichever category the extended object is placed in, so the knowledge (i.e., mental form) would belong to it. In other words, the object's mental form is placed in the category to which the thing belongs in the exterior. If the extended object is a substance, so is the form; if it is an accident, so is the form; and if it is a quality, so is the form. This is true because knowledge is the mirror of the thing which is known, regardless of in which category the thing is placed, and thus so is its knowledge. Knowledge is the realization of the extended object's form in the mind. This realization is not an addendum to the subject of knowledge, but is the same thing. In his opinion, the problem of the category of knowledge has to be solved in this manner because the problem lies in the difference of categories in which the extended object and the mental form that are equivalent in essence are placed.<sup>58</sup>

Al-Dawwānī removes the quality from being the essence of the mental form and thereby turns it into a thing that is attached in the mind to objects of different categories. Then, the mental form by itself will not be in the category of quality; rather, it will be a quality that is attached to all objects due to their presence in the mind. Al-Dawwānī does not refute the presence of the extended object in the mind by its essence. But, in his opinion, when we analyze the knowledge, we fall into the false impression that it is in the category of quality. However, the statement concerning the category relates to the object that is subject to knowledge. Since the extended object is the same in essence as the thing that is known, both form and known are placed in the same category. Then, Al-Dawwānī dismisses the category of quality from the genera of knowledge and postulates that the attribute of quality is attached to the form due to its mental existence.

57 Al-Dawwānī, *Hāshiya 'alā Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Zārī'i Riḍāyī (Qom: Intishārāt-ı Rā'id, 1393/1973), 1:132.

58 For a brief account of the debate between al-Dawwānī and al-Dashtakī, see Reza Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran: Najm al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Nayrīzī and His Writings* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2011), 99-101. For a critique of al-Dawwānī's perspective, cf. Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, 1:279, 306-07, 318-19; 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Lāhijī, *Shawāriq al-ilhām*, 1:217; al-Harawī, *Sharḥ al-Risālat al-nā'mūla*, 123.

### e. Essential and Common Predication

Mullā Şadrā attempts to solve the problems of the category of knowledge and of mental existence by means of the difference between essential predication (*al-ḥaml al-dhātī*) and common predication (*al-ḥaml al-shā'i*).<sup>59</sup> In the essential predication the subject is equivalent to the predication in terms of the essence and conception, for there is only a difference of aspect.<sup>60</sup> For instance, when we say “a human is a thinking animal,” there is both a conceptual and a corporeal unity between the human and the thinking animal. The subject is not an individual of predicate in essential predication, meaning that the human is not an individual thinking animal, but rather itself. This predication is essential because it applies only to essential qualities, and the unity of subject and predicate in concept cannot be conceived of at a station other than that of the essence itself.

At this point, Mullā Şadrā distinguishes essential predication and predication by essence (*al-ḥaml bi-l-dhāt*) by saying that to predicate one thing to another thing at the station of its essence is not the same as to predicate an essential property of it. For instance, it is not an essential predication to regard an individual in the exterior, as opposed to the concept of human being, and state “(this) human (individual) is a thinking animal,” because we speak of individual human being that is an individual in the exterior to be a thinking animal. Therefore, it is a predication by essence as opposed to an essential predication. As for the common predication the unity with the predicate is maintained in terms of being, not the concept.<sup>61</sup> For instance, when we say “the human is white,” the concepts of human and white are different from one another even though they are one in being in the exterior. The import of this predication is the incorporation of the subject into the individuals for which the concept of the predicate is valid. That is, whiteness is a predicate for some human beings, and thus they are among those individuals for whom this concept is valid.

Mullā Şadrā, who approaches the problem of the category of knowledge and mental existence from this viewpoint, accounts for the issue in this manner: According to the proponents of mental existence, beings always retain their essences and essential properties whether in the exterior or in the mind, for only the modes of being change, shifting from the extended to the mental. On the other

59 For the meaning of these concepts, cf. Tehânevî, *Keşşâf*, I, 716.

60 Mullā Şadrâ, *al-Asfâr*, 1:293; Mullâ Şadrâ, “al-Masâ'il al-Qudşiyya,” *Sa Risala az-Muḥammad b. Ibrâhîm Şadr al-Din al-Shirâzi*, ed. Sayyid Jalâl al-Din Âshtiyâni (Qom: Markaz-i Intishârât-ı Defter-i Tebliğât-ı Islâmî, 1362/1943), 45.

61 Mullâ Şadrâ, *al-Asfâr*, 1:292-93.

hand, for a thing in the category of substance being a substance is its essential property and quiddity. In this case, regardless of where an object that is a substance is located, it has not to be on a subject. However, as the mental form of this object is knowledge and an accident, it is on a subject, the mind, which necessitates that the form be both a substance and an accident.<sup>62</sup>

According to Mullā Şadrā, there is no contradiction between a thing possessing the concept of the substance (i.e., the quality of subsistence by itself) and the validity of the qualification of it with subsistence with another.<sup>63</sup> He approaches the problem from the point of difference between essential predication and common predication. For instance, we can predicate both the universal and the particular on the particular. A particular is particular because the concept of particular is valid for a particular. That is, “a particular is particular” means that particular is a thing that is not a predicate for many beings when it is subject to the imagination. A particular is universal because the concept of particular is valid for many beings, as in the examples of “this table is particular, this tree is particular, and this pencil is particular,” and predicated on them with this proviso. The first one is an essential and the second one is a common predication. Mullā Şadrā tackles the problem by supposing that the things subject to proposition have to be equivalent in the quality of predication in order to suggest any contradiction between the two propositions.<sup>64</sup> Hence, there is no contradiction between the propositions “a particular is particular” and “a particular is universal” because the quality of the predication is not equivalent in these two propositions.

His use of the quality of predication as a logical device, along with his employment of it as a part of the solution against the criticism of form being both a substance and an accident, does not illustrate the full scale of his approach. In that case, if we apply the predicament to the problem of mental existence, then the mental form of an object that is a substance in the exterior is a substance with respect to essential predication and an accident with respect to common predication. The mental form being a substance means validates the concept of substance as its definition “that it is a quiddity that is not a subject of anything when present in the exterior” applies to it. But the validity of the concept of substance in terms of the human being, for instance, does not make the form/meaning of the human being in the mind

62 Mullā Şadrā, “al-Masā’il al-Qudsiyya,” 43; Mullā Şadrā, *al-Asfār*, 1:277.

63 Mullā Şadrā, *al-Asfār*, 1:279.

64 Mullā Şadrā adds the ‘quality of predication’ to the eight necessary conditions (i.e., subject, predicate, time, space, potentiality and actuality, whole and part, condition, and correlation) in order to claim contradiction between two propositions. See Mullā Şadrā, *al-Asfār*, 1:294.

an individual of it, because it is a universal thing. Therefore, the equivalence of essence between the humanity form in mind and the human being in the exterior does not locate the mental form in the category of substance.<sup>65</sup> The mental form is identical with knowledge with respect to common predication, and therefore it is an accident and its being is external. In this case, form is not a substance and an accident, but just an accident.

Would it not mean the denial of the presence of the extended object's essence in the mind to state that the validity of the definition of substance for the form will not locate it in the category of substance, that it is an accident identical with the knowledge with respect to the common predication and its being is extended, and thus the form is not both a substance and an accident but just an accident?

Mullā Ṣadrā supposes that mental forms do not belong to any category vis-à-vis being universal and intelligible, and thus places them in the category of quality per being in the soul.<sup>66</sup> In other words, the being of knowledge that is a quality and an accident is extended. Mental existence, however, is neither a substance nor an accident, because it is part of being and being occupies no category. It appears that Mullā Ṣadrā views mental existence not as the form itself, but as its realization. But the belonging of this realization to the form and its unity with the knowledge that is an accident by itself remained a problem that Mullā Ṣadrā and other thinkers needed to confront.

## Conclusion

The philosophical system erected by Avicenna, who was regarded as the greatest thinker of Islamic thought in terms of posterior influence, was subjected to several critical readings over time. One can propose that what lies at the basis of this effort from al-Ghazzālī to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and from al-Suhrawardī to Mullā Ṣadrā, is the pursuit of a model that would secure the continuous unity between God and the universe ontologically, and perceptive subject/soul and beings epistemologically. In this context, the Peripatetic theory of perception and knowledge was criticized for making the categorical distinction between immaterial and material being so strict that it hindered the explanation of the soul's relation with the particulars. With the extra burden of the thesis that the quiddities and categories are quintessentially

65 Mullā Ṣadrā, "al-Masā'il al-Qudṣiyya," 47-48; Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, 1:296.

66 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, 1:294; Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*, ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshṭiyānī (Mashhad: Markaz-i Nashr-i Danishgāhi, 1360/1941), 31; Mullā Ṣadrā, "al-Masā'il al-Qudṣiyya," 47.



different from each other, the idea of mental existence which had to confront the issues arising from the explanation of the identity of soul with form, which inheres in it and is regarded as the means of its perfection through a substantial or accidental composition, sought an escape route.

Some of the attempts to surmount the problem are non-theoretical pursuits like the perspective that treats knowledge as the relation between the perceptive subject and object, which means the refutation of the idea of form, or the theory of exemplar/meaning, which means distancing from the idea that the essences of beings are located in the mind, albeit not denying the form. Yet these attempts to overcome the problem from within the theory also had their share of criticisms. In this context, the alternative of “knowledge being a substance in one aspect, and an accident in another” that is constructed from the postulate of an accident being not a super-genus, conflicts with the principle that a thing by itself can only occupy one category. Even if one can bolster that a thing by itself is an individual for a single essence and subject to other categories as an accident, by means of aspects, one cannot do so when it is by itself in two categories.

The effort to overcome the problem by distinguishing between “the realization in mind” and “the subsistence in mind” has to meet the challenges of similarity to the prior perspective when these are regarded as the aspects of a single form. In addition, allowing a sort of dualism will present other kinds of problems when the presence of two distinct things like meaning and form (knowledge) in the mind are postulated. The supposition that the thing subject to perception retained its essence through the transformation of its category has to come to terms with the criticism of being unable to maintain the connection and continuity between the extended object and the mental form. The suggestion that the mental form itself is not placed in the category of quality, that it is in the category with its extended object, and quality being a property attached to the form with respect to its mental being, has to disprove the postulate of knowledge being a soul’s quality. In an effort to overcome the problem by distinguishing between essential predication and common predication, the form is regarded as a quality even if its being is mentally qualified. Thus the category of form remains problematic despite the unity of its being and essence in the mind.

Obviously, the *problématique* concerning the relation between the category of knowledge and mental existence feeds on the ambiguous status of the ‘quiddity in itself’ and the different definitions of knowledge from the vista of the Avicennian system. However, a more a thorough reading will show that neither Avicennian philosophy nor post-classical thought regarded knowledge as the form itself

(quality), nor the relation (*idāfa*) between the perceptive subject and its object, nor affection (*infī'āl*), but rather the mental being (*huşūl*) and the corollary revelation (*inkishāf*) itself. Thus, the aforementioned elements will correspond to the different stations of a single truth. However, the strict distinction of immaterial and material being that commands the Peripatetic theory, as well as the postulate of the difference of essences by themselves, does not allow Avicenna to make such a statement. Besides the subsequent success of the attempts to resolve the problem, there is no doubt that the debates in this context and the aporias engendered by the tension between the ontological presumptions and the theory of knowledge provided important clues as to how muslim thinkers tried to solve the existing tensions.

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