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MULLĀ ṢADRĀ ON THE PROBLEM OF NATURAL UNIVERSALS

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Abstract. This study investigates the problem of the natural universal (*kullī ṭabīʿī*) in the works of Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640). The problem of universals made its way into Arabic/Islamic philosophy via its Greek sources, and was transformed into the problem of natural universals by Avicenna. Weighing in on this problem, Ṣadrā reinterprets the nature of natural universals against the backdrop of his doctrine of "the primacy of being." As he argues, a natural universal or quiddity qua quiddity is an "accidental being" that requires *wujūd* for its existentiation. Thus, Ṣadrā re-envisions the status of natural universals by stripping them of their disputed status as independently existing entities.

Résumé. Dans cette étude je me propose de réfléchir sur le problème de l'universel naturel (*kullī ṭabīʿī*) dans l'œuvre de Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640). Le problème des universaux s'est introduit dans la philosophie arabe et musulmane *via* les sources grecques et s'est trouvé transformé en celui des "universaux naturels" aux mains d'Avicenne. En contribuant à son tour à l'évolution de ce problème, Ṣadrā réinterpréta le statut des universaux naturels à partir de sa propre doctrine de la "primauté de l'être". Selon lui, un universel naturel ou "quiddité en tant que quiddité" est un "être par accident" qui requiert *wujūd* pour son existentiation. Ainsi, Ṣadrā re-envisage le statut des universaux naturels en les privant de leur statut contesté en tant qu'entités "indépendantes existantes".

I. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This study investigates the problem of natural universals (*kullī ṭabīʿī*) in the philosophy of the 17th century Persian philosopher, Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī (d. 1640). The "problem of universals" is a universal philosophical problem that has engaged philosophers from the time of Plato until Quine and even beyond,[1] and continues to shape current

[1] The problem of universals is tackled, in one form or another, in every major philosophical tradition, be it Western, Islamic, Indian, Buddhist, or Chinese. For the Platonic allusion to the problem, see *Parmenides* 132A1–6 and 129D–E; *Republic* 598C–D and X 596a6–7 in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper and Douglas S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis, 1997).

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philosophical debates where it is often formulated as the problem of "the ontological status of properties."[2] The problem, in the Western tradition, originates in Plato's famous theory of Forms and Aristotle's apparent opposition to it.[3] Plato argues that what we observe in the sensible world are always particular substances. For instance, if we reflect on the idea of "justice," what we see in our immediate experience of reality are the particular instances of justice, not its universal form. But the very fact that the idea of justice would remain even if all of its instances are destroyed, claims Plato, necessitates an independent order of reality for all such forms (which are inexhaustible) including beauty, goodness, equality, largeness and so on. So the very idea that things can partake in the same "property" leads us to the problem of universals, which is closely related to the theory of Platonic Forms, the real sources of particular things.[4]

For Aristotle's treatment of the problem of universals, see, for example, *Metaphysics*, 1003a11, 10232b29ff., 1038b35, 1038b11ff., 1005a12–17, 1027a17–18 in Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ, 1984). A great deal of controversy abounds in secondary literature as to whether the Platonic Forms can be thought of as universals or whether Aristotle's accusations against Plato of making universals particular substances are justified. For an in-depth analysis of these issues see Riccardo Chiaradonna and Gabriele Galluzzo (eds.), *Universals in Ancient Philosophy* (Pisa, 2013), pp. 23ff., and Alain de Libera, *La querelle des universaux: De Platon à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1996), pp. 402–26. For the Aristotelian background, see Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Toronto, 1978), pp. 366ff. An overview of the problem of universals in Mediaeval philosophy can be found in "Medieval problem of universals", in the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/universals-medieval/) (accessed on 11/10/2014). Raja Ram Dravid's *The Problem of Universals in Indian Philosophy* (Patna, 1972) gives us a detailed presentation of the problem of universals in Indian philosophy, while Buddhist and Chinese treatments of the same problem are discussed, respectively, in "Dharmakīrti," in the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (esp. section 1.1) (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dharmakiirti/) (accessed on 11/10/2014), and JeeLoo Liu, "Reconstructing Chinese metaphysics: a white paper," *Journal of East-West Thought*, 1 (2012): 151–63. For a thorough account of the problem of universals in the Islamic tradition, see Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Risālat taḥqīq al-kullīyāt* (MS Warner Or. 958 (21), fols. 67b–71b, University of Leiden Library); Mīr Sayyid Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyat taḥrīr al-qawāʿid al-mantiqiyya fī sharḥ al-Shamsiyya* (MS Dānishgāh-i Ferdowsī-yi Mashhad, (1244) 157; and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Risāla fī al-wujūd* in *The Precious Pearl: Al-Jāmī's al-Durra al-Fākhira*, trans. Nicholas Heer (Albany, 1979), pp. 223–57. Finally, for a modern understanding and survey of the problem of universals see Willard Van Orman Quine, "On what there is," in Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (New York, 1961), pp. 1–19, and Gabriele Galluzzo and Michael J. Loux (eds.), *The Problem of Universals in Contemporary Philosophy* (Cambridge, NY, 2015), *passim*.

[2] See James P. Moreland, *Universals* (Chesham, 2001), pp. 1ff.

[3] See, for example, Gail Fine, *On Ideas: Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Theory of Forms* (Oxford, New York, 1993), esp. pp. 183ff.

[4] Plato, *Republic* 476ff (I have explained the argument with slight alteration). Understandably, the theory of Forms (*eidos*) is much more complex than the way I have presented it here, especially since Plato himself points out several difficulties in conceiving the Forms and alternative ways of approaching the *aporia*, most notably in his *Parmenides* 132ff. Notwithstanding, as it has already been mentioned the apparent connection between universals and the Forms is undeniable, at least that is how the later tradition including

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Aristotle distances himself from Plato concerning his theory of universals (*katholou*) and claims that the latter makes universals particular substances (see n. 1). Aristotle's interpreters such as Alexander of Aphrodisias (2nd–early 3rd cent. CE) and Neo-Platonists (or simply Platonists) such as Porphyry (d. *c.* 305 CE) took up the problem and reformulated it, each in their own way.[5] In fact, it was Porphyry who bequeathed the problem of universals to both Arabic and Medieval philosophy when he announced it as a "problem" in his *Isagoge*. Porphyry in his *Isagoge*, which is an introduction to Aristotle's Categories, states the problem thus:

> (a) Whether genera and species are real or are situated in bare thoughts alone, (b) whether as real they are bodies or incorporeals, and (c) whether they are separated or in sensibles and have their reality in connection with them. Such business is profound, and requires another, greater investigation.[6]

It is noteworthy that when Avicenna inherited Alexander of Aphrodisias' distinction between "nature" and "universal," he linked this to his own original notion of quiddity (*māhiyya*) and its various [analytic] considerations (*iʿtibārāt*) (see section II). Alexander clearly asserts that different individuals may possess the same nature (*fusi/physis*). More strikingly, he argues that this nature is neither universal nor particular, and that universality is accidental to this nature. Also, such a nature exists prior to both the universal and the particular.[7] In

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the Muslim philosophers conceived the problem. One of the better studies devoted to the explication of the Platonic Forms in the *Parmenides* is Allan H. Coxon, *The Philosophy of Forms* (Assen, 1999), pp. 3–33 and 131–5.

[5] Apart from Alexander of Aphrodisias and Porphyry, practically all other major Platonists and Christian thinkers such as Iamblichus (d. *c.* 325 CE), Syrianus (d. *c.* 437 CE), Proclus (d. 485 CE), Simplicius (d. *c.* 560), Asclepius (d. *c.* 570), and Boethius (d. *c.* 525) too have had their share in the formulation-reformulation of the problem of universals through either independent works such as that of Proclus' *The Elements of Theology* (*Kitāb al-Īḍāḥ li-Aristūṭālis fī al-khayr al-maḥḍ*), or commentaries on Platonic and Aristotelian texts.

[6] *Isagoge*, V1.3.1, trans. Paul V. Space in *Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals: Porphyry, Boethius, Abelard, Duns Scotus, Ockham* (Indianapolis, 1994), p. 1.

[7] See Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Quaestiones 1.11 (al-ḥayawān al-kullī) 9*, 23, 25–29; 24, 9–16; 1.11, 30–32; 1.3, 26–28; *Metaphysics 1*, 50, 7–20, 52, 14–22; *Metaphysics 5*, 386, 26–31; 377, 15–17; 387, 6–8; 425, 8–25; *Metaphysics 3*, 178, 5–179, 5; 210, 25–216, 11 (all trans. are from Dooley and Madigan) and Martin M. Tweedale, "Alexander of Aphrodisias' views on universals," *Phronesis*, 29 (1984): 279–303, esp. pp. 285ff. According to Tweedale, the common elements in both Alexander and Avicenna are too numerous to be mere coincidental, implying that the latter must have drawn on the writings of the former. The present study adds further evidence to the above observation, see section II. For more discussions on the notions of "nature" and the "universal" in Alexander and the Aristotle-commentators, see the recent study by Marwan Rashed, *Essentialisme: Alexandre d'Aphrodise entre logique, physique et cosmologie* (Berlin, 2007), pp. 6–7, 94–8, 191–2 and especially, 254–60. Rashed generally agrees with Tweedale's interpretation but modifies and elaborates on it further. According to Rashed, Alexander makes a distinction between "nature" (which he takes to be "form") and the "universal," thereby differing from the traditional Aristotelian account of universals according to

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fact, in the long of history of the problem of universals, "the Avicennan turn" of it lies in restating it in terms of natural universals and their "supposed existence" in the extra-mental world. And this became known as "the problem of common nature" in Medieval philosophy, thanks to Thomas Aquinas' response to the relevant sections of Avicenna's magnum opus, the Healing (*al-Shifāʾ*).[8] At any rate, three different kinds of universals are distinguished in Avicennan philosophy:[9]

1) Natural universals
2) Logical universals
3) Mental universals

As regards the properties of the last two, there is less disagreement concerning them among Avicenna and many of his followers. However, as for the "natural universal," which is an Avicennan invention, a great deal of contention exists as to whether it is *universalia ante rem* (universals existing prior to the thing), *in re* (in the thing) or *universalia post rem* (universals existing after the thing). Before delineating both Avicenna's and Mullā Ṣadrā's views on this issue, it is important to note that a group of philosophers deny the existence of natural universals altogether.[10] They negate natural universals in the extra-mental world based on their assumption that quiddities existing *in concreto* possess numerical unity (*al-waḥda al-ʿadadiyya*):[11]

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which the universals are forms. This distinction allows Alexander to avoid the vexing question of whether a thing (*pragma*) may exist without its form or nature. Furthermore, in *Quaestio* 1.3, Alexander asserts that the existence of "natures" depends on the existence of particulars, since the common things, insofar as they are in particulars, eternally succeed one another and are indestructible. Such a claim paradoxically puts Alexander closer to the Platonic position that endorses a distinction between a form and a universal, despite his espousal of the Aristotelian denial of the separate existence of forms, see Rashed, *Essentialisme*, pp. 254–60.

[8] For helpful discussions on "common nature" [which Ṣadrā appropriates as "common meaning" (*al-maʿnā al-mushtaraka*)] see Joseph Owens, "Common nature: a point of comparison between Thomistic and Scotistic metaphysics", *Mediaeval Studies*, 19 (1957): 1–14. Aquinas discusses the problem of common nature at length in his short treatise *On Being and Essence* (*De Ente et Essentia*). His views do not differ in substance from that of Avicenna; see Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, translated by Peter King in *Aquinas, Basic Works*, edited by Jeffrey Hause and Robert Pasnau (Indianapolis, 2014).

[9] For a lucid explanation of the three different types of universals, see Michael E. Marmura, "Avicenna's chapter on universals in the Isagoge of his *Shifāʾ*," in Alford T. Welch and Pierre Cachia (eds.), *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge* (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. 34–56, esp. pp. 41–3. In his study, Marmura discusses Avicenna's views on universals extensively. Although he refers to the Metaphysics V of *al-Shifāʾ* a few times, his analysis of the issue is rather limited to his translation of the *Madkhal* (Isagoge) of *al-Shifāʾ* in the same volume. For a general survey of the problem of natural universals in Arabic-Islamic philosophy, see Toshihiko Izutsu, "The problem of quiddity and the natural universal," in Osman Amine (ed.) *Études Philosophiques* (Cairo, 1974), pp. 131–77.

[10] For an explanation of this position, see ʿAbd Allāh Javādī Āmulī, *Raḥīq-i makhtūm: Sharḥ-i Ḥikmat-i mutaʿāliya* (Qum, 2011), vol. 6, pp. 22–3.

[11] For a detailed exposition of this point, see Āmulī, *Raḥīq*, vol. 6, pp. 23–5.

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Proof I: An individual quiddity cannot be in two different places at the same time, but a natural universal is concurrent with all of its individual instances, and exists simultaneously in all of them in different places. Thus, a natural universal cannot have numerical unity, which means it cannot exist outside the mind.

Proof II: An individual quiddity is not qualified with contrary characteristics such as whiteness and blackness, knowledge and ignorance, and motion and stasis in a single instant. But since a natural universal exists simultaneously in all of its particular instances, it becomes qualified with contradictory features thereby making it impossible to have a numerical unity.

Now if a natural universal does not have a numerical unity, its relation with its individual instances would be that of a father and his numerous children. And if that happens to be the case, natural universals cannot be concurrent with their individual instances. However, Avicenna argues forcefully that natural universals are concurrent with their particulars.[12] Both Avicenna and Mullā Ṣadrā concur that natural universals are found in external reality, and since the latter's exposition of the natural universal forms a continuity with that of the former (*i.e.* Avicenna), it is necessary to analyze the former's position on the issue before moving on to delineate Ṣadrā's views which will be the main focus of this paper.

Also, this study will look at how Ṣadrā discusses the notion of an "all-inclusive universal" (*kullī siʿī*) (section III, pp. 25–6). This notion of an "all-inclusive universal" is used to account for the existence of Platonic Forms in the Ideal world that is denied by Avicenna.[13] For the purposes of the present study we will analyze the Sadrian reinterpretation of natural universals in light of his novel doctrine, the primacy of being (*aṣālat al-wujūd*). Based on the premises of the primacy of being, Ṣadrā argues that natural universals are not *ante rem*, *i.e.* existing prior to things.[14] Accordingly, Ṣadrā claims that

[12] Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, translated by Michael E. Marmura (Provo, 2005), 5.1. For the Avicennan response to these arguments see, section II of the present article.

[13] Avicenna, *Metaphysics* 5.1, 26.

[14] It should be noted that while recognizing the existence of the natural universal in the extra-mental world, Avicenna also discusses its prior existence, see section II of the present article. See also the relevant citation in Alexander's *Quaestio 1.11* from which Avicenna might have constructed his own argument of *ante rem* universals: "That it is posterior to the thing is clear… For if living creature exists there is no necessity for living creature as genus to exist; as a supposition there could be just one living creature, since universality is not in the being of [living creature]. But if living creature as genus exists, it is necessary that living creature exists. And if animate being with sensation were done away with, living creature as genus would not exist (for it is not possible for what is not to be several individuals); but if living creature as genus were done away with, it is not necessary for animate being with sensation to be done away with, for it could exist, as I said, even in a single [individual]" (*Quaestio* 1.11,24, 8–16, trans. Sharples).

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natural universals are *post rem*. Thus, although Ṣadrā frequently uses the word quiddity (*māhiyya*) in his philosophy, it takes on a different meaning and significance in his philosophy (section IV). Moreover, since the problem of "natural universals" is intimately connected with the concept of "quiddity," it is readily distinguishable from the same problem that the philosophers of Antiquity were grappling with. It should also be noted that Avicenna was perhaps the first person to lay out a full-blown doctrine of "quiddity and its different analytic considerations" such as *lā bi-sharṭ* (unconditioned by anything), *bi-sharṭ lā* (negatively conditioned) and *bi-sharṭ shay'* (conditioned by something).[15]

In addition to investigating the Ṣadrian reformulation of natural universals, this study will also analyze how the former uses the concept of natural universals to argue for the reality of mental existence (*al-wujūd al-dhihnī*) (section V). Toward the end, this study will also sketch philosophical debates in the post-Ṣadrian period in which quiddities had been reformulated in relation to natural universals in ways that were not foreseen by the earlier peripatetic philosophers. The development of highly technical expressions such as "*māhiyya lā bi-sharṭ maqsamī*" and "*māhiyya lā bi-sharṭ qismī*" bears testimony to the further development of the problem of natural universals, and well-known Iranian philosophers such as Murtaḍā Muṭaharī (d. 1979), Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1981) and Mehdī Hā'irī Yazdī (d. 1999) have written about this issue (section V).

II. THE AVICENNAN BACKGROUND

It was pointed out earlier that there are three different types of universals, *viz*., natural, logical, and mental. The natural universal refers to the common nature (*al-ṭabī'a al-mushtaraka*) that is shared by individuals falling under a particular universal term such as man.[16] Although the epithet "universal" is being used with it, it is, strictly speaking, nothing other than being as such (*bimā huwa huwa*). That is, in itself it is dissociated with the notion of universality or particularity, unity or multiplicity and so on.[17] Also, since it is unconditioned by anything (*lā bi-sharṭ*), it can exist simultaneously with its

[15] Avicenna, *Metaphysics* 5.1, 26–27. See also Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt*, edited by Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo, 1957–71), vol. 3, pp. 436ff. Aḥmad Bihishtī, *Hastī wa-'ilal-i ān: Sharḥ-i namaṭ-i chahārum* (Qum, 2011); Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ-i Manẓūma*, edited by Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu (Tehran, 1969), pp. 131–5) for helpful glosses (*ta'līqāt*) on these concepts by Hidejī and Āmulī, see pp. 330–2 in the same volume; cf. Sabzawārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, trans. Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu (Delmar, 1977), pp. 144–6.

[16] Avicenna, *Metaphysics* 5.1, 4. Cf. Marmura, "Avicenna's chapter on universals," pp. 43–5.

[17] Avicenna, *Metaphysics* 5.1, 4–6.

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particular instances. The term "natural" in the expression "natural universal" refers to the nature, essence, or quiddity of the thing being considered. As such, a complete account of the natural universal is inconceivable without the different analytic considerations of "quiddity". Similarly, a logical universal is the very notion of "universality" itself that can only exist in the mind.[18] Concerning its definition, Taftāzānī in his *Tahdhīb al-manṭiq* says the following: if it is impossible to suppose the predication of a notion/concept of many, then it is a particular; otherwise, it is a universal (*al-mafhūm in imtanaʿa faraḍa ṣidqihi ʿalā kathīrayn fa-juzʾī wa-illā fa-kullī*...).[19] In other words, the notion of universality allows a common property (or nature) to be shared by its particulars. Finally, a mental universal is a combination of both natural and logical universal; that is, a combination of both the nature itself and the logical notion of universality.[20] A mental universal exists only in the mind when universality as an "accident" of the mind occurs to a natural universal such as man.

In order to explain Avicenna's views on the natural universal and the quiddity of a thing, it is necessary to take into account different statements concerning it as found in his major works such as *al-Najāt*, *al-Shifāʾ*, and *al-Ishārāt*. In *al-Najāt* for instance, which is the earliest among these, Avicenna says the following:

> It is permissible that you find [this nature or quiddity] to be an existent thing, not as human qua human (*lā bimā hiya insāniyya*), which can be either one or many. When you know this, it can be said that there are two types of universals: 1) humanity considered without any condition (*bi-lā sharṭ*) and 2) humanity considered with the condition that it is predicable upon its individuals. The first sense of quiddity is actually (*bi-al-fiʿl*) existent in things, and is predicable upon every single individual human being. However, this does not mean that this [universal] is one or multiple in itself (*lā ʿalā annahu wāhid bi-al-dhāt wa-lā ʿalā annahu kathīr*) because in itself it is devoid of any such characteristics. As for the second type of universal, it can be posited in two different ways: 1) it is potentially existent in things [in external reality] and 2) it is potentially related to things by way of its intellectual form (*al-ṣūra al-maʿqūla*).[21]

[18] *Ibid*., 5.1, 4.

[19] Taftāzānī continues by outlining the various kinds of universals: "[a concept may be universal] whether its instances are impossible or possible; or [its instances] do not exist or exist as only one, along with the possibility of some other [instance]; or the impossibility [of another instance]; or [along with the one existing instance, the possibility] of many, with a limit [to their number] or no such limit", Saʿd al-Dīn Masʿūd b. ʿUmar Taftāzānī, *Tahdhīb al-manṭiq*, ed. Murtaḍā Ḥāʾirī Ḥusaynī (Tehran, 2013), p. 44. See also pp. 288–9 of the present study.

[20] Cf. Marmura, "Avicenna's chapter on universals," pp. 41–2.

[21] Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Najāt fī al-ḥikma al-manṭiqiyya wa-al-ṭabīʿiyya wa-al-ilāhiyya*, ed. Majid Fakhry (Beirut, 1985), p. 256.

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The above passage suggests that universals can exist in two different ways. In the first case, quiddities exist in external reality, and are predicable upon many, while in the second case, they are either existent in things or related to things by way of their intellectual form, both in the mode of potency. Unfortunately, Avicenna does not explain further how one should understand "potency" in this context. But the passage does not fail to make a distinction between these two modes of being a universal and being a universal "in itself", which would be crucial to keep in mind as we move on to analyze other relevant passages in his later works. In the *Madkhal* I.2 of *al-Shifāʾ*, Avicenna provides a clearer exposition of the different considerations (*iʿtibārāt*) of quiddity:

> The quiddities of things may be found in the external world or in the mind (lit. conception). Thus they can be considered from three different aspects: i) a consideration of quiddity insofar as it is that quiddity, without being related to either of the kinds of existence (*i.e.* mental or extra-mental), and what attaches to it inasmuch as it is such; ii) a consideration of it inasmuch as it exists in the external world, where accidents proper to this mode of existence are attached to it; iii) a consideration of it insofar as it exists in conception, where accidents proper to this mode of existence are attached to it, for instance, having a position, predication, universality… and other things that you will learn.[22]

In this crucial passage, Avicenna clearly states that quiddities, with respect to their various considerations, are found either in the mind or in the external world. In both mental and extra-mental modes of existence, the quiddities are accompanied by their respective accidents. However, apart from these two modes, quiddities can also be considered with respect to their suchness, *i.e.* without being related to either mental or extra-mental modes of existence. It is significant to note that in the passage cited above, Avicenna does not suggest that quiddities can be considered prior to their existence (*wujūd*). The question of the priority or posteriority of quiddities is discussed elsewhere in his *al-Shifāʾ* (see below). But before we proceed to analyze the ontological of status of quiddity qua quiddity in the relevant passages, it would be helpful to look at the *Ishārāt* as well, where Avicenna introduces further twists to this whole issue. Avicenna says:

> Thus the human being, insofar as his reality is one (*wāḥid al-ḥaqīqa*), and insofar as his primary reality (*ḥaqīqatuhu al-aṣliyya*) has no diverse multiplicity, is not sensible but purely intelligible (*maʿqūl ṣirf*). The same applies to every universal.[23]

[22] Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ (Madkhal)*, ed. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn *et al.* (Cairo, 1952), p. 15.
[23] Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt*, ed. Jacques Forget (Leiden, 1892; repr. Frankfurt am Main, 1999), p. 138; modified trans. taken from Shams C. Inati, *Ibn Sina's Remarks and*

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In the above, Avicenna seems to make a distinction between quiddity qua quiddity (*i.e. wāḥid al-ḥaqīqa*) and quiddity insofar as "primary reality" is attributed to it (*i.e. al-insān al-wāḥid*).[24] Given his earlier position in *al-Shifā*', the nature of quiddity qua quiddity thus expressed has to be other than the mentally considered quiddity. And he claims that such a quiddity is purely intelligible. The interpretation of the above passage is also supported by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 1209) *Sharḥ al-ishārāt*:

> Someone might say: 'In this chapter the Shaykh is trying to refute merely those who claim that nothing exists except bodies and accidents, and that whatever thought experiment he mentions will not show their claim to be false, because he is making clear that "humanity" as a universal stripped of all extra concomitants, is not sensible. Now, the universal "humanity" has no existence outside the mind, and exists only in the mind. But those people are only rejecting the existence of anything not sensible outside the mind'. The gist is that while those people are only rejecting the existence of anything non sensible outside the mind, the Shaykh is affirming the existence of a non-sensible entity in the mind. So his discussion does not prove that those people's theory is false.[25]

After delineating the possible objection of an imaginary opponent of Avicenna, Rāzī now defends the former's position:

> One may respond to this [objection] from two angles. The first is that we have previously made clear that whatever amount of humanity that is possessed by individuals outside [the mind] is an existent in the outside world, because 'this human' is an expression for 'human' that is restricted to being this [particular] one. Given that when the composite is an existent, its simple elements will be existent as well, 'human', insofar as it is a human, is something whose existence is *not conditioned upon anything*. Now, 'human' that is not *conditioned upon anything is not sensible*, given that whatever is not confined by some particular individualizing restriction will not be sensed. It is thus established that whatever is not sensed may yet be an existent.[26]

To fully explore the complexity and multifacetedness of Avicenna's exposition of quiddity and its various considerations, we must now

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Admonitions: Physics and Metaphysics: An Analysis and Annotated translation (New York, 2014), p. 120.

[24] See Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-ishārāt*, vol. 3, pp. 437–8.

[25] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Commentary on the Book of Directives and Remarks* (*Sharḥ al-ishārāt*), trans. Robert Wisnovsky in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavi (eds.), *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia* (London, 2008–15), vol. 3, p. 191. Cf. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Lubāb al-ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā (Cairo, 1986), pp. 132–4.

[26] Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-ishārāt*, trans. Wisnovsky in *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia*, vol. 3, p. 191. Cf. *Lubāb al-ishārāt*, p. 145.

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turn to the *Ilāhiyyāt* of *al-Shifā*', where the issue has been dealt with from other angles. Avicenna begins with the example of a "horse" as it relates to the question of universals. In Avicenna's own words:

> For "horseness" is not the definition of universality, nor is universality included in the definition of "horseness." [In fact] the definition of "horseness" does not require the definition of universality, but is [something] to which universality accidentally occurs. For, in itself, it is nothing at all except "horseness;" for, in itself, it is neither one nor many and exists neither in the external world (*al-aʿyān*) nor in the mind, existing in none of these things either in potency or in act, such that [these] are included in "horseness." Rather, in itself, it is but "horseness".[27]

From the above quote, it becomes evident that for Avicenna a natural universal (horseness in this case) qua itself is neither existent in the world of objective existence nor in the mind. But at the same time he contends that it would be permissible to conceive of such an "entity" because its essence (*dhāt*) belongs only to itself. He goes on to argue that even though such a natural universal exists with its particulars, it is still "itself" in such a mode of being. Moreover, he claims that a natural universal considered in this way is "prior in existence" to its individual instance, that is, the natural universal man would be prior in existence to the particular man, *e.g.* John. Avicenna says:

> Consideration of "animal in itself" would be permissible even though it exists with another, because [it] itself with another is [still] itself. Its essence, then, belongs to itself, and its being with another is either an accidental matter that occurs to it or some necessary concomitant to its nature – as [is the case with] animality and humanity. Considered in this way, it is prior in existence to the animal, which is either particular by [reason of] its accidents or universal, existing [in the concrete] or [in the mind] as in the way that the simple is prior to the complex and the part to the whole. In this [mode of] existence, it is neither genus nor species, neither individual, nor one, nor many. But, in this [mode of] existence, it is only animal and only human.[28]

Naturally, given such a claim it behooves one to ask what is the ontological status of the "natural universal" as delineated above?[29]

[27] *Metaphysics*, 5.1, 4 (trans. Marmura, with modification).
[28] *Metaphysics*, 5.1, 18 (trans. Marmura, with slight alteration).
[29] See Fazlur Rahman, "Essence and existence in Avicenna," *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies*, 4 (1958): 1–16 and Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence* (Petaling Jaya, 2007), pp. 148–52. Both Rahman and Izutsu argue that the inquiry over the ontological status of quiddities is misdirected from the start. According to Rahman, Avicenna does not conceive of being and quiddity as mutually exclusive elements to start with, and then tries to fuse them by a kind of 'metaphysical chemistry.' Izutsu concurs by adding that the distinction between being and quiddity is not a 'real' one, *i.e.* it pertains to the analytic faculty of the mind. In his view, reason, when analyzing a concrete object, extracts from it two distinct concepts, *i.e.* being and quiddity. Thinking otherwise would imply that quiddity 'existed' prior to its existence. Notwithstanding the apparent cogency of both of these views, they fail to take into account the fact that Avicenna himself states

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Before attempting to present Avicenna's response to this question, it is necessary to explain the different considerations of quiddity in some detail that are central to the understanding of this issue. A quiddity is normally used in two senses: 1) the specific sense (*māhiyya bi-al-maʿnā al-akhaṣṣ*) and 2) the general sense (*māhiyya bi-al-maʿnā al-aʿamm*).[30] It is known that quiddity in the second sense refers to the reality of things in which it is not opposed to the meaning of existence. Now, quiddity in the first sense responds to the question "what is it" as opposed to "who is it," in which it is immediately noticed that the question is directly related to the notion of the universal since when asking "what is it" of someone we get the response "man," and not John or Harry. The standard definition of quiddity that is provided in most text books states that a quiddity qua quiddity is neither existent nor non-existent (*al-māhiyya min ḥayth hiya laysat illā hiya lā mawjūda wa-lā maʿdūma*).[31] A quiddity in its purest state is free from all conditioning and determinations such as being one or many, universal or particular. For example, if we consider the quiddity of man as a universal (*i.e.* mental universal) then it cannot include all the particular men that have concrete existence. On the other hand, if that quiddity is a particular, then by definition it would exclude other particular instances of that quiddity, which is clearly inadmissible. Therefore, the quiddity of man is only "man" (no more, no less). But when existence, non-existence, universality and particularity are predicated of quiddity, they are not done so with respect to its *very* essence. This brings us back to the different considerations of quiddity. A quiddity, if considered conditioned by something, that is, with all accidents and individuating factors of the thing being considered, then that quiddity appears to be an extramental existent.[32] Now, if the same quiddity is considered devoid of all the individuating factors and accidents, that is with the condition that nothing can accompany it, it exists only in the mind.[33] However, a quiddity can also be thought of as transcending all forms of

that the 'natural universal' exists prior to its particulars (*ante rem*), arguing that quiddities "exist" in the Divine Intellect prior to their "existence" in the extra-mental world; see *Metaphysics* 5.1, 28. For a fine discussion on Avicenna's different formulation of the essence-existence distinction see, Robert Wisnovsky, "Avicenna and the Avicennian tradition," in Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge, NY, 2005), pp. 92–136. For an interesting, related analysis of the Ideas, see Harry A. Wolfson, "Extradeical and intradeical interpretations of Platonic ideas", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 22. 1 (1961): 3–32.

[30] Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, pp. 117–18.

[31] Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics*, trans. Ṣayyid 'Alī Qūlī Qarā'ī (London, 2003), pp. 6 and 46.

[32] Avicenna, *Metaphysics* 5.1, 26–27.

[33] *Ibid*.

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conditionality.[34] That is to say, a quiddity in such a state is utterly neutral to the possibility of accompanying both positive and negative conditioning, which enables it to be tilted to one side or the other or none at all. Avicenna in his *Ilāhiyyāt* of *al-Shifā*' states:

> "Animal qua animal is disengaged (*mujarrad*), without the condition of some other thing," and our saying, "Animal qua animal is disengaged, being negatively conditioned [so that] there is no other thing [accompanying it]." If it were possible for animal qua animal to be disengaged, with the condition that no other thing exists in external reality, then it would be possible for the Platonic Forms to exist in external reality. Rather, animal as negatively conditioned, exists only in the mind. As for the animal which is disengaged as totally unconditioned, it has existence in the external world. For, in itself and in its inner reality, it is totally unconditioned, even though it may be accompanied by a thousand conditions in its external [mode of existence].[35]

According to Avicenna, the "ontological status" of the natural universal (quiddity in and of itself) remains unaffected when it exists with a particular instance of it because a natural universal such as "humanity" would exist as long as a particular human being, *e.g.* Jenny exists. Avicenna argues:

> The fact that the animal existing in the individual is a certain animal does not prevent animal qua animal – [that is], not through a consideration of its being an animal in some state – from existing in it. [This is] because, if this individual is a certain animal, then a certain animal exists. Hence, animal [qua animal] which is part of a certain animal exists.[36]

To explain: there is no contradiction between the propositions "John exists with all of his necessary accidents [that are specific to him]" and "John is a man." Inasmuch as John exists with the characteristics that are only particular to him, he also exists as a "man" which is inseparable from his essence or which "is" his essence. The first proposition is an instance of quiddity "conditioned by something" while the second is that of "unconditioned by anything." The subtle point to note is that "*māhiyya lā bi-sharṭ*" does not become "*māhiyya bi-sharṭ shay*'" when it exists as a part of it.

So far we have solved the conundrum of how the *kullī ṭabī*'*ī* can exist in the external world in spite of its being a "*kullī*." But we have not yet treated the "ontological status" of the natural universal when it is considered in and of itself. Avicenna has repeatedly stated that a quiddity insofar as it is a quiddity, *e.g.* man, horse or animal, is only "itself" without any further consideration. He has also said that we can conceive of such a quiddity or the natural universal prior to its existing

[34] *Ibid.*
[35] *Metaphysics*, 5.1, 26 (trans. Marmura, with significant alterations).
[36] *Metaphysics*, 5.1, 20, with an alteration.

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with a particular object.[37] Such assertions immediately make one ponder whether or not Avicenna is affirming "the primacy of quiddity" here since he seems to be claiming "independent existence" for quiddities. However, one has to be careful before making any categorical statements concerning this, since in other places *e.g. al-Ishārāt* he affirms that "the cause (*al-sabab*) is prior in existence (*mutaqaddim fī al-wujūd*)":

> It is permissible that the quiddity of a thing is a cause of one of the attributes of that thing and that one of the attributes of that thing is a cause of another attribute, as the specific difference [is a cause of] property. However, it is not permissible that the attribute which is the existence of a thing, be verily caused by that thing's quiddity, which is not existence, or by another attribute. This is because the cause (*al-sabab*) is prior in existence (*mutaqaddim fī al-wujūd*), and nothing is prior to existence before existence.[38]

That is, although the quiddity of a thing can be a cause of one of the attributes of that thing, the "attribute" which is the existence of that very thing cannot be caused by its quiddity, since not only is the cause of a thing prior in existence, but also nothing is prior to existence before existence. This passage can be further elucidated through citing another passage from the *Ishārāt*, in which Avicenna suggests that things in the external world have both essential and existential causes (*e.g.* agent causality):

> A thing may be caused both in relation to its quiddity (or reality) and its existence. You can consider this in the example of a triangle, for instance. The reality of the triangle depends on the surface and on the line which is its side. Both the surface and the line constitute the triangle inasmuch as it is a triangle and has a reality of triangularity, as if they are its two causes: the material and the formal. But for the point of view of the triangle's existence, it may also depend on a cause other than these [two], which is not a cause that constitutes its triangularity and is not a part of its definition.[39]

So the combined interpretation of both of these passages indicates that Avicenna does not embrace an essentialist position with respect to the quiddity of a thing.[40] Nevertheless, it may be asked if quiddities

[37] However, it is not clear if "temporal priority" is intended here. I will analyze various types of "priority" in the following paragraphs, when I return to this issue again.

[38] Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt*, p. 143 (trans. Inati, with modification) in *Ibn Sina's Remarks and Admonitions*, p. 125. On Ṭūsī's explanation of this passage, see Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-ishārāt*, vol. 3, pp. 460–2.

[39] Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt*, p. 139 (trans. Inati, with modification) in *Ibn Sina's Remarks and Admonitions*, p. 121.

[40] This interpretation is also supported by Ṭūsī in his commentary. According to him, quiddity is not separable from existence except in the mind. However, even in the mind the quiddity seems to possess "mental existence" or *wujūd dhihnī*, see Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-ishārāt*, vol. 3, pp. 463–4. However, it should be noted that Ṭūsī does not specifically address the question of the ontological status of the natural universal.

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per se neither exist in the mind nor in extra-mental reality, where do they exist then, since Avicenna also denies the ontological validity of the Platonic Forms? Avicenna's response to such a crucial issue may at first seem akin to the Sufic notion of "fixed entities" (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*) or the Muʿtazilite "theory of subsistence" (*thubūt*), depending on how one interprets it.[41] However, one can only reach a balanced conclusion after considering all the subtle varieties of interpretations that exist concerning this matter.

At this point, it is worth bringing here the analysis of Amos Bertolacci's recent article on the essence-existence distinction in Avicenna.[42] According to Bertolacci, essence (*māhiyya*) and existence, "thing" and "existent", have different intensions, and essence and "thing" are prior to existence and "existent" from a cognitive point of view with respect to the absolute consideration of quiddities.[43] However, existence and "existent" are intensionally prior to essence and "thing", since the meaning of essence is also expressed by a particular sense of existence (*esse propium*), and existence is not reducible to being explained by means of a different notion, such as by the notion of essence in the case of "thing."[44] In other words, existent and existence are, in some respects, logically prior and more universal than thing and essence. On this interpretation, the concept of "thing" is synonymous with quiddity (or essence), which in turn is synonymous with the notion of proper existence, while the concepts of existence and "existent" are to be understood as being synonymous with "being established in reality." However, it should be noted that even though the notion of "existence" may have a broader extension based on the

[41] Fixed entities are the unchanging objects of God's knowledge, some of which are brought into concrete existence, and others of which are not. In both states, they remain "non-existent" and forever "fixed" in God's knowledge. In later Islamic intellectual history, they are directly identified with the quiddities of Islamic philosophy; see Mohammed Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy: Philosophy and Scripture in Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany, 2012), pp. 61–2, and 189–90 (notes 36–38). For a discussion of fixed entities, see William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, 1989), pp. 12, 183, 245; Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Cosmology* (Albany, 1998), pp. 18–19, 148–9, 229; Mohammed Rustom, "Philosophical Sufism," in Richard Taylor and Luis Lopez-Farjeat (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy* (New York, 2016). The Muʿtazilites believe immutables or non-existents subsist as things (*ashyāʾ*) distinct from God; see Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany, 1975), p. 147; Harry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, MA, 1976), pp. 359–72; Richard M. Frank, "The Aš'arite ontology: I Primary entities," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 9 (1999): 163–231, and "*Al-Maʿdūm wal-mawjūd:* The non-existent, the existent, and the possible in the teaching of Abū Hāshim and his followers," *MIDEO,* 14 (1980): 185–209.

[42] Amos Bertolacci, "The distinction of essence and existence in Avicenna's Metaphysics: the text and its context," in Felicitas Opwis and David C. Reisman (eds.), *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 257–88.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 287.

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 273–4.

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above analysis, it is nonetheless not clear how this should also imply "priority" for existence. This is so because Avicenna, following Fārābī, makes it clear that existence is *lāzim ghayr muqawwim*[45] (non-constitutive concomitant) of a thing/essence in that whenever the latter (*i.e.* essence) is implied the former is also understood.[46] That is to say, the notion of existence always accompanies the notion of thing because the "thing" is either existent in the particular or it is existent in the mind. So for instance, even the "shapeness" of a triangle should possess existence in order to be applied to the triangle, implying their "co-extensiveness" rather than "priority". Moreover, as Bertolacci himself affirms, with respect to the absolute consideration of quiddity, which is the issue most pertinent to the present inquiry, essences are prior to existence as far as their cognition is concerned. Thus it is necessary to analyze *Metaphysics* 5.1 from other viewpoints.[47]

In *Metaphysics* 5.1, Avicenna states that the cause of the natural universal or quiddity inasmuch as it is quiddity is divine providence (*al-ʿināya al-ilāhiyya*). Thus it appears that natural universals exist in God's foreknowledge before their instauration (*jaʿl*). Avicenna says:

> Animal, then, taken with its accidents, is the natural thing. What is taken in itself is the nature, of which it is said that its existence is **prior to natural existence** [in the manner of] the priority of the simple to the composite. This is [the thing] whose existence is specified as being divine existence (*al-wujūd al-ilāhī*)[48] because the cause of its existence, inasmuch as it is animal, is the providence of God, exalted be He.[49]

The first thing to note from the above passage is that even though Avicenna argues that natural universals possess prior existence, he probably has in mind "priority" with respect to essence (*dhāt*) rather than temporal priority.[50] This interpretation sits well with the *Madkhal* I.12, in which Avicenna explains the status of quiddities

[45] *I.e.* an inseparable accident of every quiddity, such that it is not a constituent of that quiddity, *e.g.* the concept of "one".

[46] Avicenna, *al-Mubāḥathāt*, ed. Muḥsin Bīdārfar (Qom, 1992–3), pp. 218–19; Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, in *al-Manṭiqiyyāt li-al-Fārābī*, ed. Muḥammad T. Dānishpaẓūh (Qom, 1987), vol. 1, p. 298, 6–16.

[47] Bertolacci, "The distinction of essence," pp. 287–8.

[48] On natural and divine existence, cf. Stephen Menn and Robert Wisnovsky, "Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī's Essay on the four scientific questions regarding the three categories of existence: divine, natural and logical. *Editio princeps* and translation," *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'études orientales du Caire* (*MIDEO*), 29 (2012): 73–96. Natural existence refers to the existence of a form in a concrete individual while divine existence refers to the existence of a form taken in and of itself, independent of either mental or concrete existence.

[49] Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, 5.1, 28.

[50] Priority can be of six kinds: 1) priority with respect to order, 2) priority with respect to essence, 3) priority with respect to time, 4) priority with respect to place, 5) priority with respect to nobility, 6) priority with respect to nature, see Naṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad Ṭūsī,

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"before", "in" and "after" a state of multiplicity. There he claims that the relationship between all things and God and the intellects is similar to that of the ideas of a craftsman/designer to her ideas (*inna nisbatahā ilā Allāh wa-al-malā'ika nisbat al-maṣnūʿāt… ilā al-nafs al-ṣāniʿa*). He also asserts that before the state of multiplicity, natural entities (*al-umūr al-ṭabīʿa*) exist both in God's and the intellect's knowledge.[51] The reference to the intellects (lit. angels) in plural may imply either all of the ten intellects or the Agent intellect alone, who is the giver of forms of in the sublunary world. This interpretation is in line with the *Madkhal* I.2's portrayal of the three different considerations of quiddities, where temporal priority is clearly not implied.[52] However, in the passage cited above, Avicenna seems to locate natural universals in divine providence, which bears a close resemblance to Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī's claim that the latter have divine (*ilāhī*) existence. In his *On the Existence of Common Things* and *On the Three Kinds of Existence*, Ibn ʿAdī criticizes the view that an essence exists in only two ways, *i.e.* mental and extra-mental. He asserts that quiddity can also exist in itself prior to other modes of existence mentioned above and in his view, such a quiddity or the natural universal represents existence in the highest degree.[53] Avicenna follows Ibn ʿAdī as regards two mental and extra-mental quiddities, but he disagrees with the latter concerning whether quiddities can exist by themselves or whether their existence is the most real (*aḥaqq*). However, in contrast to Ibn ʿAdī, Avicenna maintains that the cause of the being of natural universals is divine providence, which calls for an explanation of the term *ʿināya*.[54] He writes:

Qismat-i mawjūdāt (Persian), pp. 12–13 in *Majmūʿah-yi rasā'il*, trans. Parviz Morewedge (New York, 1992), pp. 12–13; cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, pp. 150–1.

[51] Avicenna, *Madkhal* I.12, p. 69. For a detailed explanation of this discussion, see *Madkhal* I.12, pp. 56–65.

[52] It is also notable that Avicenna rejects the Muʿtazilite notion of *ashyā' maʿdūma*, which is in line with the *Madkhal* I.2 passage on the three different considerations of quiddities as cited in the text.

[53] For an in-depth analysis of Avicenna's borrowing as well criticism of Ibn ʿAdī's theory, see Marwan Rashed, "Ibn Adi et Avicenne: sur les types d'existants", in Vincenza Celluprica and Cristina D'Ancona (eds.), *Aristotele e i suoi esegeti neoplatonici* (Naples, 2004), pp. 116–22 and 129–30.

[54] Stephen Menn thinks that *Metaphysics*, 5.1, 28 is anomalous. According to him, by this passage Avicenna meant to say "by Ibn ʿAdī and his school", that is, he was not referring to his own view. However, Menn does not bring any textual evidence for the above claim. On the contrary, Avicenna, unlike Ibn ʿAdī, brings up the idea of divine providence, and in other places of the Metaphysics explicitly states what this means, as can be seen from *Metaphysics*, 9.6, 1. Furthermore, the notion of *ʿināya* does not seem to contradict what Avicenna's says elsewhere concerning this (*e.g.* in *Madkhal* I.2 and I.12), see Stephen Menn, "Avicenna's metaphysics", in Peter Adamson (ed.), *Interpreting Avicenna* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 143–69, pp. 154–5. It should however be noted that Marwan Rashed does not interpret the passage along these lines, see *e.g.* Rashed, "Ibn Adi et

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It must, hence, be known that providence (*ʿināya*) is the First's being cognizant in Himself of the existence of the order of the good (*niẓām al-khayr*) in His being, in Himself, a cause of goodness and perfection in terms of what is possible, and in His being satisfied [with the order of the good] in the manner that has been mentioned. He would thus intellect (*yaʿqilu*) the order of the good in the highest possible manner, whereby what He intellects in the highest possible way as an order and a good would overflow (*yafīḍu*) from Him in the manner, within the realm of possibility that is most complete in being conducive to order (*al-niẓām*). This, then, is the meaning of providence.[55]

Thus, the divine providence is the overflowing of the order of the good without a view to any preponderance (*tarjīḥ*). That is, the First's (*al-awwal*) knowledge of how to best arrange the existence of everything is the source of the emanation (*fayḍ*) of everything and natural universals have the status of "divine existence" when they subsist on this level (*i.e.* at the level of divine undifferentiated knowledge),[56] because within the realm of possibilities, these universals will manifest themselves as one and many, along with various other accidents. The natural universals descend, as it were, through the celestial intellects (*al-ʿuqūl al-samāwiyya*) which contain them, to the sublunary world and become united with matter.

An issue that might be raised here is the question of the gradation (*tashkīk*)[57] in regard to the changing status of the natural universal. Since an extensive treatment of this subject is well beyond the scope of the present endeavor, a few brief remarks may be offered.[58] The

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Avicenne," p. 119. According to Rashed, Avicenna leaves this matter in vague, probably because of the tension and confusion it might engender with the Platonic Ideas.

[55] *Metaphysics*, 9.6, 1, translation modified.

[56] See for example, Avicenna, *Metaphysics* 8.7, 1–4; 8.6, 5–8; 8.6, 12–13.

[57] An alternative translation of *tashkīk* is modulation.

[58] The origin of the issue of *tashkīk* in Arabic and Islamic philosophy lies in *manṭiq* (logic), where two types of concepts can be discerned: concepts which either correspond to their external instances (*maṣādiq*) by way of univocity (*tawāṭu'*), or by way of gradation. An example of the former is the concept of man (*insān*) while that of the latter are light (*nūr*), time, number etc. For an overview of the treatment of *tashkīk* in Avicenna and his Greek and Arabic predecessors, see the excellent study by Alexander Treiger, "Avicenna's notion of transcendental modulation of existence (*taškīk al-wuǧūd*, *analogia entis*) and its Greek and Arabic sources," in Opwis and Reisman (eds.), *Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 327–63, at 353–61. It should be noted that this study does not discuss *tashkīk* in relation to the ontological status of natural universals. Before analyzing the principle of *tashkīk*, it is necessary to specify its criterion of which at least three are relevant in the present context. They are as follows: *tashkīk ʿāmm* (general), *khāṣṣ* (specific) and *akhaṣṣ* (most specific). The "criterion" of gradation that pertains to *wujūd* is the "general criterion" (*tashkīk ʿāmm*) that states that that by which a thing differs (*mā bi-hi al-ikhtilāf*) is exactly the same as that by which that very thing shares in common (*mā bi-hi al-ishtarāk*). Indeed, that by which contingent beings differ from the Necessary Being is nothing other than *wujūd*, while that which is common between them is also *wujūd*. But between the *wājib* and the *mumkin* lies an insurmountable gulf since there is gradation in *wujūd*. Based on the preceding analysis, it appears that Avicenna's

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discussion of *tashkīk* in Islamic philosophy up to Avicenna's time centered on the issue of how the term "existent" should be predicated.[59] In this debate, Avicenna is to be credited with the earliest formulation of the doctrine of transcendental gradation of existence, which played a significant role in Ṣadrā's philosophy as we shall see in the next section.[60] In line with Aristotle's treatment of the various kinds of predication, Avicenna takes up the subject in the corresponding book of *al-Shifā'* (*i.e. Maqūlāt*).[61] In *Maqūlāt* I.2 and I.4, Avicenna discusses *tashkīk* extensively.[62] According to him, a term can be predicated 1) as a "shared name" (*bi-al-ittifāq al-ism*) and 2) as a pure univocal (*'alā sabīl al-tawāṭu'*). Further, (1) can be divided into i) graded univocal (*ism mushtarak*), ii) mixed equivocal (*bi-tashābuh al-ism*), and iii) unmixed equivocal (*bi-ishtarak al-ism*). Now as far as the present analysis is concerned it is (i), *i.e.*, graded univocal that admits of "gradation" in strength and weakness, priority and posteriority etc. The discussions in the *Maqūlāt* I.2 and I.4 explain "predicamental gradation" of existence, whereas in his *Mubāḥathāt* he extends the gradation of existence from the predicamental to the transcendental level (*i.e.* how existent can apply to both the Necessary Being and contingent beings).[63] This perspective, as stressed by Treiger, is a significant shift in the history of *tashkīk*, since Ṣadrā and his predecessors drew on Avicenna to formulate their own responses to the issue. At

conception of gradation does not flesh out all the different ramifications of *tashkīk*. For a detailed analysis of *tashkīk*, see 'Abd al-Rasūl 'Ubūdiyyat, *Niẓām-i Ṣadrā-yī: Tashkīk dar wujūd* (Qum, 2010), pp. 17–32, 55–97, 191–257. This study is particularly useful in explaining the problematic of gradation in Ṣadrā, and its historical roots in Avicenna.

[59] For the ensuing discussion in the next paragraph I rely mainly on Treiger's treatment of *tashkīk* in Avicenna and his predecessors, see Treiger, "Avicenna's notion of Transcendental," pp. 338–52. For a background discussion on how the term "existent" should be predicated (*i.e.* as synonymy or homonymy), see Ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Ibn al-Ṭayyib's Commentary on Porphyry's Eisagoge*, trans. by K. Gyekye in Arabic Logic: *Ibn al-Ṭayyib's Commentary on Porphyry's Eisagoge* (Albany, NY, 1979), pp. 77–90; Fritz W. Zimmermann (tr.), *al-Farabi's Commentary and Short Treatise on* Aristotle's *De interpretatione* (*Sharḥ kitāb al-'ibārah li-Arisṭuṭālis*) (London, New York, 1981), 18.24, 62.16, 78.18, 80.16,27, 110.19, 122.12, 146ff.; Fārābī, *Alfārābī's philosophische abhandlungen*, ed. Friedrich Dieterici [*Risāla fī jawāb masā'il su'ila 'anhā*] (Leiden, 1892), pp. 82–91.

[60] Treiger, "Avicenna's notion of transcendental," p. 360.

[61] Avicenna, *Maqūlāt* (*al-Shifā'*), ed. Ibrāhīm Madhkūr *et al.* (Cairo, 1959), pp. 9–36. On the theory of predication and discussions of homonymy in Aristotle, see Allan Back, *Aristotle's Theory of Predication* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 59–97; Rick Van Brennekom, "Aristotle and the copula," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 24.1 (1986); Terence H. Irwin, "Homonymy in Aristotle," *The Review of Metaphysics*, 34.3 (1981): 523–44 and Christopher Shields, *Order in Multiplicity: Homonymy in the Philosophy of Aristotle* (Oxford, 1999), esp. chs. 2 and 9. Some useful semantical interpretations of the Aristotelian notion of being/existent in the Arabic tradition are as follows: Allan Bäck, "Avicenna on existence," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 25.3 (1987): 351–67 and Nicholas Rescher, "Al-Farabi: is existence a predicate?," in *Studies in the History of Arabic Logic* (Pittsburgh, 1963), pp. 39–42.

[62] Avicenna, *Maqūlāt*, pp. 20–1, 26–7, 28–31, 36.

[63] Treiger, "Avicenna's notion of transcendental," pp. 360–2.

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any rate, Avicenna says that existence is differentiated into the Necessary Being and contingent beings, and further into the ten Aristotelian categories. What is important to note is that existence is differentiated not as a genus by differentiae, but by the very quiddities of the entities of which it is predicated:

> If existence were predicated of what is below in the manner genus is predicated of its species, it would necessarily follow that what is below it must be differentiated from one another by a differentia. If this were the case… the Necessary Being would be composed of a genus and a differentia, which is impossible… Existence is predicated of what is below it by gradation (*bi-al-tashkīk*) and it necessarily follows that every existent must be differentiated from one another by its essence (*bi-dhātihī*) as blackness is from extension.[64]

In the later period, Ṭūsī would defend and elaborate further on Avicenna's notion of *tashkīk*, when theologians such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī called philosophers into question for failing to demonstrate how God too can "exist" in a similar sense that a creature exists.[65] In any event, notwithstanding Avicenna's transcendental gradation, he does not say anything explicit as to how the former is related to the ontological status of natural universals. However, he affirms unequivocally that being qua being (*wujūd bimā huwa wujūd*) does not admit of any variance in strength and weakness (*al-shidda wa-al-ḍuʿf*) or in being more diminished and deficient (*al-aqall wa-al-anqaṣ*), which is to say that he denies gradation in the structure of *wujūd* itself.[66] Thus, it is clear that even though Avicenna allows existence to be applied to both the Necessary and the contingent, he has in mind conceptual gradation rather than ontological gradation.[67] Otherwise, this would flatly contradict what he says in the *Metaphysics* (6.3, 26) as cited above. Moreover, the text from the *Mubāḥathāt* cited above, along with Ṭūsī's interpretation of *tashkīk* confirms such a view. A typical example of Ṣadrian interpretation of *tashkīk* would further clarify the issue. So for instance, in Ṣadrā's

[64] Avicenna, *Mubāḥathāt*, pp. 218–19 (trans. Treiger, with some modifications); cited in Treiger, "Avicenna's notion of transcendental," p. 362.

[65] For an elaborate discussion, see Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-ishārāt*, vol. 3, pp. 458ff.

[66] *Metaphysics* 6.3, 26. This viewpoint is somewhat opposed to the Ṣadrian understanding of gradation, which encapsulates the whole of reality, that is, all of existence. A typical demonstration of *tashkīk* in Ṣadrā would take the following syllogistic form: 1) existence is primary 2) existence is synonymous (*al-mushtarak al-maʿnawī*) in all existents 3) multiplicity in existence is real 4) existence is simple (*basīṭ*). Therefore, existence must be a gradational reality (*amr mushakkik*) embracing unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity. For more proofs of *tashkīk* and how Ṣadrā's exposition of it differs from that of Avicenna, see ʿAbd al-Rasūl ʿUbūdiyyat, *Dar āmadī ba-niẓām-i Ṣadrā-yī* (Tehran, 2014), vol. 1, pp. 137–60.

[67] See Ḥusayn Sūznichī, *Waḥdat-i wujūd dar ḥikmat-i mutaʿāliya* (Tehran, 2011), pp. 30–4 and 49–50.

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ontology *wujūd* is a gradational reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-mushakkika*) that self-determines itself due to its unconditioned nature, and consequently becomes conditioned into various entities that after mental analysis are identified as quiddities.[68]

Finally, it may be noted in passing that Avicenna also claims that universals can be said of in three ways.[69] In his view, a human being is an instance of the universal because it can be predicated of many individuals. However, universals can also be predicated of things that do not have extra-mental existence as for example, a heptagonal house. Nonetheless, it is a universal because it can be predicated of many at least in the mind. In other words, the condition of existing in the external world is not among the conditions of being a universal. In addition, there are universals that have no more than just a single referent, for example, the sun or the earth, but they are nevertheless called universals since there is nothing in their essence that prevents them from being predicated of many.[70]

III. FROM AVICENNA TO MULLĀ ṢADRĀ: THE INTERMEDIARIES

The previous section evinced the multifacetedness of Avicenna's exposition of the natural universal and key issues associated with it. Before attempting to investigate Ṣadrā's theory of the natural universal, it would be pertinent to look at some of his notable predecessors who had taken up the issue from Avicenna and interpreted him in various ways. Since I have already dealt with Ṭūsī's and Rāzī's views, I would like to begin this section with Mīr Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī who was born in Gurgān in 1339 CE.[71] Based on current scholarship, we have precious little information about Jurjānī's life. He was a contemporary of Taftāzānī (d. 1390), as well as a pupil of Quṭb al-Dīn Rāzī (d. 1374) and a teacher of Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (d. 1502).[72]

The quiddity considered with a condition attached to it, is called the mixed quiddity (*makhlūṭa*), that is, the quiddity conditioned-by-something (*bi-sharṭ shayʾ*). It is found in [the external world] concerning which there remains no

[68] Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fī al-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa*, ed. Riḍā Luṭfī, Ibrāhīm Amīnī, and Fatḥ Allāh Umīd (henceforth *Asfār*) (Beirut, 1981), vol. 2, chap. 6, pp. 28–9.

[69] Avicenna, *Metaphysics* 5.1, 2–3.

[70] *Ibid.*

[71] On Jurjānī, see Josef van Ess, "Jurjānī," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. XV, Fasc. 1 (2009): 21–9, available online at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jorjani-zayn-al-din-abul-hasan-ali.

[72] On Taftāzānī, see Wilferd Madelung, "At-Taftāzānī und die Philosophie," in Dominik Perler and Ulrich Rudolph (eds.), *Logik und Theologie. Das Organon im arabischen und im lateinischen Mittelalter*, STGM 84 (Leiden, 2005), pp. 227–35; on Dawānī, see Reza Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran: Najm al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Nayrīzī and His Writings* (Leiden, 2011), pp. 4–15.

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doubt… The quiddity stripped of all of its consequents (*al-lawāḥiq*), is named the disengaged quiddity (*mujarrada*), that is, negatively conditioned (*bi-sharṭ lā shay'*)… There is no doubt that when this [quiddity] is disengaged from all the external consequents, you will find it in the mind. However, if it is absolutely disengaged from all the external as well as mental accidents, you will not see it [in the mind] at all. This is so because if it is (*i.e.* the disengaged quiddity) to be found in the mind, then it would accompany all the accidents of the latter, as we have mentioned earlier… The quiddity when considered insofar as it is itself (*i.e.* nothing accompanying it), divested of all of its accidents that accompany it, is called the absolute quiddity, that is, unconditioned by anything (*lā bi-sharṭ*). And this is more general than the other two, which is sometimes found in external reality (*fī al-khārij*).[73]

Thus according to Jurjānī, there are fundamentally three considerations of quiddity:

1) the mixed quiddity (*māhiyya makhlūṭa*)
2) the disengaged quiddity (*māhiyya mujarrada*)
3) the absolute quiddity (*māhiyya muṭlaqa*)

What is important to note is that by Jurjānī's time, the Avicennan considerations of quiddity were taken up by the philosophers and theologians alike and were systematized with well-defined terms such as those mentioned above.[74] However, it should be noted that the substance of what Jurjānī is saying is not far from what Avicenna explicated in his *al-Shifā'*, except that in the case of the former the terms had been refined further. As we shall see in the next section, Ṣadrā adopts much of the vocabulary developed by Jurjānī *et al.* in his analysis of the natural universal.

To provide more background to Ṣadrā's reading of Avicenna's exposition of quiddity and its various considerations and the notion of *tashkīk*, I will now analyze the work of some of the key figures of the Safavid era philosophy. Among its major figures who became famous as founders of one of the two strands of philosophy in the School of Shīrāz are the two Dashtakīs, namely Ṣadr al-Dīn (d. 1498) and his

[73] Mīr Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī, *Sharḥ Kitāb al-Mawāqif li-'Aḍūd al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad al-Ījī*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umayrah (Beirut, 1997), vol. 1, pp. 290–2. One should also look at al-Qūshjī's (d. 1474) *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-i'tiqād*, which contains useful parallels. Unfortunately, I have not been able to acquire a copy of this, see 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī al-Qūshjī's, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-i'tiqād*, Lithograph Edition by Mullā 'Abbās 'Alī, Tabriz, 1883.

[74] One should also look at Taftāzānī's formulation of the different *i'tibārāt* of quiddity and his rejection of its external existence insofar as it is *bi-sharṭ lā*. His interpretation of the external existence of universals might have influenced that of Dawānī, as we shall see in the ensuing paragraphs. It is also interesting that Taftāzānī engages with Sufi thinkers such as Ibn 'Arabī and their well-known doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* in relation to his rejection of the external existence of universals, see Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid fī 'ilm al-kalām*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umayra (Beirut, 1998), vol. 1, pp. 310, 311, 336, 403–4, 409. See also, 'Aḍūd al-Dīn Ījī, *al-Mawāqif fī 'ilm al-kalām* (Beirut, n. d.), p. 66, 1–7.

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son Ghiyāth al-Dīn (d. 1542). In his path-breaking study, Reza Pourjavady avers that together with Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (d. 1502), the Dashtakīs are the three best-known scholars who were teaching Islamic philosophy and theology (*kalām*) in the late 15th century Shīrāz.[75] The revival of Arabic/Islamic philosophy in Iṣfahān during the *Safavid* period, and especially the synthesis of Avicennan philosophy, Illuminationism and *ʿirfān* that came to characterize the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā himself, owes much to the Dashtakīs and Dawānī.[76] The philosophical contribution of the Dashtakī family had its effect in the subsequent debates in Arabic/Islamic philosophy, for instance, in his general metaphysics (*al-umūr al-ʿāmma*), Mullā Ṣadrā brings up the debate between Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī and the two Dashtakīs and evaluates their views concerning several key issues including the primacy (*aṣālat*) and gradation (*tashkīk*) of being, mental existence (*al-wujūd al-dhihnī*), and primary and essential predication (*ḥaml al-awwalī al-dhātī*), all of which lend support to the underpinning of his own philosophical project.[77]

In a rather surprising way Dawānī claims that natural universals do not exist in the external world.[78] He self-consciously refutes such a view, which is held by Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Dashtakī, Avicenna himself and others.[79] In his view, the external accidents of quiddities are distinct from their essence (*dhāt*), and the latter does not necessitate a common universal (*al-kullī al-mushtarak*) among them. Moreover, he claims that the species (*nawʿ*) has the attribute of being eternal (*qadīm*) and when it is originated it "exists" by means of *wujūd*.[80] This is in accordance with

[75] Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran*, p. 32.

[76] For instance, Mullā Ṣadrā uses the following honorific titles for Dawānī: *baʿḍ ajalat al-mutaʾakhkhirīn*, *baʿḍ al-muḥaqqiqīn*, *al-mawlā al-Dawānī*, *baʿḍ ajalat aṣḥāb al-buḥus*, *al-muḥaqqiq al-Dawānī*, *al-ʿallāma al-Dawānī*, *baʿḍ ajalat al-fuḍalāʾ*; for Ṣadr al-Dīn: *baʿḍ ahl al-taḥqīq*, *baʿḍ al-amājad*, *baʿḍ al-mudaqqiqīn*, *baʿḍ al-adhkiyāʾ*, *al-sayyid al-ʿazīm*. As for Ghiyāth al-Dīn he states "*alladhī huwa sarābihi al-muqaddas*, *Ghiyāth aʿāẓam al-sādāt wa-al-ʿulamāʾ*, *al-manṣūr al-muʾayyad min ʿālam al-malakūt*," see for instance, Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, vol. 1, pp. 42, 60, 306, 91, 399, 422, 307, 59, 315, 415 respectively; vol. 4, pp. 86, 86 respectively; *Rasāʾil-i falsafī* (Qum, 1983), p. 171.

[77] Ṣadrā thinks that Ṣadr al-Dīn is a proponent of the primacy of being, while Dawānī that of the primacy of quiddity, see Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, *Asfār*, vol. 1, pp. 65, 101–3, 228–9, 270–7, 292–4, 312–47, 393, and vol. 6, pp. 62, 102–9. As is well known, Mir Damad advocates the primacy of the quiddity over existence when it comes to contingent beings. According to him, the stage of individuation (*tashakhkhuṣ*) and determination which is identical to the stage of actual existence in the real world follows after the intelligible stage belonging to the universal quiddity itself. This becomes possible because actual existence in the external world is not identical with the original substance of the quiddity. For more information, see Keven A. Brown, "Time, perpetuity, and eternity: Mir Dāmād's theory of perpetual creation and the trifold division of existence. An analysis of *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*: *The Book of Blazing Brands*", Ph.D. diss., Univ. of California (Los Angeles, 2006), pp. 162–4.

[78] Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, "*Risālat Ibṭāl al-zamān al-mawhūm*," in *Sabʿ Rasāʾil*, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad Taysirkānī (Tehran, 2001), p. 279.

[79] *Ibid.* He shows awareness that he is rejecting the views of these philosophers.

[80] *Ibid.*, pp. 279–80.

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what he says elsewhere, namely that that only the Real (*al-ḥaqq*), whose existence is His quiddity, is truly existent. As for other entities, given that they are all caused, they are only existent in the sense that God causes them to exist.[81] For instance, he asserts that the fixed entity (*al-ʿayn al-thābit*) of the human being, which is a quiddity distinct from the Necessary Being, does not exist at all.[82] For Dawānī, contingent beings are called "*mawjūdāt*" only because they derive their *wujūd* from the Necessary. Otherwise, it is known that their existence is unreal (*ghayr ḥaqīqī*), since *wujūd* does not subsist in them.[83]

As was indicated above, Ṣadr al-Dīn, on the contrary, asserts that existence has priority over quiddity, which is in line with the doctrine of the primacy of being. In his view, the existence of the thing precedes what makes it distinct from other entities, namely, quiddity. For him, it is the existence that determines the quiddity, and not the other way round:

> Know that being existent (*mawjūdiyya*) is prior to the actuality of the quiddities in and of itself (*nafs al-amr*), that is, [for instance,] a human being within the domain of non-existence (*fī ḥayyiz al-ʿadam*) is not human. It [*i.e.*, *mawjūd*] is not even distinct in one way or another and is posterior to quiddity in respect of its being a mental construct (*fī al-iʿtibār al-dhihnī*) [. . .].[84]

Just as Ṣadr al-Dīn seems to uphold the primacy of being, his son, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, takes the next step and explicitly affirms that the natural universal exists in the external world.[85] And like Jurjānī *et al.* he too reiterates the three considerations of quiddity. As for *wujūd*, he divides it into mental and extra-mental existence and asserts that it is a "gradational" reality (*maqūl bi-al-tashkīk*). He asserts that *wujūd* admits of variance in strength and weakness.[86]

The Natural Universal contrasted with the All-Inclusive Universal (*kullī siʿī*):

Before we move on to the next section, it would be helpful to introduce a novel concept in Ṣadrian metaphysics, which plays a notable role in describing the relation between natural universals and *wujūd*. Ṣadrā argues that the concept of being is a universal much like the natural universal in that it is predicable upon its particular instances just as a natural universal such as man is predicable upon on all particular instances of man. However, the concept of being

[81] Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran*, pp. 90–2.
[82] Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, "*al-Ḥawrā*'" [*Sharḥ al-Zawrā*'], pp. 207–8.
[83] Dawānī, "*Risālat Ithbāt al-wājib al-jadīda*," in *Sabʿ Rasāʾil*, p. 129.
[84] Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Dashtakī, *Ḥāshiya ʿalā sharḥ Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*, MS Majlis 1998, fol. 24a,10–14; trans. and cited in Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran*, p. 97.
[85] This is in contrast to what Dawānī has asserted concerning the natural universal. See Ghiyāth al-Dīn, *Muṣannafāt-i Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr-i Ḥusaynī-i Dashtakī-i Shīrāzī*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh Nūrānī (Tehran, 2007), vol. 1, p. 19.
[86] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 19–20.

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(*mafhūm al-wujūd*) as a universal remains valid as long as it refers to "the reality of being" (*ḥaqīqat al-wujūd*) since by itself it cannot shed light on the essence of the latter whereas a natural universal such as man does show the essence of all particular men. Whatever exists in the objective world are the instances of the mental notion of *wujūd* but external entities themselves are innumerable aspects and particularizations of the reality of being. Therefore, the reality of being is characterized by a peculiar kind of universality, which later commentators of Ṣadrā termed as "*kullī-yi siʿī*" in Persian.[87] Ṣadrā himself uses the word "*shumūl*" which is a synonym of *siʿī* (*siʿa* in Arabic) to describe *wujūd*'s (*i.e.* reality of being) encapsulation or embracing of all things in the cosmos.[88] Since there is nothing in the cosmos that is devoid of the "particular portion" (*ḥiṣṣa*) of the reality of being when it manifests itself and becomes self-determined, without the addition of anything else, into myriad of things, *wujūd's* "universality" is more universal than anything else.[89] Hence Ṣadrā claims that *wujūd*'s [ontological] vastness is envisioned as an existential flow (*sarayān*) and expansion (*inbisāṭ*) on the [ontologically neutral] quiddities. Imagining the reader's difficulty in conceptualizing of such a reality, Ṣadrā states:

> Existence's encompassing of things is not like the universal's encompassing of particulars, but [rather] on the basis of expansion and permeation on the temples of quiddities in such a way that no complete description of it can be provided.[90]

> The reality of being's encapsulation (*shumūl ḥaqīqat al-wujūd*) of existing things is not like a universal concept's encapsulation of particulars and its holding valid for them. As we have already informed you, the reality of existence is not a genus, nor a species, nor an accident, since it is not a natural universal.[91]

IV. THE PRIMACY OF BEING AND THE NATURAL UNIVERSAL

This section will argue that Ṣadrā's views on the *kullī ṭabīʿī* and *māhiyya* rest on the doctrine of "the primacy of being."[92] What

[87] Āmulī, *Raḥīq*, vol. 6, pp. 49 and 106ff. *Wujūd* as a universal is similar to the example of the sun discussed by Avicenna (see section II above), in that the former is the only universal that is found in reality because everything conceivable would be one of its instances.

[88] See Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Lāhījī, *Sharḥ al-Mashāʿir*, edited by Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Qum, 2007), pp. 138ff.

[89] Āmūlī, *Raḥīq*, vol. 1, pp. 322ff.

[90] Ṣadrā, *Al-Maẓāhir al-ilāhiyya fī asrār al-ʿulūm al-kamāliyya*, ed. Sayyid J. Āshtiyānī (Qum, 2008), pp. 26–7.

[91] Ṣadrā, *Al-Mashāʿir*, p. 9 (trans. with modification taken from *The Book of Metaphysical Penetrations*, trans. Seyyed Hossein Nasr; ed. Ibrahim Kalin [Provo, 2014]).

[92] For the arguments of the primacy of being, see Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, vol. 1, pp. 33–42, vol. 2, p. 287, vol. 3, pp. 36ff., vol. 4, p. 213; *al-Mashāʿir* (Beirut, 2000), pp. 4, 9, 10, 35, 52. See also the translation of this latter text in Nasr, *The Book of Metaphysical Penetrations*, pp. 6–16.

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Ṣadrā does, as the following analysis will show, is obliterate the fundamental reality of "quiddity" altogether so that all that remains are the self-determinations, modalities, and particularizations of Being.[93] For Ṣadrā, quiddities are ultimately relegated to the manifestation (*ẓuhūr*), bound/borderline (*ḥadd*), determinations (*taʿayyunāt*), shadows (*aẓlāl*), aspects (*shuʾūn*) and signposts (*asmāʾ*) of existence.[94]

The doctrine of the "primacy of being" states that it is *wujūd* that precedes and constitutes things. Its story begins thus: if one accepts the self-evident axiom that there is "reality" (*lā shakka anna hāhunā wujūd*, as Avicenna says in the Metaphysics of *al-Najāt*, §II.12, 383) as opposed to the sophistical belief that one is under the spell of an evil genie somehow tricked into believing things exist in the world that otherwise do not exist, one can investigate two distinct possibilities regarding [external] objects.

1. The concept of existence which is shared by all mental propositions and external realities and which shows traces of all existing things.
2. The concept of quiddity which is the narrator of the whatness of the same realities, that is, it describes differences or particularities of objects, for example, a man is other than a mountain or a table is other than a tree and so on.

The point of contention between the proponents of the primacy of being and the primacy of quiddity lies in that the former claim that objects are the external instances (*maṣādiq*) of the concept of existence while the latter believe it to be just the contrary (*i.e.* external objects are the instances of quiddity). It should be noted that in the discourse on the primacy of either existence or quiddity, the term "*aṣāla*" refers to the entities that are existent by essence (*mawjūḍ bi-al-dhāt*) as opposed to existent by accident (*mawjūd bi-al-ʿaraḍ*).[95] Taking into account the technical meaning of primacy, one may argue that neither being nor quiddity has any relation with things in the external world, but such a standpoint entails closing off of all discussions as it renders the objective world a mere illusion. On the contrary,

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Ṣadrā and his school present some thirty five arguments in favor of the primacy of *wujūd*, and refute the standpoint of *aṣālat al-māhiyya* or *iʿtibāriyyāt al-wujūd*. For an excellent analysis of the viewpoints of both the proponents and opponents of *aṣālat al-wujūd*, see Ghulamriḍā Fayyāḍī, *Hastī wa-chistī dar maktab-i Ṣadrāʾī* (Tehran, 2011), chapters 2–4.

[93] In Ṣadrā's ontology, which is largely inspired by Sufi metaphysicians such as al-Qayṣarī (d. 1350), what is "ultimately real" is *wujūd*, and although he accepts multiplicity (*kathra*) based on his notion of *tashkīk* (gradation), he never affirms multiplicity as existing in and of itself; see *Asfār*, vol. 2, chap. 6, pp. 20–5, and Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, edited by Ḥasanzādah Āmulī (Qum, 2008), 25ff.

[94] *Asfār*, vol. 1, pp. 49, 107, 198, 210; vol. 2, pp. 236–7, 339–40; vol. 3, p. 33.

[95] Ṣadrā, *Mashāʿir*, pp. 53–5.

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one may put forward the idea that both of the aforementioned concepts can have objective reality and that each of them as a "real" concept can be applied to things in the external world. The impossibility of this argument too becomes obvious since it implies that every entity, while being just "one thing," is understood to be two things. Hence by logical necessity one is forced to embrace either the position of the primacy of being or the primacy of quiddity since what is at issue is a sole entity in the extra-mental world, *e.g.* a man, which is the referent for both being and quiddity. It may be justifiably asked whether or not one object can be analyzed from more than one standpoint, as for example, a pen may be an instance of a number of concepts such as form, matter, substance, extension, being, quiddity and the concept of pen itself, all of which refer to the *miṣdāq* of pen. However, the dispute over the primacy of either being or quiddity involves asking which of the two, being or quiddity, is the underlying reality of entities found *in concreto*, and not whether an entity can be considered from various conceptual points of reference.[96]

As is well-known, the proponents of the primacy of quiddity relegate being to a mere philosophical secondary intelligible (*al-maʿqūla al-thāniya al-falsafiyya*) and claim that it is only a generic concept without any reality of its own and has no representation in the external world.[97] Moreover, in their view, the concept of being is something abstracted from quiddities which are *real*. Against such claims Mullā Ṣadrā brings the following arguments:

> Existence is the most real of all things occurring to [things] possessing reality because everything except for it (*i.e. wujūd*) attains its reality through its mediation both in the external world and in the mind. [It is] existence that bestows reality to all things, so how can it be a mere mental concept (*amran iʿtibāriyan*)?[98]

[96] Also, *aṣālat al-wujūd* itself is premised on the "self-evident nature" (*badīhī*), "synonymy" (*al-ishtarāk al-maʿnawī*) and "universality" (*kulliya*) of the concept of "being," see *Asfār*, vol. 1, pp. 33–40 and 117–25. On another note, it should be made clear that Avicenna was not concerned with the "underlying reality" of entities (for him entities are simply found in the external world as composites of being and quiddity), which is why, for him, the question of the "primacy" of either being or quiddity was irrelevant. However, his works can be read as supporting both positions. For more information on this point, see Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Ṣadrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition* (New York, 2010), pp. 97–8.

[97] For an explanation on the difference between a concept and its referent, see Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, ch. 2. For the arguments of the proponents of the primacy of quiddity, see Muhammad Kamal, *Mulla Ṣadra's Transcendent Philosophy* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 12–23 and Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 98–100. Some of the prominent upholders of the primacy of quiddity were Suhrawardī (d. 1191) and Mīr Dāmād (d. 1631), although the former was probably not concerned with the primacy of either being or quiddity, see Rizvi, "An Islamic subversion of the existence-essence distinction? Suhrawardī's visionary hierarchy of lights," *Asian Philosophy*, 9.3 (1999): 219–27.

[98] Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya fī manāhij al-sulūkiyya*, ed. Sayyid J. Āshtiyānī (Qum, 2003), p. 134.

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The reality of everything is its existence, through which its effects on it and its [existential] condition result. Existence is, therefore, worthiest of all things to possess reality because everything else becomes the possessor of reality through it; it is the reality of all that possesses reality, and it does not need, in its possessing reality, another reality. It is by itself in the external world, and other things – by which I mean the quiddities – exist in the external world through it, not by themselves.[99]

The above citations can be re-framed in the following syllogistic form:

Premise I: Everything other than *wujūd* actualizes its reality through the mediation of being (without having being entities would be pure non-existents). Likewise, traces and accidents of things too become real through the intervention of being.

Premise II: A principle that acts as an agent of making everything else real must be "real by itself," which is to say, it must be principial or primary (*aṣīl*).

Conclusion: *Wujūd* or being is real by itself, that is, principial. Its actualization occurs in and by itself and it can dispense with the determining mode (*ḥaythiyya taqyīdiyya*) while "existing" in contrast to other entities. That is to say, to predicate "being" on being we do not require any conditioning factor since it is a self-existing principle by definition.

So far we have established that for Ṣadrā being (and not quiddity) is primary in the order of reality. Now it will be observed how quiddity along with its modalities (*i.e.* different *iʿtibārāt*) takes on a completely different meaning than what is found in the analyses of Avicenna. Based on his theory of the manifestation of being (*ẓuhūr al-wujūd*) which itself is premised on the oneness (*waḥda*), primacy and gradation (*tashkīk*) of being, Ṣadrā asserts that quiddity as "manifestation of *wujūd*" precedes quiddity qua quiddity (*min ḥayth hiya hiya*), which is to say that he *reverses* the Avicennan position.[100] According to Ṣadrā, "quiddity as manifestation of being" possesses "concrete existence" while quiddity qua quiddity or the natural universal is abstracted in the mind (*intizāʿ al-dhihn*) from the former as he says:

[99] *Mashāʿir*, pp. 9–10.

[100] Since in Ṣadrā's ontology, "reality" is synonymous with the reality of *wujūd* at all levels, the highest level of reality, which is *wujūd lā bi-sharṭ maqsamī* (not *wājib al-wujūd*), cannot but manifests "itself" (otherwise, limitation will be imposed on it) and consequently becomes conditioned into various "forms/existents" that after mental analysis identified as quiddities. For the doctrine of the manifestation of being, see *Asfār*, vol. 2, chap. 6, pp. 28–9; *Īqāz al-nāʾimīn* (Tehran, 1985), pp. 5–8 and Āmulī, *Raḥiq-i makhtūm*, pp. 71–129 and also, Sajjad Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics: Modulation of Being* (London, 2009), pp. 102ff. I am working on a study which seeks to deal with this issue in detail against the backdrop of the development of post-Avicennan philosophy, and in conversation with current debates in Ṣadrā studies, see "An analysis of the notion of "the absolutely unconditioned being" in the Metaphysics of Mullā Ṣadrā and Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī: based on the distinction between the concept and reality of existence)," in preparation for review.

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We can conceive of one single meaning from various individuals in possession of different characteristics or differentiae, who share the same genus and species. This [meaning] would correspond to every one of the individuals [in question] and it would be allowed to describe them by this meaning. This is the very abstracted universal meaning, for example, it is allowed that you can abstract a common meaning from various individual human beings that is common to all of them and that is the absolute man (*al-insān al-muṭlaq*), which would correspond to both big and small man... in itself [it] is the sum total of all the [different] conditionings/determinations free from the accidents of matter and its concomitants. And this "meaning" is not found in the external world [...].[101]

The "common meaning" in the above quote refers to the natural universal and the example that he cites for it is the absolute man (*al-insān al-muṭlaq*), which is found in all men. The "absolute man" is free of all determining factors (as found in the individual) because of which it is their common meaning or essence. But he hastens to add that this "meaning" is not found in the extra-mental world because it is an abstraction of the mind, hence a *post rem* universal. He clarifies his position further in the following passage:

The natural universal (*kullī ṭabīʿī*) and the absolutely unconditioned quiddity (*māhiyya lā-bi-sharṭ*) in their essence and insofar as their essence (*dhāt*) is considered – are devoid of existence, unity, multiplicity, continuity and fixity; and they don't have a temporal origination (*ḥudūth*) or cessation either. Rather they are contingent on their individual instances in all these attributes and exist through their [individual instances] being.[102]

The reference to individual instances in the above passage is the existent by essence (*mawjūd bi-al-dhāt*). In keeping with the notion of the primacy of being, quiddity is reinterpreted as the existent by accident (*mawjūd bi-al-ʿaraḍ*), that is, something that inheres in the container of *wujūd*. Ṣadrā states:

A natural universal is not an existent by itself; rather "existent by itself" is the *esse propium* (*al-wujūd al-khāṣṣ*).[103]

It is important to note that Ṣadra does not eliminate the concept of quiddity altogether. In fact, he uses it to advance the claim of the primacy of being because quiddity qua quiddity is neutral to either existence or non-existence; hence it becomes existent through the mediation of *wujūd*. But he argues that *kullī ṭabīʿī* does not exist in the external world as an existent by itself since as soon as it is found in the external world, it exists as a manifestation or determination of *wujūd*. Once a natural universal is found *in concreto* as a

[101] *Asfār*, vol. 1, p. 272.
[102] *Asfār*, vol. 7, p. 285.
[103] *Asfār*, vol. 4, p. 213.

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manifestation of *wujūd*, then it can be intuited in the mind where it exists as a "universal." Ṣadrā states:

> Quiddity insofar as it is quiddity, is neither existent nor non-existent, neither one nor many, neither universal nor particular, *e.g.* when the quiddity of man is found [in the external world], it is particular and when it is intellected it is a universal. From this it is known that it is not among the conditions of *māhiyya* that in itself it be universal or particular.[104]

Thus, it is no surprise that Ṣadrā uses the notion of the natural universal to prove mental existence (*al-wujūd al-dhihnī*), which I shall analyze in the ensuing section.

V. SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE SADRIAN THEORY OF NATURAL UNIVERSALS

The Ṣadrian theory of natural universals has several implications for issues related to epistemology and mental existence. In particular, Ṣadrā makes use of the notion of the *kullī ṭabīʿī* to demonstrate the validity of mental existence. His argument in this regard is as follows:

The multitudes of individuals with all their accompanying accidental factors such as shape, size, color etc. that fall under one species and different species with varying characteristics that come to be classified under a common genus allows one to derive a "common meaning" (*al-maʿnā al-mushtaraka*) from them, for example, the meaning of man can be obtained from John, Jack, Jonah etc. while that of animal from man, horse, camel etc. At this stage, Ṣadrā argues that this common meaning cannot exist in the extra-mental world as an "individual unit" since in that case it will imply contradictory properties being predicated of the same unit, which is impossible. For instance, an individual cannot be both black and white at the same time. Therefore, the above-mentioned common meaning of species or genus with the attribute of "oneness" must find its way into the container of mind, thereby proving the validity of mental existence. In Ṣadrā's words:

> From individuals with various characteristics or actualized "differentiae" (*fuṣūl*), we can conceive of a unitary genus or species in the manner that this would be predicable on all the individuals through the predication of *huwa huwa* (non-derivative predication).[105] This common unique meaning cannot exist as a common genus or species in the extra-mental existence since it is impossible that the same thing described by opposite qualities would exist, that is, with various determinations and contradictory

[104] *Asfār*, vol. 2, pp. 3–4.

[105] Non-derivative predication is the opposite of derivative predication (*ḥaml al-ishtiqāq*). In non-derivative predication, the subject and predicate are united in being, see Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ-i manẓūma*, pp. 150–2.

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implications. So if [this common meaning] is found *in concreto*, it would be by way of multiplicity and numerical plurality. But we have stipulated that this [common meaning] exists in a singular fashion which by its uniqueness encompasses multiple individuals and becomes united with them [...].[106]

However, Ṣadrā is fully aware of the argument of those who claim that the "*kullī ṭabīʿī*" exists in individuals or exists as a part of them. Ṣadrā responds to it by arguing that the mistake of such people (Avicenna included) results from their putting the [notion] of universal in the place of "the absolutely unconditioned nature" and the verification of this [matter] falls back on the issue of the difference between quiddity and its various considerations (*fī al-kalāmi khalaṭa, yūjibu al-ghalaṭa... min jihati waḍʿi al-kullī mawḍiʿu al-ṭabīʿati lā bi-sharṭ shayʾin wa-taḥaqquqi al-amri fīhi marjūʿun ilā mabāḥithi al-māhiyyati wa-al-farqi bayna iʿtibārātihā...*).[107] In Ṣadrā's view, natural universals cannot exist in the extra-mental world with the attribute (*waṣf*) of universality for this would involve conjoining of contraries (*ijtimāʿ al-naqīḍayn*), which is inadmissible.[108] On the other hand, if natural universals exist as particulars, it would lead to the transformation of essence (*inqilāb fī al-dhāt*) which is also impossible (*i.e.* the universal will no longer remain a universal). To evade such a dilemma, Ṣadrā suggests that since natural universals are natures that are totally unconditioned, they exist in the extra-mental world with the condition of being determined and individuated (*mutashakhkhaṣ*) while they exist in the mind with the condition of "universality."[109] Thus, for him the natural universal also proves mental existence.

The debate over the natural universal and the absolutely unconditioned quiddity did not end with Mullā Ṣadrā and his reinterpretation of it on the basis of the primacy of being. As is well known, Islamic philosophy in Iran has remained a living tradition and contemporary practitioners of it (not all of whom are Ṣadrian in orientation) have engaged with the problem of universals with new insights. Thus we find two contemporary philosophers, Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī (d. 1981) and Hāʿirī Yazdī (d. 1999), presenting contrasting views as regards the concept of the *kullī ṭabīʿī*.[110] What seems interesting from a scholarly point of view is that with the passage of time, the tradition developed concepts such as "*māhiyya lā bi-sharṭ*

[106] Ṣadrā, *Shawāhid*, p. 152.
[107] *Ibid*., p. 153.
[108] *Ibid*., pp. 153–4.
[109] *Ibid*., pp. 152–3.
[110] On Ṭabāṭabāʾī's life and work, see Hamid Algar, "Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i: philosopher, exegete, and gnostic," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 17.3 (2006): 1–26. Yazdī's views on natural universals can be found in Mehdi Hā'irī Yazdī, *Āgāhī wa-gawāhī* (Tehran, 2003), pp. 17–20.

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maqsamī" and "*māhiyya lā bi-sharṭ qismī*," which are loaded with technical discussions embracing both logic and metaphysics.[111] The word "*maqsam*" literally means a place of division, but in logic (*manṭiq*) it has several ruling properties (*aḥkām*) some of which are discussed in Ṣadrā's logical treatise, *al-Taṣawwur wa-al-taṣdīq*.[112] In short, a *maqsam* is a logical term that has the property of being the source of division of its numerous kinds. However, a *maqsam* lacks any separate existence apart from its determinations or divisions. Thus considered in itself the status of a *maqsam* remains ambiguous.[113] For example, the term "*maf'ūl*" (object) in Arabic grammar is a *maqsam* since it has six divisions apart from which it lacks any independent existence, *i.e.* in itself it is non-actualized (*ghayr mutaḥaṣṣal*) and inherently ambiguous. Using the concept of "*maqsamī*," and "*qismī*," Yazdī (*pace* Ṣadrā) argues that the natural universal is neither "*māhiyya lā bi-sharṭ maqsamī*" nor "*lā bi-sharṭ qismī*."[114] In his view, since the natural universal alludes to the "essence" (Pr. *gawhar*) of things, it is not ambiguous in nature. According to him, a natural universal is only a natural universal – pure and simple, beyond even the condition of "*maqsamī*," and "*qismī*."[115] On the other hand, Ṭabāṭabā'ī observes that quiddity has three different considerations, each of which corresponds to *bi-sharṭ shay'*, *bi-sharṭ lā* and *lā bi-sharṭ* respectively.[116] These in turn correspond to mixed quiddity (*māhiyya makhlūṭa*), divested quiddity (*māhiyya mujarrada*) and absolute quiddity (*māhiyya muṭlaqa*).[117] In his view, the quiddity of which these considerations

[111] These technical terms are not found in the works of either Avicenna or Ṣadrā, although clear indications of them can be found in the writings of the latter. However, beginning most probably with Sabzawārī and Āqā 'Alī Mudarris Zunūzī, they became the standard expressions for philosophical musings on the analytic considerations of both being and quiddity; see Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ-i Manẓūma*, pp. 132–3; Zunūzī, *Bidāyi' al-ḥikam* (Tehran, 1996), pp. 291–4, 371ff. As for the analytic considerations of *wujūd*, no substantial study of it exists in English, even though Izutsu's *The Concept and the Reality* discusses it in a limited fashion. The first thing to note is, unlike Avicenna's metaphysics, which proceeds from the being-quiddity distinction, Ṣadrā's metaphysics begins with the distinction between the concept and reality of existence. Although the treatment of the concept-reality distinction is now slowly making its way into the growing body of Ṣadrian scholarship, no writer, to my knowledge, has shown its full implication for Ṣadrian ontology. For an extensive treatment of this issue, see the present author's already cited forthcoming study, *An Analysis of the Notion of "the Absolutely Unconditioned Being."* For the concept-reality distinction in Ṣadrā in general see, Cécile Bonmariage, *Le réel et les réalités: Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī et la structure de la réalité* (Paris, 2008), pp. 28–30, and Sayeh Meisami, *Mulla Sadra* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 24–7.

[112] Ṣadrā, *al-Taṣawwur wa-al-taṣdīq*, in Mullā Ṣadrā, *Majmū'at al-rasā'il al-falsafiyya* (Beirut, 2001), pp. 45–7.

[113] *Ibid*., p. 45.

[114] Yazdī, *Āgāhī wa-gawāhī*, pp. 18–19.

[115] *Ibid*., p. 18.

[116] Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics*, pp. 46–8.

[117] *Ibid*., p. 47.

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are sub-classes is called the natural universal, which would correspond to "*māhiyya lā bi-sharṭ maqsamī*." Thus, he conforms to the Sadrian position.

As for the epistemological implication of the problem of natural universals, some brief remarks may be offered, although they are by no means exhaustive. If things have nothing common in their essence then what we perceive in the external world is but particulars and this would lead to the murky of waters of nominalism (acknowledging that there are varieties of nominalism).[118] On the other hand, if universals only exist in the mind then it would imply the closing of realism, which again would result in an epistemological impasse. Yet the idea of imagining universals existing in the external world is something inherently unconventional to the mind. And if realism is denied than the alternative becomes either phenomenalism or representationalism, both of which are acutely problematic.[119] Thus, Avicenna's theory of quiddity and the natural universal and its further development at the hands of Mullā Ṣadrā seem to offer an alternative route to the age-old *aporia* of universals as it safeguards collective essences in the extra-mental world.

VI. CONCLUSION

It was mentioned that Muslim philosophers inherited the problem of universals from Antiquity, which had its origin in Plato's theory of Forms. When the problem of universals made its way into the works of Islamic philosophers such as Avicenna, it was transformed into the problem of the natural universal (*kullī ṭabīʿī*) since the latter identified three different types of universals, and dispute broke out as to whether or not the natural universal exists in the external world. Moreover, the Avicennan background to the problem has shown that the problem of the natural universal is intimately connected to his original notion of quiddity and its analytic considerations.

For Avicenna as well as for Mullā Ṣadrā, the natural universal is none other than quiddity considered in an absolutely unconditioned manner. Attention has been paid to those who pointed to the impossibility of the external existence of natural universals. The deniers of natural universals in the extra-mental world argue that since individuals share contradictory properties, natural universals cannot be

[118] For more information on the varieties of nominalism, see Walter L. Moore, "Via moderna," in Joseph Strayer (ed.), *Dictionary of Middle Ages* (New York, 1989) vol. 12, pp. 406–9, and Gyula Klima, "Nominalism," in E. Keith Brown (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (Oxford, 2006), vol. 7, pp. 648–52.

[119] See *e.g.* John W. Davis, "Berkeley and phenomenalism," *Dialogue*, 1.1 (1962): 67–80. It should, however, be noted that in analytic philosophy, a variety (or combination) of different forms of realism, representationalism etc. can be found.

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co-extensive with its particulars. At the heart of their argument lies the assumption that natural universals have numerical unity, which both Avicenna and Ṣadrā have rejected. Avicenna's refutation of the deniers of natural universals consists in stating that since no one doubts concerning the fact that John is a certain man, man-ness necessarily exists as a part of this certain man.

Pace Mullā Ṣadrā, one line of interpretation of Avicenna might suggest that natural universals are *ante rem* and exist in Divine Providence before becoming existentiated in the external world. Such remarks may create the impression that Avicenna might have suggested quiddities as "real" in the sense of possessing "primacy." But it should be kept in mind that when he refers to "before" he has in mind "priority with respect to essence" rather than temporal priority. Moreover, it is clear that when cogitating over these issues Avicenna was not thinking which one among being and quiddity forms the *basis of reality*, as in other places he asserts that quiddities eternally exist in the knowledge of the intellects. Thus it would be incorrect to argue that Avicenna was advocating an "essentialist" position.

The problem of natural universals was revised in the works of Ṣadrā based on the doctrine of the primacy of being, which had its precedence in Safavid philosophy. The primacy of being states that it is *wujūd* that reveals the *real* faces of entities, and not quiddity. After proving the validity of the primacy of being, Ṣadrā relegates the notion of quiddity to shadows, aspects, determinations etc. of being. Naturally, in such a philosophical system, the natural universal or quiddity qua quiddity becomes an "accidental existent" – something that inheres in the "substance of being."[120] Thus Ṣadrā strips the natural universal of its independent existence. Consequently, natural universals become *post rem* in the Ṣadrian perspective. However, Ṣadrā does not deny that natural universals exist in the external world. Rather, he reinterprets it in light of the primacy of being in which it exists by means of *wujūd* and not independent of it.

Coming back to the Greek background, we are now in a position to respond to Porphyry's historic formulation[121] of the problem of universals from the perspective of Ṣadrā. As to his first question, the answer would be to say that logical universals (*e.g.* genera, species etc.) exist only in the mind, but as natural universals (*e.g.* as a natural genus) they exist in the extra-mental world as well. The answer to the second question is fairly straightforward. The natural universals exist as incorporeals and as part of individuals when existing extra-mentally.

[120] By "substance of being" I do not mean being is a "substance" or has substance. Rather from the Sadrian standpoint, being is "analogous" to substance whereas quiddities are all accidents since "primacy" belongs to the former alone.

[121] See section I.

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As to his third and the final question, the response would be to state that natural universals do not exist separately from the sensibles when existing extra-mentally; hence, without the existence of the latter, it would be meaningless to ask if they exist in the external world since in itself the *kullī ṭabīʿī* is but itself.

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