

On the Footsteps of Mentalist Tendency: Essence, Mind and Reality According to 'Alī al-Qūshjī

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Abstract: One of the most lively debates in the post-Avicennan Islamic philosophical tradition concerns how to establish the correspondence between the quiddities found in the external world and our universal knowledge of them in relation to external existence. In particular, following Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's criticism of the Avicennan conception of mental representation—specifically his argument that the forms in the intellect do not reflect external immaterial natures—thinkers who sought to uphold the theory of representation developed a new position that diverged from Avicenna's metaphysical realism. Accordingly, they abandoned the notion that insensible nature exists beneath the sensible appearance of particular substances—a nature common to all substances of the same species—and instead argued that only particular substances exist in external reality. In addition to this approach—which rejects the external existence of the natural universal that Avicenna claims externally as a part of particulars—they argued that universal natures exist only in the mind and not in external reality. This position, which attributes the emergence of universal natures in the mind to mental operations on the intellectual form—following a comparison of particulars and their sensible properties—reinterprets the correspondence between the mind and the external world by rejecting a direct correspondence between the intellectual form and the external form. This new position challenged Avicenna's metaphysical realism on multiple fronts: ontologically, by denying the external existence of natures; semantically, by arguing that references to 'nature' actually point to particulars; and epistemologically, by asserting that what we know are not external natures but the common properties among particulars, with universal natures existing only in the mind. This approach, referred to as the *mentalist tendency*, weakened the *external* aspect of metaphysical realism while and strengthening its *mental* aspect. This article will demonstrate how the mentalist tendency, which began with Naşir al-Din al-Tūsī and reached its peak with Quṭb al-Din al-Rāzī, was continued by 'Alī al-Qūshjī in the fifteenth century and trace its evolution from an interpretation of Avicenna's philosophy into an independent philosophical stance.

Keywords: Ontology of essences, problem of universals, metaphysical realism, mentalism, Post-Avicennan Islamic Philosophy, Nasir al-Din al-Tūsī, Quṭb al-Din al-Rāzī, Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjāni, 'Alī al-Qūshjī, Jalāl al-Din al-Dawwāni

Öz: İbn Sînâ sonrası İslam felsefe geleneğini meşgul eden en canlı tartışmalardan biri mahiyetlerin dışta nasıl bulunduğu ve onlara dair tümel bilgimiz ile harici varlık arasındaki mutabakat ilişkisinin nasıl kurulacağıyla ilgilidir. Özellikle Fahreddin er-Râzî'nin İbn Sînâ'cı zihni temsil anlayışına yönelttiği ve akıldaki suretlerin dıştaki mücerred tabiatları yansıtmadığını öne süren eleştirisi neticesinde, temsil teorisini sürdürmeyi amaçlayan düşünenler İbn Sînâ'nın metafiziksel gerçekçiliğinden uzaklaşan yeni bir tutum geliştirmişlerdir. Bu tutum etrafında onlar tikel cevherlerin duyulur yüzü altında, duyulur olmayan ve aynı türe ait tikel cevherlerin tümünde ortak olan bir tabiatın mevcut olduğu anlayışını terk ederek dış varlıkta değil yalnızca zihinde bulunduğunu öne sürmüştür. Tümel tabiatların zihinde ortaya çıkışı tikeller ve onların duyulur özellikleri arasındaki ilişkiyi mukayese etmesinde meydana gelen akli suret üzerindeki zihinsel işlemlerle açıklayan bu tutum, zihin ve dış arasındaki mutabakatı da akli suret ile haricteki suret arasındaki mutabakat ilişkisinden çıkartarak yeni bir yorumla tâbi tutmuştur. Tabiatların harici varlığını reddederek İbn Sînâ'nın metafiziksel gerçekliğinin ontolojik yönünü, tabiat denildiğinde aslında tikellerin kastedildiğini öne sürerek semantik yönünü, bildiğimiz şeylerin dıştaki bu tabiat değil tikeller arasındaki ortak özellikler olduğunu ve tümel tabiatların yalnızca zihinde bulunduğunu savunarak da epistemolojik yönünü budayan bu yeni tutum, metafizik gerçekçiliğin *hârice* bakan kısmını zayıflatıp *zihne* bakan kısmını güçlendirdiği için *zihinselci eğilim* olarak adlandırılmıştır. Bu makalede Nasirüddin et-Tūsî ile başlayıp Kutbüddin er-Râzî ile zirvesine çıkan *zihinselci eğilim* on beşinci yüzyılda Ali Kuşçu tarafından nasıl sürdürüldüğü gösterilecek, söz konusu eğilimin bir İbn Sînâ yorumu olmaktan uzaklaşarak nasıl bağımsız yeni bir felsefi tutuma evrildiği tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Mahiyetlerin ontolojisi, tümeler sorunu, metafizik gerçekçilik, zihinselcilik, İbn Sînâ sonrası İslam felsefesi, Nasirüddin et-Tūsî, Kutbüddin er-Râzî, Seyyid Şerif el-Cürçânî, Ali Kuşçu, Celâleddin ed-Devvânî

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One of the most pressing problems in the post-Avicennan Islamic philosophical tradition concerns the ontological position of universal essences. A shared yet evolving discourse has emerged around this issue, with contributions from Illuminationist, Neo-Ash'arite, Avicennan, and Akbarī thinkers. Within this context, Suhrawardī's position marks a key point in the Illuminationist transformation of this tradition. He asserts that only simple, particular existents have external reality and reinterprets the constituent substantial parts, which Avicenna claims exist within composite substances, as *ʿtibārī* (conceptual) distinctions.¹ On the other hand, the position of Ibn ʿArabī and his followers, such as al-Sadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī and Mullā Fanārī, represents the line of Akbarī transformation. They argue that existence is found in external particular existents as natural universal and that what the Peripatetic philosophers consider to be the constituent parts of the composite substance are merely the sensible emergence (*ḡuhūr*) of the simple, immaterial parts further back.² What these two positions—Illuminationist and Akbarī—have in common is their emphasis on the intuitive method (*mukāshafah*) and their attempt to explain the multiplicity of universal natures through the idea of the multiplication of the creative act of existence, while preserving its unity.

In contrast, the transformations within the Neo-Ash'arite and Avicennan lines, which are relied on the rational method (*naẓar* and *istidlāl*), either maintain the original Avicennan position—that quiddity exists both outside

- 1 Regarding the debates about the attributive meanings and existents after the twelfth century, see Robert Wisnovsky, "Essence and Existence. Robert Wisnovsky, "Essence and Existence. Thirteenth-Century Perspectives in Arabic-Islamic Philosophy and Theology", in *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Receptions of Avicenna's Metaphysics*, ed. Dag Nikolaus Hasse and Amos Bertolacci (Berlin: De Gruyter: 2012), 123-52; Fedor Benevich, "The Essence-Existence Distinction: Four Elements of the Post-Avicennian Metaphysical Dispute (11-13th Centuries)", *Oriens* 45/3-4 (2017): 203-258 ; Jari Kaukua, "ʿTibārī Concepts in Suhrawardī: The Case of Substance", *Oriens* 48 (2020): 40-66 .
- 2 For the views of the Akbarī thinkers on the problem of natural universal, see. Shams al-Din al-Fanārī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns bayna al-Ma'qūl wa al-Mashūd fi Sharḥi Miftāḥ Ghayb al-Jam' wa al-wujūd*, Tehran 1323, p. 35. For the discussions about the problem in the Akbarī tradition see Nicholas Heer, "The Sufi Position with Respect to Problem of Universals", pp. 1-5 (Last modified May 2024 <https://faculty.washington.edu/heer/universals-sep.pdf>); Yuki Nakanishi, "Post-Avicennian Controversy over the Problem of Universals: Sa'daddīn at-Taftāzānī (d. 1389/90) and Šamsaddīn al-Fanārī (d. 1431) on the Reality of Existence", in *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th to the 14th Century*, ed. by Abdelkader Al Ghouz, Göttingen, Germany: Bonn University Press, 2018, pp. 357-74; Justin Cancelliere, *Traversing The Barzakh: The Problem of Universals in Islamic Philosophy and Theoretical Sufism*, MA Thesis, The University of Georgia, 2019.

and in the mind, as seen in the works of Afdal al-Dīn al-Hunajī, Sirāj al-Dīn al-'Urmawī, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī—or propos alternative views. For example, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī argues that abstract quiddity exists in the external world but not in the mind, while another position, beginning with Naṣīr al-dīn al-Ṭūsī and culminating in Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, asserts that quiddity exists only in the mind and not in the external world. Based on a previous study we published on Quṭb al-Dīn Razi's theory of universals, we concluded that this final position represents a significant shift among Avicennan philosophers away from Avicenna's metaphysical realism toward what can be described as a *mentalist* tendency.³ In that study, we discussed how Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī transformed Avicenna's metaphysical realism into a mentalist tendency in response to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's challenges. However, we also noted that further studies are needed to determine the extent to which this tendency continued in the later period.

In this article, we aim to answer this question by tracing the mentalist tendency through 'Alī al-Qūshjī's (d. 879/1474) work on Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's *Tajrīd al-'Aqā'id*, known as *al-Sharḥ al-jadīd*. In the chapter on "essence and its concomitants" of this work, 'Alī al-Qūshjī engages in a dialog with Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, which may initially lead the reader to think that he is advancing the mentalist tendency. However, this dialog does not occur directly between al-Ṭūsī and Qūshjī. Instead, it is mediated by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī—the most prominent advocate of the mentalist tendency in the 8th/14th century—and Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī, another notable interpreter of al-Ṭūsī in the 9th/15th century. Aligning at times with the position of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī and at other times with that of al-Jurjānī, 'Alī al-Qūshjī ultimately articulates a mentalist stance on natural universals.

The divergence between this position and Avicenna's original realism was clearly identified by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawwānī in his gloss on Qūshjī's work. al-Dawwānī harshly criticized proponents of the mentalist position, grounding his critique in Avicennan metaphysical realism. In the following discus-

3 On the concept of *the mentalist tendency* and the emergence of this tendency to its peak in Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, see. Ibrahim Halil Üçer, "Realism Transformed: The Ontology of Universals in Avicennan Philosophy and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Theory of Mental Exemplars", *Nazarīyat* 6/2 (2020): 23-68.

sion, ‘Alī al-Qūshjī will be examined as a representative of the mentalist tendency in the 15th century, with attention to the thinkers who influenced him and the reasoning that led him to to adopt this position.

What is *Māhiyyah*?

The question of what quiddity (*māhiyyah*) is and what it is said to be is central to understanding the transformation of Avicenna’s metaphysical realism. Avicenna himself dedicates *al-Shifā’/Ilāhiyyāt* VI and V.II to this issue, defining quiddity in two distinct ways. In VI, he describes quiddity as “that which is present in things and by virtue of which the thing is what it is,” emphasizing its ontological character. In V.II, he defines it as “the intelligible that is commonly said of particular things,” emphasizing its epistemological character. The first definition highlights quiddity as being present in external existence, while the second refers to quiddity as a universal intelligible. Avicenna’s metaphysical realism bridges these two aspects, asserting that the ontological (external) and epistemological (mental) dimensions of quiddity reflect one another. For Avicenna, intelligible quiddities in the mind—such as horseness, humanity, and animality—are equivalent representations of external intelligible quiddities that are common to particular things in the external world.

The post-Avicennan debates on the ontology of quiddities largely revolve around reducing one of these two aspects of quiddity—external and or mental—to the other. Examining this issue through *Tajrīd al-‘Aqā’id* reveals that Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī emphasizes the mental aspect of quiddity. Accordingly, al-Ṭūsī states that the term *mā-hiyyah* (what-ness) is derived from the the question “mā huwa?”, that is, (“What is it?”), arguing that *mā-hiyyah* corresponds to the intelligible meaning that arises in response to this question within the human mind. Thus, he asserts that it is appropriate to use the term quiddity for intelligible meanings, as is usually done (*tuṭlaq ghāliban ‘alā al-amr al-mā’qūl*). His use of “usually” (*ghāliban*) acknowledges the ontological use of quiddity but reflects his preference for its mental interpretation.⁴ In fact, al-Ṭūsī’s attitude here can be considered a continuation of his approach in *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, where he defines quiddity as “that which is derived from a thing and realized

4 ‘Alī al-Qūshcġi, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-‘Aqā’id*, ed. M. Ḥusayin ez-Zāri‘i, Qum: Intishārāt al-Rāid, 1398, I/395,5s

in the mind, excluding the accidents external to the thing.” Here, too, he associates quiddity with the mental concept derived from the question “mā huwa?”⁵

‘Alī al-Qūshjī, in commenting on al-Ṭūsī’s view, further develops this mentalist interpretation of quiddity. Alongside with Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī, he emphasizes that quiddity refers to what occurs in the human faculty of reasoning (*al-ḥāṣil fī al-quwwat al-‘āqilah*). To underscore this idea, he emphasizes that quiddity is nothing other than the universal present in the mind (*fa-lā yakūnu illā kullīyyan mawjūdān fī al-dhihn*). Al-Qūshjī, holding that universality exists solely in the mind, argues that quiddity implies universality (*il-tizām*), which arises only in mental processes. By this reasoning, quiddity can only exist in the mind, as universality is a concomitant of quiddity.⁶ This line of thought excludes the ontological interpretation of quiddity as “what makes a thing what it is” and restricts its meaning to what arises solely in the mind. This shift marks a significant departure from Avicenna’s original metaphysical realism, reframing quiddity as purely mental.

This reductive approach regarding the dual meaning of quiddity, adopted by al-Ṭūsī and later by al-Qūshjī, was noted by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawwānī in his gloss on al-Qūshjī’s commentary. al-Dawwānī’s attention was drawn to the term *ḥuṣūl*, used by al-Qūshjī. The term *ḥuṣūl*, which denotes the subsequent appearance of a meaning previously absent from the mind, was employed by al-Qūshjī to explain the concept of *ma’qūl*—a term that al-Ṭūsī identified with quiddity. Al-Qūshjī described *ma’qūl* as “that which occurs in the rational faculty (*al-ḥāṣil fī al-quwwat al-‘āqila*),” suggesting that quiddity, as a *ma’qūl*, can only exist within the human rational faculty.

Al-Dawwānī, however, recognized a potential fallacy in identifying *ma’qūl* solely with what subsequently occurs (*al-ḥāṣil*) in the human intellect. He argued that *ma’qūl* encompasses not only representational knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-ḥuṣūlī*) but also knowledge by presence (*al-‘ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*). In other words, *ma’qūl* includes both newly acquired knowledge and knowledge already present (*al-ḥādīr*) in the intellect. Why then al-Ṭūsī and al-Qūshjī emphasize *ḥuṣūl*

5 Naṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, ed. Karim Feyzī, Qom: Matbū‘āt-i Dīnī, 1383, III/281.

6 ‘Alī al-Qūshchī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-‘aqā’id*, ed. M. al-Zārī‘ī al-Razāī, Maktabat al-Rāid, Qom: 1393, I/395,6-7; cf. Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd*, ed. E. Altaş et al., Istanbul: Isam Publications, 2022, II/245, ḥāshīya 2.83.

and align *ma'qūl* with representational knowledge? According to al-Dawwānī, one reason may have been to highlight the universality of representational knowledge in contrast to the particularity of knowledge by presence, such as self-awareness. By associating *ma'qūl*—and, by extension, quiddity—with representational knowledge, they sought to emphasize its universal nature. However, al-Dawwānī suggested a deeper purpose behind this association. He argued that the primary intent of al-Ṭūsī and al-Qūshjī was not merely to allocate *ma'qūl* to representational knowledge but to assert a more fundamental point: quiddities should be understood independently of existence. That is, “when it comes to quiddities, existence is not considered (*innamā arāda anna al-māhiyyah lā yu'tabaru fī-hā al-wujūd*).”⁷ This stance excludes any implication of external existence from quiddity and confines it to mental existence.

Due to his insistence on disregarding existence in quiddity (*māhiyyah*) and referring only to the intelligible meaning in the mind, al-Ṭūsī proposes a new terminology for cases where quiddity is considered alongside external existence. According to al-Ṭūsī, when referring to *māhiyyah* as it exists in the external world, the term *quiddity* is not appropriate. Instead, he suggests using the terms *dhāt* (self) and *ḥaqīqah* (reality). In Avicenna's own terminology, however, *dhāt* in its narrow sense does not correspond to quiddity. For Avicenna, the substantial form of composite substances is neither their self (*dhāt*) nor their quiddity (*māhiyyah*). The form is only a part of the composite substance, not the composite substance itself. Quiddity, in contrast, is the composition that unifies form and matter. Self (*dhāt*), in its precise sense, is not this composition but the whole that emerges as a result of it.⁸ Thus, for Avicenna, *māhiyyah* is not called *dhāt* in its narrow sense when its external existence is considered. In external existence, *māhiyyah* corresponds to the principle of unity and continuity that preserves *dhāt's* identity over time—ensuring that it remains what it is. Therefore, while *māhiyyah* is present in external existence in this sense, it is distinct from *dhāt*. As Avicenna explains, when a person says that he knows what something is, it is not the thing itself (*dhāt*) but the meaning of its quiddity (*māhiyyah*) that occurs in the human mind.⁹

7 'Alī al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, I/395,15, fn. 3.

8 Ibn Sinā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. G. C. Anawati, S. Zāyed, Cairo: 1960; pp. 244-5.

9 Ibn Sinā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 143.

Regarding *al-ḥaqīqah* (reality), Avicenna identifies it with “special existence” in *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt* I/5, stating: “It is clear that everything has a special reality, and this reality is its quiddity.”¹⁰ Similarly, in *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt* II/2, he notes the existence of an external reality that actualizes matter, emphasizing that this reality is the form itself.¹¹ These usages suggest that, for Avicenna, reality—unlike the general concept of existence—corresponds to the “special existence” that distinguishes a thing from others. It serves as the principle through which a thing is itself, such as triangularity or whiteness.¹²

Avicenna elaborates that sentences like “This or that reality exists either in the external world, in the souls, or absolutely in a way that encompasses both” can be correctly formulated.¹³ Therefore, reality is not exclusively tied to quiddity in relation to external existence. Like *māhiyyah* (quiddity), *ḥaqīqah* can refer to both universal quiddities in the mind and absolute quiddities that encompass both mental and external existence. However, since the term *ḥaqiq* is often associated with external and permanent existence,¹⁴ as al-Jurjānī observes, external existence may initially come to mind when referring to reality.¹⁵

Despite this common association, Avicenna asserts that reality, strictly speaking, cannot be limited to the external existence of quiddity. Al-Qūshjī and al-Jurjānī highlight this nuance by pointing out that expressions such as “the reality of the phoenix” or “the quiddity of the phoenix” would be meaningless if *dhāt* (self) and *ḥaqīqah* referred only to the external existence of quiddity. They emphasize that the terms *dhāt*, *ḥaqīqah*, and *māhiyyah* are generally used interchangeably.¹⁶ While al-Jurjānī and al-Qūshjī raise a cautious objection to some implications of this view, they ultimately agree with al-Ṭūsī in affirming that, in common usage, quiddity is referred to as reality or self when external existence is considered. As al-Dawwānī notes, the central

10 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 31.

11 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 68.

12 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 31.

13 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 31.

14 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 48.

15 Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd*, II/245, ḥashiya 3.83.

16 'Alī al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, I/395,9-396,1; cf. Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd*, II/245, ḥashiya 3.83.

concern in these discussions—regarding quiddity, self, and reality—lies in al-Ṭūsī's effort to exclude any implication of external existence from quiddity. In this regard, al-Jurjānī and 'Alī Al-Qūshjī largely agree with al-Ṭūsī, albeit with certain reservations.

Aspects of Quiddity

The analysis of the term quiddity presented by al-Qūshjī does not provide sufficient evidence to determine his definitive stance on the ontology of quiddities. To clarify his position, one must examine the chapter on the aspects (*ʿitibārāt*) of quiddity, where this issue is addressed in depth. A key tenet of Avicenna's philosophy is that quiddity can be considered from three distinct aspects. The first, as described in *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt* V/1, is quiddity “without any condition” (*lā bi-sharṭi shayʿ*), which refers to absolute quiddity independent of external or mental conditions. The second is quiddity “with the condition of not being a thing” (*bi-sharṭi lā shayʿ*), corresponding to abstracted intelligibles in the intellect that are universalized on the condition that they are not one of the external particulars. The third aspect is quiddity “with the condition of being a thing (*bi-sharṭi shayʿ*)”,¹⁷ which refers to quiddity with the condition of being one of the particulars in external existence and accompanied by their accidents.

In *al-Shifā/al-Madkhal*, Avicenna further elaborates on these aspects, defining quiddity as follows: (1) quiddity “in itself” (quiddity without a condition), (2) quiddity “in the external world,” surrounded by external accidents (quiddity with the condition of being something), and (3) quiddity “in the mind,” surrounded by mental accidents (with the condition of not being something).¹⁸ A similar categorization is presented in the metaphysical section of *al-Najāt*, where Avicenna discusses the modes of existence of universal *maʿnā* (used synonymously with quiddity). In *al-Najāt*, Avicenna explains that a universal meaning (*maʿnā*) can be understood in three ways: as a nature in itself, as general or particular, and as one or many. When taken as a nature in itself, the universal meaning corresponds to the human being “without any additional condition (*bi-lā sharṭ ākhar*)”. However, when the human being is

17 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 200-201.

18 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Madkhal*, 15.

considered as a general or particular human, as one or many, this universal nature corresponds to the human being “with an additional condition” (*bi-sharṭ zā'id*). In this latter state, the universal nature is either surrounded by the additional conditions in the external existence, corresponding to individual persons, or it is abstracted to become a *ma'qūl* (intelligible meaning), representing the universal in the mind.¹⁹

Apart from these three aspects of quiddity developed in relation to its conditioned or unconditioned status, Avicenna introduces another classification of universals in *al-Shifā al-Madkhal*: the natural universal, the intellectual universal, and the logical universal.²⁰ When compared to the aspects of quiddity, the natural universal corresponds to quiddity “without a condition (*lā bi-sharṭ shay'*),” while the intellectual universal corresponds to essence “with the condition of not being something (*bi-sharṭi lā-shay'*).” The logical universal, on the other hand, refers to the notion of universality in the sense of being “capable of being said of multiplicity.”

A closer examination of the ontology of quiddities through these distinctions reveals the fundamental tenets of Avicenna's metaphysical realism. Broadly speaking, metaphysical realism posits that external entities possess their own existence and intrinsic nature, independent of whether they are the subject of our contemplation. In this context, when we refer to these entities, we are speaking of objects that exist in the external world, and when we claim knowledge of them, we assert that we know the things themselves, not merely mental construct. Consistent with this position, Avicenna argues that common names such as horse, cat, and human are not mere labels or concepts but correspond to external realities that exist independently of our thoughts. This is to claim that the horse and the essence that constitutes it as an actual horse exist externally. However, metaphysical realists can differ in their answers to the questions about what essences mean, how they exist externally, and how we can know them.

19 Ibn Sinā, *Kitāb al-Najāt*, ed. M. Taqī Dānishpajūh (Tahran: Intishārāt Dānishgāh-e Tahrān, 1364/1985, 536-537.

20 Ibn Sinā, *al-Madkhal*, 65; cf. On the sources of this distinction and how to interpret it in a way that is compatible with Avicenna's other classification of universals before, in, and after multiplicity, also in *al-Madkhal*, see İbrahim Halil Üçer, “Realism Transformed,” 31-33.

Avicenna's metaphysical realism is characterized by his assertion that beneath the sensible properties that allow us to perceive an object in a particular way lies a quiddity. This quiddity serves as the principle of those properties and is shared by all objects of the same kind. Avicenna further argues that the quiddity, when characterized by universality in the mind, corresponds to the external quiddity, excluding the existential properties associated with its presence in the mind.

Avicenna, in both *al-Shifā'/al-Ilāhiyyāt* and *al-Najāt*, asserts that the quiddity “without any other condition (*lā bi-sharṭi shay*)” exists in the external world as the part that constitutes what makes particulars what they are. This emphasis is articulated in *al-Shifā'/al-Ilāhiyyāt* as follows:

The animal exists only in the mind, conditioned by “not being something else” [*bi-sharṭi an-lā yakūna shay'an ākhar*]. In contrast, the abstract animal, “without any other condition” [*lā bi-sharṭi shay'in ākhar*], exists externally. For even with a thousand conditions attached to it externally, it exists in itself and in its reality without the condition of anything else. Thus, [considered in terms of] pure animality the animal exists in the external world (*fa al-ḥayawān bi-mujarrad al-ḥaywāniyyah mawjūdun fi al-a'yān*).²¹

This notion—that quiddity “without any other condition” exists in the external world—is expressed in *al-Najāt* as follows:

Sometimes it is said: Humanity is universal without any condition (*bi-lā sharṭ*). Sometimes it is said: Humanity is universal provided that it is said to multiplicity in any of the known ways. In the first respect [*without any condition*], the universal is actually present in things and is predicated of each of them. [...] In the second respect, [the universal] is predicated of individuals at any time in such a way that it is actually one in existence. This does not exist externally; it is *ma'qūl* meaning.²²

These two passages make it clear that, according to Avicenna, essence, that is, the nature that makes things what they are, exists externally without any condition. This nature does not exist on its own, independent of particulars like the Platonic ideas, nor does it exist in the divine intellect like the Neo-Platonic ideas; it can only exist in particulars.

21 Ibn Sinā, *al-Shifā'/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 204.

22 Ibn Sinā, *Kitāb al-Najāt*, 536-7.

Avicenna says that universality is attached to this quiddity in the intellect when it is separated from the foreign attachments of particulars and abstracted by the intellect:

In this context, when we say “the universal nature exists externally,” we do not mean this universality in the sense that it is universal through universality [i.e., logical universality in the sense of being capable of being said of multiplicity], but in the sense that the nature to which universality is attached exists externally. (...) If this consideration counts in the sense of universality, that nature exists externally together with universality. The universality we are talking about exists only in the soul.²³

This nature, which exists in external individuals and makes them what they are, is neither universal nor particular, neither general nor specific, neither one nor many in itself. All of these attributes exist as attachments to it, while the nature itself remains independent of them. As such, it can be particular when it exists in Amr or Zayd and universal as it exists in the intellect. Therefore, referring to this nature as universal when it exists in the external world and calling it the natural universal (*al-kullī al-ṭabīʿī*) does not imply that this nature is inherently universal. Rather, this designation highlights that it is the external nature to which universality is attached in the intellect. This further reaffirms Avicenna’s metaphysical realism, emphasizing that the natures in question are not mere mental constructs but have an existence independent of the mind.

The main problem with the ontology of quiddity in the post-Avicenna period concerns the veracity of the interpretation of Avicenna’s conception of quiddity and universals, which we have briefly presented here and which has a very strong textual basis in terms of the standard reading of Avicenna’s texts. Can we truly speak of a quiddity that exists externally and is shared among individuals? And can we claim that this quiddity is the nature to which universality is attached in the intellect?

A reader well-versed in Avicenna’s philosophy might find it surprising that such questions arise, given the explicit nature of his texts. However, the reason for this debate lies not solely in interpreting Avicennan texts but in responding to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s formidable challenge to Avicenna’s met-

23 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 211. For a similar assessment, see Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Madkhal*, 66.

aphysical realism. Al-Rāzī questions whether an absolute essence, existing externally and common among individuals, can be equivalent to the essence in the intellect, differing only in its universality, as Avicenna claims.²⁴ Al-Rāzī rejects this view, arguing that knowledge as representation cannot be identical to nature because representation is mental while nature is external. The two, he asserts, cannot correspond due to the fundamental difference in their modes of existence.

His arguments²⁵ were so influential that subsequent philosophers who sought to uphold Avicenna's representational theory of knowledge were compelled to revise it. They gradually moved away from Avicenna's conception of *representation equal to nature*—central to metaphysical realism—and shifted toward emphasizing the mental aspect of quiddity while diminishing its external aspect. This philosophical shift, which I refer to as the “mentalist tendency,” emerged from these efforts.

To better understand this development, we turn to the views of ‘Alī al-Qūshjī on the central question posed by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: Is it possible to speak of an external, common quiddity? Our analysis will be accompanied by the perspectives of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawwānī, the author of a super-commentary on *Sharḥ al-Jadīd*, who defends a realist stance in opposition to al-Qūshjī's mentalist tendency.

In the primary text underlying ‘Alī al-Qūshjī's discussion, *Tajrīd al-Aqā'id*, al-Ṭūsī presents the following statements on this subject:

The quiddity is sometimes taken in such a way that what is outside of it is eliminated (*maḥẓūfan an-mā ‘adāhu*). So much so that if something is added to it, it becomes additional and can no longer be said of the whole. This is quiddity “with the condition of

24 See Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fi al-mantiq wa-l-ḥikma*, ed. A. M. Ismā‘il, A. Šābir Muṣṭafa, Rājih Hilāl, Cairo: Markaz al-Ihyā li al-buḥūs wa al-dirāsāt, 2021, II/39-43.k

25 These arguments can be divided into three groups: 1. the rejection of mental existence, 2. the rejection of the view that knowledge is *huṣūl*, and 3. the view that universal forms cannot exist in particular minds, so that the forms in the mind would be surrounded by accidents specific to the mind and could never be equal to the external essence. For these, see. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fi al-mantiq wa-l-ḥikma*, II/39-43, 25-30; *al-Matālib al-‘āliyah min al-‘ilm al-ilāhī*, ed. A. Ḥijāzī al-Sanā (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1987), 103; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-Mashriqīyya*, ed. M. al-Mu‘tasṣm-Billāh al-Baghdādī (Beirut: Dār al-kutubi al-‘Arabī, 1990), II/377. For a detailed presentation of these arguments, see İbrahim Halil Üçer, “Realism Transformed,” 37-43.

nothing additional (*bi-sharti-lā-shay'*). In this respect, quiddity exists only in the mind. Quiddity is sometimes taken "unconditional" (*lā-bi-sharti shay'*). It is the natural universal and exists externally as part of individuals. The natural universal is correctly said of the composition of it and what it is attributed to it. The universality that is attached to the essence is called the logical universal. And the combination [of the universality and the quiddity] is called the intellectual universal. These two [i.e., the logical and intellectual universal] are mental.²⁶

At first glance, this passage seems to repeat the standard Avicennan understanding of the ontology of quiddities. However, in explaining the phrase "the natural universal (...) exists in the external world", 'Alī al-Qūshjī interprets this section in the following manner:

A critical investigation (*tahqīq*) into the position of those who posit the existence of natures in external existence shows that the natural universal exists externally in the sense that what the natural universal correctly predicated of, i.e. the individual, exists externally (*mawjūdun fi al-khārij 'alā ma'nā anna mā sadaqa 'alayhi, a'nī al-shakhṣu mawjūdun fi al-khārij, 'alā mā huwa tahqīqu madhhabi man qāla bi-wujūdi al-ṭabā' fi al-a'yān*).²⁷

With this interpretation, 'Alī al-Qūshjī rejects the external existence of natures and reinterprets the explicit statements of Avicenna and later scholars, such as al-Urmawī, that assert the external existence of natures. He argues that these statements actually affirm the external existence of individuals (*al-shakhṣ*), not natures. According to him, when one analyzes the relationship between nature, individual substances, and universals, it becomes evident that the claim of the external existence of nature can only be understood as affirming the external existence of individual substances. Thus, for those who assert the existence of a human nature that makes each individual human being human, this claim cannot be interpreted as anything other than the existence of individual human beings in the external world. Al-Qūshjī's position, which asserts that only individual substances exists externally, is clearly a continuation of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's view. Notably, Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī also defends the same perspective in his super-commentary on *Lawāmi'*. I quote the following statements from Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī to provide a comparison with al-Qūshjī's view and to illustrate the background of the mentalist tendency:

26 Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, ed. E. Altaş et al., in *Hāshiyat al-Tajrīd*, 248.

27 'Alī al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, I/416-7.

The natural universal has no existence in the external world; only individuals exist in the external world (*anna al-kullīyya al-ṭabīʿī lā wujūda lahū fī al-khārij, wa innamā al-mawjūdu fī al-khāric huwa al-ashkhāṣ*).²⁸

If one objects: “Surely the existence of ‘animal’ is necessary and cannot be denied.”

I respond: The existence of ‘animal’ is necessary only insofar as there exist particular things to which the predicate ‘animal’ correctly predicated of [i.e., individual animals]. The existence of animality as a nature in itself is not merely unnecessary—it is impossible.²⁹

After expressing this view explicitly, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī gives a detailed reasoning about why only individual substances should exist in the external world, which we do not see in ‘Alī al-Qūshjī. Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī confirms this reasoning in his super-commentary on *Lawāmi*³⁰ and argues that there are only individual substances in the external world:

Only individuals exist in the external world (*fē-lā wujūda fī al-khārij illā li-al-ashkhāṣ*). Therefore, no existence common to multiple things can be found in the external world. Likewise, there is no entity in the external world to which universality is attached, in the sense that when it is conceived in itself, its conception does not prevent commonality in it, and there is a relation there that give it the capability of being corresponded to and predicated of many things.

Indeed, there exists something in the external world to which universality attaches when the intellect cognizes it and its sensible accidents are stripped away (*ḥudhifā*). This universality does not attach in the literal sense of commonality, but rather in a different sense of the universality. Were this not the case, we would have no external being characterized by universal meanings either in the external world or in the mind. Consider this carefully and approach this problem with prudence!³⁰

While al-Jurjānī’s clearly follows Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī in maintaining that only individual substances exist in the external world, there remains an ambiguity in his exhortation to readers to think deeply and gain insight. This ambiguity concerns the nature of the existence he claims is present in the external world—an existence which becomes universal when stripped of its sensible properties. Al-Jurjānī later resolves this ambiguity in his *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, where he systematically presents both the arguments for the existence of na-

28 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ Matālī’ al-Anwār*, ed. Usāma al-Sāʿidī (Qom: Dhawī al-qurbā, 1395), I/241.

29 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ Maṭālī’ al-Anwār*, I/243.

30 S. Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Hāshiya ‘alā Sharḥ al-Maṭālī’*, I/242, in *Sharḥ Matālī’ al-anwār*.

tures in the external world and those maintaining that only individual substances exist externally.

When al-Jurjānī interprets the statements of 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī—which argues for the existence of absolute quiddity in the external world 'unconditionally' and supports this through Avicenna's mereological argument—he promises a future analysis of how precisely this 'unconditional' quiddity exists in the external world. He says in the relevant part:

In the external world, only individuals exist. As for universal natures and concepts, the intellect abstracts them from individuals. The intellect sometimes abstracts them from the individuals themselves and sometimes abstracts them from the accidents surrounding them according to different dispositions and various aspects.³¹

This line of reasoning is followed by 'Ali al-Qūshjī, who not only defends the existence of individual substances in the external world, but also argues that when the view of those who argue that natures exist in the external world is analyzed, this does not mean anything other than defending the existence of individual substances in the external world, and attempts to eliminate the opposition Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāzī constructs between the two positions through a critical investigation (*taḥqīq*). Thus, 'Alī al-Qūshjī follows Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāzī in maintaining that only individuals exist in the external world, and agrees with al-Jurjānī that defending the natures ultimately amounts to defending the existence of individuals. However, this interpretive position faces a significant challenge when confronting the Avicennan mereological argument found in al-Ṭūsī's main text, which contends that nature exists as a constituent part of external individuals.

To address this, al-Qūshjī, together with al-Jurjānī, reevaluates this argument. The classical formulation that al-Qūshjī correctly attributes to proponents of unconditioned quiddity in the external world runs as follows: "The 'animal' is a part of the externally existing 'this animal'; and whatever is part of something that exists externally must itself exist externally." Al-Qūshjī's response is nuanced: If one claims that "the natural universal is a part of in-

31 Bk. S. Sharif al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif I*, ed. and trans. into Turkish, Ömer Türker, İstanbul: Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2015, 642.

dividuals” it is meant that ‘animal’ is literally a part of the individual in the external world, this foundational claim must be rejected. However, if one means that ‘animal’ is a part of it in the intellect, then it can be accepted. To justify rejecting the view that natural universals must exist externally by virtue of being parts of individuals, al-Qūshjī offers counter example: “Blindness is a part of ‘this blind person’ that exists in the external world, yet blindness itself is not present in it.”³² Accordingly, just as we cannot claim that blindness exists in the privative sense of ‘not seeing’ in ‘this blind’, even though blindness is a part of ‘this blind’ in the external world, we cannot assert that animality exists in ‘this animal’, even though it is a part of ‘this animal’.

‘Alī Al-Qūshjī’s analysis represents both a continuation of Qūṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s mentalist approach and an echo of Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī’s commentaries in his *Lawāmiʿ* and *Tajrīd*. Therefore, alongside these two thinkers, al-Qūshjī exhibits a clear mentalist tendency, distancing himself from Avicenna’s metaphysical realism. In line with this tendency, he weakens the ontological foundation of metaphysical realism by asserting that external natures do not exist—only individuals do. He also undermines the epistemological assumption of the realist position by arguing that when we claim to know concepts humanity or animality, we are not knowing an external nature but rather a meaning formed in our minds through a comparison of external individuals or their properties. In doing so, al-Qūshjī dismantles the opposing view, which posits the external existence of natures. He contends that defending such a view ultimately amounts to asserting that only particulars exist externally, leaving no viable alternative to the mentalist approach he advocates.

In comparison to Avicenna’s original view, this deviation caught the attention of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawwānī in his super-gloss on ‘Alī al-Qūshjī’s commentary. Al-Dawwānī critiques al-Qūshjī’s interpretation, which refutes the view that positing the external of natures. He argues that if asserting the external existence of natures is effectively reduced to asserting the external existence of individuals, the entire debate becomes superfluous. As al-Dawwānī notes, such an interpretation reduces the discussion to nothing more than a mere debate of words:

32 ‘Alī al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-‘aqā’id*, I/417-20; cf. Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Hāshiyat al-Tajrīd*, II/250, ḥāshiya 4.85; Qūṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ Maṭālī’ al-Anwār*, I/240.

Regarding his statement, “a critical investigation (*tahqīq*) into the position of those who posit the existence of natures in external existence shows that the natural universal exists externally in the sense that what the natural universal correctly predicated of, i.e. the individual, exists externally” I say: This reduces the discussion to a mere debate of words (*hādihā yaj'alu al-nizā' lafẓiyyan*). However, the literal meaning of the author's [al-Ṭūsī's] statement that “it [i.e., the quiddity or natural universal without a condition] is part of the individual substances” does not support such an assertion.³³

As al-Dawwānī observes, it is actually Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī—whom al-Qūshjī also followed—who seeks to reduce the issue to a mere debate of words. In the continuation of the aforementioned passage, where he promises to analyze the view of those who claim that quiddity exists externally “without any condition,” al-Jurjānī outlines several potential interpretations of what might be meant by the statement that natures exist externally. He then presents the third of these alternatives, which he himself endorses, as follows:

If he meant to say that “there is an existent in the external world, and when this existent is conceived and abstracted from its tangible properties, a universal form arises in the intellect,” this is identical the view of those who claim that “there are only individual substances (*al-ashkhās*) in the external world, and universal natures are abstracted from these particular substances.” In this case, the discussion reduces to a mere debate over terminology.³⁴

This is the point that al-Jurjānī emphasizes in the passage quoted from his super-commentary on Lawāmi', where he cautions his readers, saying: “Think about this, and be prudent about this problem!” Accordingly, al-Jurjānī believes that the ultimate solution, when the problem is carefully considered, lies in the formulation outlined above. However, as al-Dawwānī observes, the issue is not merely about whether to label the external thing as a nature or an individual. Rather, it concerns the deeper philosophical question of whether there is an intelligible nature underlying the sensible, particular properties of external individuals—and, if so, the extent the intelligible forms in our minds can accurately reflect it.

33 'Alī al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aḳā'id*, I/416, fn. 6.

34 Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, I, 642. I would like to thank Ömer Türker for drawing my attention to this passage. For a detailed interpretation of the passage in terms of al-Jurjānī's approach, see. Ö. Türker, “Urmevî'nin Nesnelciliği İle Kutbüddin er-Râzî'nin ve Cürcânî'nin Öznelciliği Arasında Tabii Küllînin Varlığı Sorunu”, forthcoming article. For a more detailed discussion of al-Jurjānī's views on the relation between the external physical object and the quiddity in the mind, the relation of these views to Q. al-Râzî's position, al-Dawwānī's criticisms of al-Jurjānī, and finally Siyâlkütî's responses to al-Dawwānī, see M. Ali Koca, *Seyyid Şerîf Cürcânî'de Neşin Mahiyeti ve Bilgi Teorisi*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Istanbul 29 Mayıs Univ. Sos. Bil. Inst., 2023. 383-411.

By re-dividing the alternatives that al-Jurjānī and, subsequently ‘Alī al-Qūshjī had previously unified, al-Dawwānī seeks to elucidate the opposing positions once again. In doing so, he expresses surprise that al-Qūshjī presents the mereological argument for the external existence of natures—as if unaware of its origin in Avicenna—by stating, “the following evidence is given for the existence of essence without a condition,” only to then critique and reject it. Al-Dawwānī proceeds to remind readers of Avicenna’s original view, drawing extensively from the philosopher’s texts through lengthy quotations. As one of the earliest sources to directly compare Al-Qūshjī’s interpretation (following al-Jurjānī) and al-Jurjānī’s interpretation (following Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī) with Avicenna’s original texts, and to articulate the distance between them so clearly, al-Dawwānī’s critical evaluation is worthy of quotation here.

This reasoning [i.e., Avicenna’s mereological argument] is found in *al-Shifā*. Here Avicenna demonstrates that the animal in the sense that it is animal without a condition [*lā bi-sharṭi shay’*] exists in the external world. According to this assertion, if “this individual” is a certain animal, then a certain animal exists; therefore, the “animal” that is part of a certain animal also exists. Just as whiteness exists. That is, although whiteness is not separate from matter, it exists in matter by virtue of its whiteness, because whiteness is something other than matter when it is taken into account and considered to have a reality of its own, even though this reality may be accompanied by something else in existence. [Following this demonstration, Avicenna] criticized in a humiliating way those who claim that what exists is not animal *qua* animal, but only a certain animal [= *thumma bālagha fi al-tashnī’i ‘alā man za’ama anna al-mawjūd huwa ḥayawānun mā, dūna al-ḥayevān bi-mā huve ḥayawān*].

(...)

In his words, Avicenna repeated over and over again that in terms of being a nature, the nature precedes the individual and universal nature, and that this is like the simple preceding the compound. A thorough understanding of what Avicenna says makes it completely clear that what the proponents of the existence of natures mean is not only the existence of their individuals, as the commentator, following the others, suggests. (*ba’da al-iḥāṭat bi-aṭrāfi hādha al-maqāl lā yakhfā anna laysa murādu man qāla bi-wujūdi al-ṭabā’i wujūd afrādiḥā faqaṭ, ka-mā dhahaba ilayhi al-shāriḥ teba’an li-ākharīn*). On the contrary, arguing for the existence of natures aims to argue that if Zayd, for example, who is a rational animal in his essence, exists, then since Zayd exists, the rational animal also exists. For if the rational animal did not exist, Zayd would not exist either, since it is assumed that what makes it what it is does not exist. On the other hand, when the rational animal exists, the animal and the rational necessarily exist. Then the relation of existence to nature *qua* nature is, in one aspect, prior to the relation of existence to Zayd in itself, perhaps even in time.³⁵

35 ‘Alī al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-‘Aqā’id*, I/417-8, fn. 3.

In the remainder of the passage, Al-Dawwani includes three lengthy quotations from *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt* V.1: one addressing the mereological argument, another, on the external existence of quiddity 'without any condition', and a third on the divine existence of nature, which is said to exist externally in a way that precedes natural beings. It seems reasonable to conclude that his intention is to highlight the significant divergence between the line of thought that begins with al-Ṭūsī and progresses through Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī and 'Alī al-Qūshjī, and Avicenna's original position on the ontology of quiddities. Following his identification of this deviation from Avicenna's teachings, al-Dawwānī not only critiques the aforementioned position for its departure from Avicenna's doctrine but also provides a comprehensive evaluation of its deficiencies within the framework of his own philosophical system.

One key point to note about this new line of reasoning is as follows: it would be inaccurate to suggest that the aforementioned philosophers were unfamiliar with the Avicennan passages referenced by al-Dawwānī. On the contrary, they developed a new approach that directly challenges Avicenna's ideas. While there are occasional attempts to harmonize their views with Avicennan texts, these do not negate the emergence of a novel philosophical stance that transcends Avicenna's framework. With the exception of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, the issue for these philosophers is no longer about correctly interpreting Avicenna. Rather, their focus, guided by critical inquiry (*taḥqīq*), is on determining whether natures exist in the external world and how the relationship between our knowledge to the external world is established.

Essence, Mind, and Reality

The process of critical inquiry (*taḥqīq*), aimed at discovering the truth about the external existence of quiddities and the relationship between mind and external reality, consists of three fundamental steps. First, about it examines the ontological structure of external objects. Second, it explores the formation process of universal concepts in the mind. Finally, about it investigates the relationship between concepts in the mind and external existence. In this inquiry into existence, knowledge, and truth, 'Alī al-Qūshjī initially focuses on the ontology of quiddities while pursuing two specific objectives. The initial objective is to demonstrate that abstract essences cannot exist in the external

world. The subsequent is to argue that the association of mental properties (exclusive to the domain of mental existence) with essences within the mind does not compromise their abstractness. Al-Qūshjī's reasoning aims to refute Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's assertion that quiddities exist externally in an abstract form, while in the mind, they are associated with mental properties, thus preventing correspondence with external abstract quiddities.

In order to achieve this objective, al-Qūshjī initially proposes to make some amendments to the terminology employed in the context of the aspects of quiddities. In this respect, for example, he states that when the 'animal' is taken 'with the condition of being something,' it becomes identical with one of its species; when it is taken 'with the condition of being nothing else,' it becomes a part of the species rather than being identical with it; and when it is taken 'unconditionally,' it serves as a predicate of the species. Thus, in the first case, 'animal' corresponds to 'human being'. In the second, it corresponds to 'animal' as a component of 'rational animal.' In the third, it corresponds to 'animal' as the predicate in the proposition 'the human being is animal'.³⁶ Al-Qūshjī argues that when 'animal' 'with the condition of being something,' the condition does not refer to individualizing conditions in the external world but to the differentia that refines and specifies the ambiguous genus, transforming it into a distinct species. For example, 'an animal is a human being provided that it is a rational being'.³⁷ This interpretation of quiddity 'with the condition of being something' differs from Avicenna's understanding, which associates it with quiddity surrounded by particular accidents specific to external existence. A similar divergence appears in his interpretation of quiddity 'with the condition of being nothing else.' Al-Qūshjī examines two statements from al-Ṭūsī regarding quiddity 'with the condition of being nothing else' (*bi-sharṭ lā shay'*):

1) "The essence is sometimes taken in such a way that what is external to it is eliminated."

2) "If something is added to it, it becomes an excess and is no longer to be added".

36 'Alī al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, 404-5.

37 'Alī al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, 405-6.

According to al-Qūshjī, these statements reveal two distinct understandings of quiddity 'with the condition of being nothing else'. The first corresponds to abstract quiddity. The second refers to quiddity as a component of an external composite substance, with a condition added to it. When quiddity is understood in the second sense, it becomes part of a composite whole, constituted by both the quiddity and the added condition. Since the part cannot be predicated of the whole, quiddity in this sense cannot be predicated of the whole either. Therefore, quiddity 'with the condition of being nothing else' refers to a quiddity that cannot be predicated of the whole to which it belongs or of anything else, as external conditions have been added to it. This interpretation contrasts with the possibility of the genus, as the quiddity 'with the condition of being something else,' being refined into a distinct species through the addition of differentia.

Al-Qūshjī emphasizes the gap between these two meanings: one referring to universal forms in the intellect and the other to the individual existence of quiddities in the external world.³⁸ However, it remains unclear whether he ultimately chose between the two interpretations of quiddity *bi-shart lā shay'*. There are indications, however, that he leaned toward the second meaning. First, he provides a detailed explanation of the second interpretation while omitting clarification of the first. Second, he associates the property of abstractness and independence from attachments with 'unconditioned' quiddity, which he denies exists externally and asserts exists only in the mind.

Nevertheless, 'Ali al-Qūshjī acknowledges that al-Ṭūsī intended the term quiddity 'with the condition of being nothing else,' to convey the first meaning rather than the second. Al-Ṭūsī asserts that quiddity in this sense exists in minds, making it clear that the second meaning can appear externally only when external conditions are added. Furthermore, he states that quiddity in this form cannot be predicated of the members of the species in any way. In this context, al-Qūshjī addresses the following problem: In the first sense, it is indisputable that abstract quiddity cannot exist in the external world. This is because when it exists externally, it must be surrounded by conditions such as external existence and individuation (*tashakhkhuṣ*), which render it no longer abstract. However, a similar issue arises when the quiddity is present

38 'Ali al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, 405.

in the mind.³⁹ When quiddity, presumed to be abstract, is present in the mind, it is encompassed by conditions such as mental existence, thereby losing its characteristic of abstraction.

Al-Qūshjī notes that some scholars attempt to resolve this problem by considering quiddity abstract if it is independent of external accidents, without regard to mental accidents. However, he proposes a more detailed approach to address the issue. Resolving this problem is crucial because, in order to effectively counter Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's criticisms, it is insufficient to merely show that abstract quiddity cannot exist in the external world. It must also be demonstrated that quiddity can exist abstractly in the mind.

To address this problem, al-Qūshjī argues that the mind is capable of conceiving everything, including its own non-existence, and therefore has no difficulty in conceiving something in an abstract manner. As a matter of fact, the mind also judges the impossibility of the external existence of abstract quiddity. If the mind could not conceive such a thing, it would be incapable of judging its possibility or impossibility. Therefore, 'Alī al-Qūshjī asserts that characterizing a quiddity in the mind as abstract is simply the intellect's conception (*taṣawwur*) of it. This conception is achieved by abstracting the quiddity from the property of existing in the mind. In doing so, the meaning that emerges in this act of conception corresponds to the abstract quiddity (*al-māhiyya al-mujarrada*), which is entirely independent of all attachments arising from both external and mental existence.⁴⁰

After demonstrating that the intellect can conceive of quiddity abstractly *what it is*, al-Qūshjī proceeds to discuss the 'unconditioned' quiddity, which is said to correspond to the natural universal. At this level, no conditions are taken into account—neither inclusion nor exclusion. In other words, it is considered neither *with the condition that the differentia is included in it and makes it a human being (bi-sharṭi shay')*, nor *with the condition that it becomes a part and cannot be anything else (bi-sharṭi lā- shay')*. The 'unconditioned' animal thus corresponds to the abstract animal, independent of all external and internal attachments.⁴¹

39 'Alī al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, 406.

40 'Alī al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, 407-10.

41 'Alī al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, 406.

Critiquing Avicenna's approach to the ontological position of this quiddity—without naming him—al-Qūshjī argues that, according to this view, the quiddity corresponds to external natures that are common among individuals. In this framework, independent of accidents but becomes subject to particular accidents in the external world. However, al-Qūshjī rejects this perspective. He asserts that once something exists in the external world, it is always be a particular entity. For this reason, it is fundamentally impossible for such a thing to possess commonality among individuals. Consequently, he concludes that 'the existence of nature in the external world and its commonality among individuals cannot be conceived.'⁴²

In light of these considerations, 'Alī al-Qūshjī's position on the ontology of quiddities becomes fully elucidated. According to him, the quiddity 'with the condition of being something' corresponds to the genus with an ambiguous nature. The quiddity 'with the condition of being nothing else' corresponds to the quiddity as an external part that cannot be predicated of the whole. Finally, the 'unconditioned' quiddity corresponds to the quiddity that cannot exist externally but is conceived abstractly by the intellect. It is also important to note that the 'unconditioned' quiddity becomes a mental conception when it is detached from external existence. In this sense, it aligns with al-Qūshjī's earlier description of quiddity 'with the condition of being nothing else'.

Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, whom al-Qūshjī followed closely, also argued that the 'unconditioned' quiddity—such as the nature of animal *qua* animal—does not exist externally and can only be a mental conception, or as he describes it, a mental exemplar (*al-mithāl al-dhihnī*).⁴³ This nature, abstractly conceived by the intellect, is neither particular nor universal in itself. Particularity and universality, he explains, arise as additional meanings after the intellect has conceived this nature. The reason this nature is called universal is not because it is inherently universal but because universality is attached to it. As previously noted, this interpretation aligns with Avicenna's claim that the natural universal is labeled universal because universality in the mind is attached to the external, unconditioned nature. The key difference, however, is that while

42 'Alī al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, 411-12.

43 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ Maṭāli' al-anwār*, I/243.

Avicenna asserts this nature exists externally, al-Rāzī, al-Jurjānī, and al-Qūshjī contend that it exists only in the mind.

Avicenna regarded the universality in the intellect as being attached to an external nature, which he termed the natural universal, while its mental representation was referred to as the intellectual universal. However, mentalist thinkers argue that this nature gradually emerges in the mind through a process of abstraction. They contend that the mental forms produced in the early stages of this process are not universal, but particular. These particular forms create traces in the mind, ultimately giving rise to a universal exemplar. This universal exemplar corresponds to the nature, and the only true universal—since universality is attached to this nature in its original form.⁴⁴ Following this reasoning, al-Qūshjī argues that universality, understood as commonality, cannot belong to intellectual forms, just as it does not belong to natures assumed to exist externally. According to him: firstly, intellectual forms cannot be universal because they are particular forms residing in particular souls. Secondly, universality is a quality specific to second-order intellectual forms, which become manifest and known through these particular intellectual forms. And finally, universality should not be understood in terms of commonality but in terms of correspondence (*muṭābaqah*). This notion of correspondence, which ‘Alī al-Qūshjī identifies as the essence of universality, has two dimensions. The initial proposition is that when we intellect the individuals in the external world separately, the same meaning invariably emerges from them in our minds. The second proposition is that the nature, which is the subject of universality, exists as the individuals themselves in the multiplicity when it exists in the external world.⁴⁵

Conclusion

Metaphysical realism, which defends the external existence of essences and argues that our knowledge pertains to these essences—thereby grounding truth in the correspondence between the mental and external presence of

44 Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-kullīyyāt*, ed. and trans. into Turkish, Ömer Türker, Istanbul: Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2013, 25.

45 ‘Alī al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-‘aqā’id*, 412-13.

these essences—underwent a significant transformation after the thirteenth century. This transformation, initiated by Naşīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and reached its peak with Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, gave rise to a new philosophical attitude in Islamic philosophy that we can refer to as the *mentalist tendency*. In a previous study, we examined how Avicenna's metaphysical realism was transformed by Naşīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī in their responses to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's criticisms, and how this transformation led to the emergence of the mentalist tendency. However, the extent to which this tendency was maintained after Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī remained unclear. As this has shown, the mentalist tendency continued to develop, albeit in different forms, in the works of Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī and 'Alī al-Qūshjī—two of the most influential thinkers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This tendency gradually solidified into a definitive philosophical stance regarding the ontology of quiddities. Following the thinkers he admired, 'Alī al-Qūshjī rejected the idea that an underlying, intelligible nature exists beneath the sensible aspects of individual substances. He also dismissed the notion that such a nature is common to all individual substances. Instead, he argued that external existence comprises only individual substances (*al-ashkhāṣ*). This approach represents a major transformation that cannot be taken lightly, as it abolishes the distinction between sensible and intelligible form, which Avicenna had posited as one of the most original aspects of his philosophy and which he said that the philosophers before him had made great mistakes because they had failed to grasp it⁴⁶, and argues that there are only simple, individual substances with sensible properties in external existence

In line with this approach, 'Alī al-Qūshjī rejected the external existence of the natural universal, which Avicenna had claimed exists externally as a part of individual composite substances. Instead, he argued that natures exist in the mind. Explaining the emergence of these natures as the final step in a process of intellection based on a comparisons among particulars and their sensible properties, he reinterpreted the correspondence between intellectual and external forms. In terms of existence, knowledge, and truth, 'Alī al-Qūshjī's mentalist attitude diverged from Avicenna's metaphysical realism in three fundamental ways. Ontologically, al-Qūshjī weakened the external

46 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Kawn wa al-Fasād*, VI, 129,15-130,1; 130,8-131.10.

dimension of metaphysical realism by arguing that essences and natures exist only in the mind, and that external existence consists solely of individuals. Epistemologically, he claimed that what we know are not external natures but the natures that form in our minds. Semantically, he asserted that references to the external existence of natures actually refer to individuals substances. By diminishing the *external* aspect of metaphysical realism and amplifying the *mental* aspect, al-Qūshjī's approach, along with the contributions of the thinkers he followed, has been called the *mentalist tendency*.

As is inherent to the nature of philosophy, new philosophical positions often provoke opposing responses. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawwānī articulated a contrasting viewpoint in his super-gloss to 'Alī al-Qūshjī's *Sharḥ al-Jadīd*. Al-Dawwānī's perspective demonstrates how a new realist position can be defended against the criticisms posed by the mentalist tendency. Further studies on this dialectic between realists and mentalists promise to uncover new questions and answers regarding the structure of physical objects, the limits of theoretical thought, and the relationship between mind and reality. Additionally, such investigations will elucidate the history of post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy—a field still in the process of being fully illuminated, with its contours becoming increasingly discernible.

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