Reconciling Ambiguity (*tashkīk*) and Superaddition (*ziyāda*) in Commentaries on Tūsī's *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*: Iṣfahānī, Jurjānī, and Qūshjī on Proper Existences (*wujūdāt khāṣṣa*)*

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Abstract: The ontology of the Necessary Existent was a topic of heated controversy in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī argued that existence is superadded to (*zāʾid ʿalā*) all essences, including the Necessary Existent's, while Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī used the notion of existence's ambiguous predication (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) to argue for the identity of the Necessary's essence with its existence. This paper analyzes the synthesis of Rāzīan superaddition and Ṭūsīan ambiguity as developed in early commentaries on Ṭūsī's *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*, namely the *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid* of Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1348) with its glosses by al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 1414), and the "new" commentary by ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Qūshjī (d. 1474). After surveying the development of the new synthesis, which entails "three tiers" (*thalātha umūr*) of unqualified existence (*wujūd muṭlaq*), proper existence (*wujūd khāṣṣ*), and quiddity (*māhiyya*), I highlight Qūshjī's suggestion, in response to Iṣfahānī's argument (and Jurjānī's denial) that ambiguity entails superaddition, that these proper existences are metaphysically superfluous. Qūshjī thus proposes a sparser ontology comprising only unqualified existence and quiddity but still making good on his predecessors' concerns: I examine his arguments in his subsequent discussions of existence's diversification among existents and, finally, of existence's superaddition to the Necessary.

Keywords: ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Qūshjī, Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *tashkīk al-wujūd*, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, ontology, Necessary Existent, *wujūd khāṣṣ*, *wujūd muṭlaq*

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Introduction

It is well known that Avicenna's ontology as applied to the Necessary Existent was a topic of heated controversy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī famously argued that if existence is an attribute shared by all existents, it must be distinct from and superadded to (*zā'id ʿalā*) all of them, including the Necessary Existent, while Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī resisted this conclusion, leveraging the notion of existence's ambiguous predication (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) to argue that while existence is an attribute distinct from the essences of contingent existents, it is identical with the essence of the Necessary Existent. Although there have been numerous studies of the role these concepts play in Rāzī's and Ṭūsī's metaphysics, it is not well understood how they were received by later *mutakallimūn*, who in general remain sparsely treated in Western scholarship. This paper aims to help address this gap by analyzing the synthesis of Rāzian superaddition and Ṭūsian ambiguity as it is presented and developed in several early and important commentaries on Ṭūsī's manual of *kalām*, the *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*: I examine the *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid* (or "old" commentary) of Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1348) together with its glosses by al-Sayyid al-Sharīf ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī (d. 1414), as well as the "new" commentary of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Qūshjī (d. 1474), which incorporates insights from both Iṣfahānī and Jurjānī while also criticizing both thinkers at turns.

In Iṣfahānī we find one of the first systematic presentations of the new superaddition-ambiguity synthesis; Jurjānī similarly accepts it, together with what he terms its "three tiers" (*thalātha umūr, thalātha ashyā*) of unqualified existence (*wujūd muṭlaq*), proper existence (*wujūd khāṣṣ*), and quiddity (*māhiyya*). However, Jurjānī criticizes Ṭūsī's and Iṣfahānī's neglect of the proper existences to which unqualified existence is superadded, which, he says, blunts their arguments for this three-tier ontology. Qūshjī in turn critiques Jurjānī's criticisms, replying that there is no compelling case to be made for these proper existences at all: the reconciled doctrines of superaddition and ambiguity stand and achieve their desired results without them, and so the Ṭūsian ontology is better off with only unqualified existence and quiddity. After an overview of the development of the new synthesis, I highlight Qūshjī's suggestion, in response to Iṣfahānī's argument (and Jurjānī's denial) that ambiguity entails invariable superaddition, that these proper existences are metaphysically superfluous. Qūshjī thus proposes a sparser ontology comprising only unqualified existence and quiddity but still making good on his predecessors' concerns. I examine the arguments he advances to this effect in his subsequent discussions of existence's diversification among existents and, finally, of existence's superaddition to the Necessary.

1. Superaddition (*ziyāda*) and Ambiguity (*tashkīk*) in Post-Ṭūsīan Kalām: Background and Development

The superaddition and ambiguity of existence both go back to key principles of Avicenna's ontology that present a certain tension when extended to the Necessary Existent. Superaddition is premised on existence's being distinct from and in fact accidental for quiddity (a relation later glossed as existence's being "superadded to" [*zāʾid ʿalā*] quiddity), while ambiguity means that existence is predicated of its subjects with a single meaning (unlike pure equivocity) that nonetheless differs in some way between these subjects (i.e., by degrees of priority, merit, essentiality, or intensity).[1] Taken together, these principles have uncertain implications for the Necessary Existent: since ambiguity entails a single, shared concept of existence, is existence therefore the same sort of superadded attribute for the Necessary as it is for contingents? Or should the variability of which existence admits be taken to exempt the Necessary's existence from the rule of superaddition? Although Avicenna generally disavowed superaddition in the Necessary and claimed rather that the Necessary's essence is identical with pure, self-subsistent existence, his answers to these questions were not as complete or consistent as all of his readers would have liked, leading to rival attempts to fill the gaps in the postclassical period.[2]

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1   I have discussed the original Avicennian understanding of the ambiguity of existence and its Aristotelian background in "From Focal Homonymy to the Ambiguity of Existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*): Avicenna's Reception and Revision of Aristotle's Categorial Ontology," *Oriens* 51 (2023): 327–66. The postclassical development of how ambiguous terms in general should be understood, meanwhile, has been discussed in Hisashi Obuchi, "Why Is *Mušakkik* So Called? The Views of Philosophers from the Thirteenth to the Fourteenth Century," *Mélanges de l'Institut dominicain d'études orientales* 39 (2024): 471-499.

2   On the one hand, Avicenna is clear in all his major summae that the Necessary's existence is not superadded to its quiddity and, indeed, that the Necessary does not properly have a quiddity, but is rather pure, self-subsistent existence on its own; see, e.g., *al-Shifāʾ: al-Ilāhiyyāt* VIII.4. Hence, where existence is accidental for most essences, it is identical with the Necessary's essence. This difference, which could conceivably be construed as one of degrees of essentiality, may in turn be why Avicenna in one late work says that existence is predicated ambiguously between the Necessary and contingents; see *Mubāḥathāt*, ed. Muḥsin Bīdārfar (Qum: Intishārāt Bīdār, 1992/1993), 232 (section 692). For a contemporary defense of this reading (which is very similar to that of Ṭūsī, Iṣfahānī, and Jurjānī), see Damian Janos, "*Tashkīk al-wujūd* and the *lawāzim* in Avicenna's Metaphysics," in *Penser avec Avicenne: De l'héritage grec à la réception latine, en hommage à Jules Janssens*, eds. Daniel De Smet and Merem Sebti (Leuven: Peeters, 2022), 132–8. But on the other hand, in this same work, Avicenna reneges on his earlier characterization of the Necessary as self-subsistent existence, conceding instead that the Necessary has a quiddity distinct from its existence; see *Mubāḥathāt*, 168–9 (sections 475–9). It is thus an open question whether, for Avicenna, existence's ambiguous predication between the Necessary and contingents goes along with its invariable superaddition to quiddity, or whether the ambiguity of existence is premised on an exception to the usual rule of superaddition in the case of the Necessary.

Some of Avicenna's readers argued that the Necessary's existence, like that of contingents, is superadded to its corresponding quiddity: I hereafter call this "the distinction view" of the Necessary's essence and existence. Its most famous proponent is Rāzī, who emphasized the invariable superaddition of existence on the basis of its commonality (*ishtirāk*): if existence indeed has a single meaning for all existents, then it must act the same way in all cases—that is, it must be an attribute distinct from its subject.[3] This is not to say that the Necessary has its existence from some cause other than itself, as contingents do; indeed, Rāzī goes so far as to describe the Necessary's existence as caused by its essence. This affirmation of self-causation comes with other problems, though, among them the apparent implication that the Necessary's existence depends on something other than it, thus compromising its utter simplicity and necessity.[4] Hence, other thinkers claimed that in the Necessary's unique case, its existence is identical with, not superadded to, its essence. I hereafter call this "the identity view" of the Necessary's existence and essence. Although this view was first advanced by Avicenna, only its later partisans—the most well-known being Ṭūsī—would explicitly invoke the ambiguity of existence in support of it: Ṭūsī argues that, because existence is predicated ambiguously (*bi l-tashkīk*), it does, in

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3   Rāzī discusses this issue in all his mature works; see, e.g., his *Mulakhkhaṣ fī l-manṭiq wa-l-ḥikma*, ed. Ismāʿīl Khān Oghlū (Amman: Aslein Studies and Publication, 2021), 1:291–5. For studies, see Robert Wisnovsky, "Essence and Existence in the Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Islamic East (*Mašriq*): A Sketch," in *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics*, eds. Dag Nikolaus Hasse and Amos Bertolacci, 27–50 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012); Heidrun Eichner. "Essence and Existence: Thirteenth-Century Perspectives in Arabic-Islamic Philosophy and Theology," in Hasse and Bertolacci, *Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception*, 123–51; Fedor Benevich, "The Essence-Existence Distinction: Four Elements of the Post-Avicennian Metaphysical Dispute (11–13th Centuries)," *Oriens* 45 (2017): 203–58; Francesco O. Zamboni, "Is Existence One or Manifold? Avicenna and his Early Interpreters on the Modulation of Existence (*taškīk al-wuǧūd*)," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 31 (2020): 136–7; Zamboni, *At the Roots of Causality: Ontology and Aetiology from Avicenna to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 137, 152–3, etc.

4   For this endorsement of self-causation, see, e.g., Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya min al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿarabī, 1987), 1:306–11; *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, ed. Alī Riḍā Najafzāde (Tehran: Anjuman-i āthār wa mafākhir-i farhangī, 2005), 2:361–2. For studies, see Zamboni, *At the Roots of Causality*, 303–9, 311–16; Fedor Benevich, "The Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd*): From Avicenna to Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," in *Philosophical Theology in Islam: Later Ashʿarism East and West*, eds. Ayman Shihadeh and Jan Thiele (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 142–9. As Zamboni and Benevich both note, the other difficulty that self-causation leads to is the (evidently paradoxical) priority of an essence to its own existence, which I do not focus on in this paper.

fact, differ among its various instances to the extent that it can be accidental for one
subject and identical with another,[5] without compromising the fundamental unity of
the common notion "existence."

Construed thus, superaddition and ambiguity might be taken as mutually ex-
clusive: existence must either be superadded for the Necessary and for contingents,
and so distinct from the Necessary's essence (as it is for contingents); or it must be
ambiguous between them, and so identical with the Necessary's essence (in contrast
with contingents). This conclusion would not be quite correct, though: Rāzī is willing
to accept that existence is ambiguous between the Necessary and contingents, but
he allows only for a difference in its degree of priority between these subjects, not a
difference in its being accidental for one sort of subject (contingents) and accidental
for another (the Necessary).[6] Ṭūsī, meanwhile, as good as concedes Rāzī's point that
existence is invariably superadded to quiddity, but nonetheless thinks this principle
can be reconciled with the identity view:

> **Text 1** [Existence] applies to the existence of the Necessary and to the existence of vari-
> ous contingents in their various individual identities [*huwiyyāt*], which have no names in
> particular. I do not say [it applies] to the quiddities of contingents, but to the existences
> of these quiddities, that is, that it also applies to them as an external and non-constitu-
> tive concomitant.

5   Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, ed. Ḥasan Zāda al-Āmulī (Qom: Bustan-e
     Ketab, 2012), 1:572. The best introduction to the Rāzī/Ṭūsī conflict in the context of their *Ishārāt*
     commentaries remains Toby Mayer, "Faḫr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī's Critique of Ibn Sīnā's Argument for
     the Unity of God in the *Išārāt*, and Naṣīr ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī's Defence," in *Before and After Avicenna:
     Proceedings of the First Conference of the Avicenna Study Group*, eds. David Reisman and Ahmed H.
     al-Rahim, 199–218 (Leiden: Brill, 2003). More recently, Benevich augments Mayer's treatment with
     reference to Rāzī's other works; see "The Necessary Existent," 124–35.

6   Rāzī, *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*, ed. anonymous (Tehran: Muʾassasat al-Ṣādiq li-l-ṭabāʿa wa-l-nashr,
     1994), 3:53–5. Here Rāzī shows he is aware of the Avicennian understanding of *tashkīk al-wujūd*
     and does not object to existence's being predicated this way rather than purely univocally (*bi-
     l-tawāṭuʾ*); see Benevich, "The Necessary Existent," 134–5. Rāzī arguably diverges from Avicenna
     elsewhere, though, with his observation that ambiguous and univocal terms are similar in that
     they each signify a single concept (*mafhūm wāḥid*), such that ambiguity and univocity in fact fall
     under a single proximate genus, whereas Avicenna tends to class ambiguous terms as types of
     equivocals; Rāzī himself, meanwhile, prefers the simpler division of terms into monosemic (*al-
     alfāẓ al-mutarādifa*) and polysemic (*al-alfāẓ mutabāyina*), with univocal and ambiguous terms
     evidently both falling under the former. Rāzī, *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*, 1:117–18.

When this is established, all the obscurities [raised by] this esteemed [commentator] become resolved at once. This is because existence applies to what is under it with a single meaning, as the philosophers profess. It does not follow from this that [existence's] implicants, which are the existence of the Necessary and the existence of contingents, are equal in essence [*fī l-ḥaqīqa*], for things differing in essence may share in a single concomitant.[7]

Here Ṭūsī is quite clear that existence is a concomitant (that is, an accident) rather than identical with or constitutive of any quiddity—including for the Necessary as well as for contingents. This would seem at first glance to concede Rāzī's point. However, Ṭūsī is not saying here that existence is a concomitant for the quiddities of both the Necessary and of contingents. He is saying, rather, than every existent has an individual existence that is proper to it and no other, and that the single meaning (*maʿnā wāḥid*) of existence common to all existents is a concomitant of these proper existences. This common or "unqualified" existence (*wujūd muṭlaq*) is not, conversely, concomitant for the quiddities to which proper existences are attached, a point that Ṭūsī emphasizes presumably because of one notable case in which a proper existence is not, in fact, attached to any corresponding quiddity:

Text 2 The real essence that intellects cannot perceive is its [sc. the Necessary Existent's] proper existence that differs from other existences in what it is, which is the first principle of all. The existence that [intellects] can perceive is unqualified existence, which is a concomitant of this [Necessary] existence and of other existences. This is what is primary in conception. [...] The Necessary's real essence is not common existence (*wujūd ʿāmm*), but rather is purely its existence that is proper to it and that differs from other existences through its self-subsistence (*bi-qiyāmihi bi-l-dhāt*).[8]

Ṭūsī again invokes the distinction between unqualified existence and proper existence, here to show (in answer to another of Rāzī's objections) that the unqualified existence that is concomitant on all existents is an immediate object of knowledge, whereas the proper existence that belongs only to the Necessary cannot be known

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7   Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 1:572–3. The broader discussion of which this passage forms part has lately been translated into English multiple times; see Zamboni, "Is Existence One or Manifold?" 139–42; Rosabel Ansari and Jon McGinnis, "One Way of Being Ambiguous: The Univocity of 'Existence' and the Theory of *Tashkīk* Predication in Rāzī and Ṭūsī's Commentaries on Avicenna's *Pointers and Reminders*," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 96, no. 4 (2022): 545–70; Peter Adamson and Fedor Benevich, *The Heirs of Avicenna: Philosophy in the Islamic East, 12-13th Centuries: Metaphysics and Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 450–1.

8   Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 1:574–5.

by human intellects at all.[9] Crucially, though, Ṭūsī refers to this proper existence as self-subsistent: it does not, in other words, require a quiddity through which to subsist, but rather, uniquely among proper existences, it subsists on its own. This, then, is the ultimate utility of Ṭūsī's construal of the ambiguity of existence: it enables him to affirm the unity, commonality, and invariable concomitance of the (unqualified) existence shared by all existents, as well as the difference among individual (proper) existences such that they might be either subsistent in quiddities or self-subsistent. He can make both claims, in turn, because unlike Rāzī, he differentiates between unqualified and proper existence, resulting in three ontological tiers that can be attributed to any individual existent: unqualified existence, proper existence, and quiddity.[10]

Now, Ṭūsī does not, in general, go so far as to say that unqualified existence is "superadded" to the proper existence of either the Necessary or contingents. He prefers rather to use the language of concomitance: unqualified, shared existence is a necessary byproduct, as it were, of the Necessary's proper existence and all contingent proper existences.[11] This reticence on Ṭūsī's part is likely because he sees unqualified

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9   Here Ṭūsī follows Avicenna, who explicitly distinguishes between unqualified existence and God's proper existence in the *Shifāʾ: Ilāhiyyāt* VIII.4. It has been averred, with some justification, that Ṭūsī's three-tiered model represents a departure from Avicenna, particularly regarding the ambiguity of existence; see Zamboni, "Is Existence One or Manifold?" 139–43. However, we can see how Ṭūsī arrives at his model from several Avicennian premises. For one, Avicenna does describe unqualified existence as a concomitant of the Necessary's existence; see Ibn Sīnā, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣrīyat al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 1973), 70. For another, although in some passages Avicenna seems to use the term "proper existence" interchangeably with quiddity, in others he clearly distinguishes between a given quiddity and the existence proper to it (as distinct again from the existence common to all things); see Ibn Sīnā, *Dānishnāma-yi ʿAlāʾī, Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. Muḥammad Muʿīn (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tihrān , 1952), 38. See also my discussion of the latter passage, "From Focal Homonymy," 336–8.

10   Rāzī, conversely, distinguishes only between existence and quiddity. Zamboni points, though, out that Rāzī would not necessarily object to the idea of individual existences that differ from each other, so long as this difference was through their accidents, not through their essences. Zamboni, "Is Existence One or Manifold?" 136.

11   Although in at least one passage Ṭūsī does characterize unqualified existence as superadded, he duly specifies that "its superaddition is [only] conceptual" (*ziyādatuhu fī l-taṣawwur*). Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*, ed. Muḥammad Jawād al-Ḥusaynī al-Jalālī (Qom: Maktab al-iʿlām al-islāmī, 1986), 106. Wisnovsky has previously noted this usage; see "Avicennism and Exegetical Practice in the Early Commentaries on the *Ishārāt*," *Oriens* 41 (2013): 373–4. Wisnovsky cites only "Book 1, Chapter 3" of the *Tajrīd*, apparently in reference to *maqṣid* 1, *faṣl* 3 (on cause and effect); however, I have found no such use of *zāʾid ʿalā* or its derivatives in this section, the above quotation being found in *maqṣid* 1, *faṣl* 1 (on common things). Wisnovsky also makes rather much of this solitary use of Rāzīan terminology on Ṭūsī's part, when, to my knowledge, this is the only such usage in Ṭūsī's corpus.

existence as purely conceptual and having no concrete status—indeed, a mere secondary intention.[12] (This position is in notable contrast to Rāzī, who takes existence as concrete, albeit not in the sense of an attribute that subsists in its subjects and enables them to exist.[13]) It should come as little surprise, then, that Ṭūsī elsewhere tends towards denying that unqualified existence has any real standing at all:

> **Text 3** You say [existence] is shared; we say that the true doctrine (*madhhab ḥaqq*) is that existence is not shared (*wujūd mushtarak nist*), but rather that existence for each thing is the reality of its essence. [...U]nqualified existence is conceptual, not extramental, and it does not follow that, whatever you say for necessary existence once it comes to be qualified by the necessary, the same is granted for contingent existence. Thus, necessary existence differs from contingent existence, even if [existence] is in principle shared.[14]

Here Ṭūsī denies the concrete reality of a common and distinct attribute "existence," going so far as to assert that all that really exists are essences, their existence being simply a term for their reality. The shared concept "existence" in question has exclusively mental standing, and is something we extrapolate from various individual, proper existences. Hence, there is no such thing as unqualified existence; there are only many different quiddities. The status of their proper existences, meanwhile, remains unclear—are they to be considered similarly conceptual, or somehow concrete? As we will see, this was an open question among Ṭūsī's readers.

Many subsequent *mutakallimūn* adopted Ṭūsī's versions of these two doctrines together with his three-tiered ontology, while also tending to be much more forthright than Ṭūsī in their affirmation of the superaddition of (unqualified) existence.[15] Commentaries on Ṭūsī's *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād* came to be a favorite occasion for expounding and elaborating upon this new ontology: this trend is present already in al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī's (d. 1325) *Kashf al-murād*, which discusses the threefold division of un-

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12   See, e.g., Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād,* 116.

13   See, e.g., Rāzī, *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*, 3:7; *al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā (Cairo: Maktabat al-kulliyyāt al-azhariyya, 1986), 1:86–7. Rāzī denies that existence is an attribute that subsists in quiddities and makes them exist in multiple places; see *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya fī ʿilm al-ilāhiyyāt wa-l-ṭabīʿiyyāt*, ed. Muḥammad al-Baghdādī (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿarabī, 1990), 1:133–4; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, 1:300. For discussion, see Zamboni, "Existence and the Problem of Aḥwāl," 301–2, 304–5, 310–13; Benevich, "The Essence-Existence Distinction," 223–6.

14   Ṭūsī, *Qismat mawjūdāt*, ed. and trans. Parviz Morewedge in *The Metaphysics of Tusi* (New York: SSIPS, 1992), 43–4 (modified).

15   Perhaps the most monumental example is Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥman ʿUmayra (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-kutub, 1989), 1:321ff.

qualified existence, proper existences, and quiddities, together with the superadded
and ambiguous status that this division implies for unqualified existence.[16] The trend
is even stronger in Iṣfahānī's works, an example being his commentary on ʿAbd Allāh
al-Bayḍāwī's (d. ca. 1300) *Ṭawāliʿ al-anwār*. Bayḍāwī tends to favor Rāzī's ontology: he
affirms the invariable superaddition of existence, which he also takes to exist con-
cretely (through itself, not through a subject in which it subsists).[17] Like Rāzī, more-
over, he does not differentiate between unqualified and proper existence, and thus
he takes invariable superaddition to entail the distinction view. Bayḍāwī is not una-
ware of the Ṭūsīan doctrine of ambiguity, meanwhile; he argues that the doctrine (if
true—Bayḍāwī is himself skeptical) actually lends support to invariable superaddi-
tion, since "that which applies to things ambiguously cannot but be one of their acci-
dents."[18] This argument in fact agrees with Ṭūsī, who says that ambiguous predicates
are always accidental for their subjects, never identical with or constitutive of them;
this rule is in turn reiterated by Ḥillī.[19] In response, Iṣfahānī first notes that "an ambig-
uous predicate is a universal that applies to its instances not equally but differently"[20]
before rebutting Bayḍāwī's claim:

16   ʿAllāma Ḥasan ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād fī sharḥ Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*, ed. anonymous
      (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li-l-Maṭbūʿāt, 1988), 7–10, 24–5, 45–8, etc. For an overview of early
      commentaries on the *Tajrīd*, see Reza Pourjavady, "Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 908/1502), Glosses
      on ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Qūshjī's Commentary on Naṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*," in *The Oxford
      Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Khaled el-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke (New York: Oxford
      University Press, 2016), 418–19.

17   "Existence exists, and its existence is itself. It is distinguished from other existents by a negative
      condition, and so no regress follows." ʿAbd Allāh al-Bayḍāwī, *Ṭawāliʿ al-anwār min maṭāliʿ al-anẓār*,
      ed. unknown, (Qum: Intishārāt Rāʾid, 2014), 1:46. See also 44–5, where Bayḍāwī (paraphrasing Rāzī
      in the *Mulakhkhaṣ*) denies that existence is an attribute that subsists in a thing.

18   Bayḍāwī, *Ṭawāliʿ al-anwār*, 1:44 –5 (quotation at 44).

19   Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 1:539; Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 25. Avicenna nowhere explicitly attaches this
      condition to ambiguous predication; some contemporary scholars, though, have similarly noted
      that ambiguity for Avicenna overwhelmingly governs notions that are accidents or concomitants
      for their subjects; see Janos, "Avicenna on Equivocity and Modulation: A Reconsideration of the
      asmāʾ mushakkika (and *tashkīk al-wujūd*)," *Oriens* 50, no.1–2 (2022): 50–1, 57; "*Tashkīk al-wujūd* and
      the *lawāzim*," 111ff. It is worth noting too that Ṭūsī evidently sees both concrete accidents (such as
      whiteness and light) and conceptual ones (such as existence and priority) as admitting of ambig-
      uous predication.

20   Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, *Maṭāliʿ al-anẓār fī sharḥ ṭawāliʿ al-anwār*, ed. in Bayḍāwī, *Ṭawāliʿ al-an-
      wār*, 2:286. Iṣfahānī also gives a fuller explanation of ambiguous predication in one of his legal
      works. See Obuchi, "Why Is *Mušakkik* So Called?," 282.

Text 4 [Bayḍāwī's claim] is false, because what [he] claims is that its [sc. the Necessary's] proper existence is superadded to its quiddity like the proper existence of contingents. This follows neither from ambiguity nor from the universal distinction among subjects of accidence. Rather, ambiguity entails that unqualified existence is accidental [and] superadded to proper existences, and the distinction among subjects of accidence entails the distinction of the proper existence of the Necessary from the proper existence of contingents. This does not entail that proper existence is accidental in the case of the Necessary Existent as it is in the case of contingents, this being what [Bayḍāwī] claims.[21]

Existence's being predicated ambiguously between the Necessary and contingents does not refer to its being accidental for the Necessary as well as for contingents, says Iṣfahānī; it refers rather to the fact that the Necessary's proper existence differs from those of contingents in some fashion (i.e., it is accidental in the case of contingents and identical in the case of the Necessary). Unqualified existence is what is invariably superadded—but only to these proper existences, which does not alter the fact that these individual existences may have a relation of either accidentality or identity with their respective subjects. Ambiguity, therefore, does not preclude the identity view, since it only entails the invariable superaddition of unqualified existence. Iṣfahānī thus makes good on the Rāzīan intuition that existence must act the same way in all cases; but this unqualified existence, per Ṭūsī, is also purely conceptual, such that its superaddition to God's essence does not compromise divine simplicity. Hence, Iṣfahānī also affirms ambiguity in the Ṭūsīan sense: God's proper existence is self-subsistent and does not (contra Rāzī) require a corresponding quiddity or anything else for its cause. As we will see, this same ontology is very much on display in Iṣfahānī's commentary on Ṭūsī's *Tajrīd*, the *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid*.

Jurjānī accepts the same three-tiered ontology as Iṣfahānī, which he makes especially clear in his commentary on ʿAḍūd al-Dīn al-Ījī's (d. 1355) influential *Mawāqif fī ʿilm al-kalām*. Here Ījī gestures at the Ṭūsīan claim that unqualified existence (as distinct from proper existence) is superadded for the Necessary as surely as it is for contingents. In this case, Ījī demands, wherein lies the difference between the Necessary and contingents? The only possibility is for there to be some "third level" (*amran thalāthan*) apart from both quiddity and unqualified existence—but this position, he claims, has no proof for it, nor does it have any adherents.[22] Jurjānī responds, though, by affirming precisely these three levels:

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21   Iṣfahānī, *Maṭāliʿ al-anẓār* in Bayḍāwī, *Ṭawāliʿ al-anwār*, 2:287.

22   ʿAḍūd al-Dīn al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif fī ʿilm al-kalām*, ed. anonymous (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, n.d.), 51.

Text 5 The distinction in this case is by there being three levels (*thalātha umūr*) in the
contingent: quiddity; the individual instance of existence that occurs to this quiddity;
and the share of concrete being that occurs to this instance. In the Necessary, meanwhile,
there are two levels (*amrayn*): an individual instance of existence, which is the same as
its quiddity; and the share of being that occurs to this instance. This is the existence that
has been affirmed to be superadded to the quiddity in the contingent and the same as it
in the Necessary.[23]

Ījī goes on to invoke ambiguity, arguing (against invariable superaddition) that if
one existence can differ from another in its real essence (*ḥaqīqa*) while sharing in the
single meaning "existence," it does not make sense to suppose that existence must
act the same way in all cases—it could be superadded in some, and not in others.[24]
Jurjānī would of course agree with this, and goes on to point out that this argument
is in fact the same as the Ṭūsīan argument that Ījī has earlier discounted.[25] His main
point, though, is that Ījī's response here tacitly accepts the three tiers he has previ-
ously denied:

Text 6 I say: if quiddities differ in their essences and share in the accident of unqualified
existence, then in every existence is a share of this accidental [unqualified existence],
and in contingents is a quiddity [that is a] subject of accidence for the proper existence
that is a subject of accidence for a share [of unqualified existence]. Thus it has been
proved [that there are] three levels (*thalātha ashyā'*) in them [sc. contingents].[26]

Jurjānī and Iṣfahānī are in basic agreement as to Ṭūsī's three-tier ontology, then—
even though, as we will see from Jurjānī's glosses on Iṣfahānī's *Tasdīd*, Jurjānī criticiz-
es various other aspects of Iṣfahānī's interpretation and supporting arguments, more
often than not with the aim of strengthening the case for the three-tier ontology.

When we arrive at Qūshjī's "new" commentary on the *Tajrīd*, conversely, we will
see that although he makes free use of Iṣfahānī's and Jurjānī's readings, and simi-
larly accepts both superaddition and ambiguity, he is not entirely convinced by the
three-tier ontology. In particular, like Ījī, Qūshjī is skeptical of the notion of proper
existences that are distinct from both unqualified existence and quiddity: no notion

23 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8 vols., ed. Muḥammad 'Umar al-Damiyāṭī (Bei-
rut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1998), 2:159 –60.

24 Ījī, *Mawāqif*, 51–2.

25 Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 163.

26 Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 162.

of proper existence, he thinks, will be meaningfully distinguishable from the broader concept of unqualified existence. Qūshjī contends instead that Ṭūsī's (and Iṣfahānī's and Jurjānī's) concerns can be addressed just as satisfactorily by a less crowded ontology.

2. Does Ambiguity Entail Existence's Invariable Superaddition to Quiddity?

In support of the new reconciliation of superaddition and ambiguity, Iṣfahānī argues that the fact that existence is predicated ambiguously (*bi-l-tashkīk*) entails that it is superadded to (*zā'id 'alā*) the quiddities that are subjects for it: far from excluding it, then, the ambiguity of existence necessitates the superaddition of existence. Although we have seen Bayḍāwī use a similar argument in support of the distinction view, Iṣfahānī thinks he can repurpose it in support of the three-tier ontology. Jurjānī, however, will criticize this argument on virtually the same grounds that Iṣfahānī criticizes Bayḍāwī; Qūshjī will adopt some of these criticisms but will also have his own for Jurjānī in turn. The context for Iṣfahānī's argument is his explanation of a short passage from early in the *Tajrīd*:

> **Text 7** [Existence] differs from quiddity. Otherwise, quiddities would [all] be one, or their parts would be unlimited.[27]

Iṣfahānī, following ʿAllāma Ḥillī, explains these two brief lines as indicating three possibilities for existence's relation to quiddity: either it is (1) superadded to it, or (2) identical with it, or (3) a part of it. Now, Ṭūsī has previously shown that existence is a single meaning that is shared in common (*mushtarak*) among existents. Hence, if (2) this singular existence were identical with quiddity, there would likewise be a single quiddity shared by all things, which is manifestly not the case. As for (3), the argument that Ḥillī and Iṣfahānī both extrapolate is significantly more convoluted; the main problem, however, is that taking existence as a part of quiddity yields an infinite regress.[28] Hence, existence is superadded to quiddity.

Iṣfahānī then entertains an objection that superaddition only holds in some cases, and that in others existence can be either identical with or a part of the quiddity:

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27 Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*, 106.

28 Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, 7–8; Iṣfahānī *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid*, 2:67–8.

Text 8 It has been said: If he intends the judgment to be particular, namely that existence is superadded in some quiddities, this is granted. And if he intends it to be universal, namely that existence is superadded in all quiddities, then this contradicts the particular [reading], and this is what we say: Existence is not superadded in all quiddities, in which case it is possible for it to be superadded in some and the same in some and a part in some. Hence, none of [the arguments] you have given are complete: neither the unification of quiddities, nor their being composed of infinite parts.[29]

The objector points out that Ṭūsī's verdict as to existence's superaddition (as explicated by Iṣfahānī) can be taken as holding either universally or only in particular cases. The objector in turn accepts the particular reading but rejects the universal one, presumably having in mind the Avicennian notion that God's existence is self-subsistent and identical rather than superadded to his essence, which would be a clear exception to any rule of superaddition. Thus, if in fact existence is not universally superadded, Ṭūsī's disjunctive argument falls apart: the conflation of quiddities does not follow, since quiddity need not be identical with existence in all cases. Nor does the regress argument hold, since, presumably, some of the existence-parts at some point in the chain could be identical with their quiddities, thus preventing the regress.[30]

Ṭūsī, of course, would have a response to this objector, namely that the objector is conflating the two kinds of existence, when in fact it is unqualified existence that is invariably accidental, and proper existence that may be either accidental or identical. This distinction between the two kinds, as we have seen, is the substance of Ṭūsī's doctrine of the ambiguity of existence: it explains how existence can be the single, common meaning that Avicenna specified while also varying in terms of accidentality and identity for different individual essences. Iṣfahānī, however, does not make this point in his response. Indeed, he all but concedes the weakness the objector finds in Ṭūsī's (implicit) proof for invariable superaddition, and offers an alternative one:

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29   Iṣfahānī, *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid*, 2:68.

30   It seems unlikely that any objector would in fact want to affirm that existence can indeed be either superadded to, constitutive of, or identical with quiddity, depending on the individual; Jurjānī observes that, although it is included in such considerations as a possible option, "no one says that existence is a part of quiddity." Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 2:127. The overriding point here is simply that, given Ṭūsī's apparent affirmation elsewhere that existence can be sometimes superadded to essence (for contingents) and sometimes identical to it (for the Necessary), his argument here for universal superaddition fails.

Text 9 It is replied: It is inconceivable for existence to vary in accidentality, identity, and inclusion. For if accidentality is entailed, then it should be so in all cases. And if identity or inclusion is entailed, then it should be so in all cases.

If it is said: We do not grant the necessity of equality in them. This would only follow if it were one of the univocal concepts. This is denied, since it is ambiguous.

It is replied: If it is ambiguous, it is superadded in all cases. This is the very object of inquiry.[31]

Where the objector posits that Ṭūsī's verdict on the superaddition might not hold in all cases, Iṣfahānī replies with the maxim that existence must relate to its subjects the same way in all cases. Although this may sound like Iṣfahānī is taking a page out of Rāzī's book (and begging the question to boot), we have seen that Ṭūsī too affirms that (unqualified) existence is invariably accidental without conceding that essence and (proper) existence are distinct in God. So Iṣfahānī may not be begging the question so much as obliquely invoking the widespread acceptance of invariable accidentality together with the arguments that thinkers like Rāzī and Ṭūsī have offered for it. Iṣfahānī's objector next attempts to parry, noting that this invariability would only hold if existence were univocal rather than ambiguous, thus taking Ṭūsī's invariability rule in a more Rāzīan sense: if existence is invariable, there is no way for existence to be accidental in one case and identical in another. On Avicennian terms, this would make it univocal, where it was meant to be ambiguous. Iṣfahānī's second response again leverages Ṭūsī's invariability rule for ambiguity: ambiguity can only govern predicates that are accidental for (rather than identical with or constitutive of) their subjects. Thus construed, the ambiguity of existence ends up supporting invariable superaddition rather than posing a problem for it.

Now, Ṭūsī's invariability rule does not mean, of course, that proper existence is always external to quiddity, which would preclude the identity of essence and proper existence in God. Rather, it means that unqualified existence is always external to its individual instances (i.e., proper existences). Iṣfahānī is well aware of this, as we have seen from his response to Bayḍāwī in Text 4. In Text 9, however, Iṣfahānī has not so clearly distinguished between unqualified and proper existence in his response to the objector, which could therefore be misinterpreted, if taken in isolation, as a defense of the same invariability of existence that Bayḍāwī asserts—that is, that ex-

31   Iṣfahānī, *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid*, 2:68–9.

istence is always superadded to quiddity, including the Necessary Existent's. Indeed, Iṣfahānī has his objector reply just as though this is Iṣfahānī's intent. It is perhaps with an eye to clearing up such possible misinterpretations that Jurjānī points out precisely what Iṣfahānī's argument proves in view of the correct understanding of ambiguity. He first notes (evidently with some disapproval) that Ṭūsī's initial case for the superaddition of existence, as extrapolated by Iṣfahānī in his commentary on Text 7, speaks only to unqualified existence, not proper existences:

> **Text 10** According to those who profess that its [sc. existence's] commonality is a [single] meaning, meanwhile, there is unqualified existence shared among all existents, and an existence proper to each existent. This proof—that is, the first one premised on commonality—only proves that unqualified, shared existence is superadded to quiddity; it does not prove that proper existence is superadded to quiddity, unless it is proven that unqualified [existence] is the same as or a part of the quiddity of the proper [existence]. But this cannot be proven; rather, the truth is that [unqualified existence] is accidental for its individual instances.[32]

This omission in turn leads to problems with how Iṣfahānī, wishing to support superaddition on Ṭūsī's terms, construes ambiguity in his response to his interlocutor in Text 9:

> **Text 11** [*Iṣfahānī says: For if accidentality is entailed*:] It may be said that [existence] does not entail any of this, rather, what entails accidentality and inclusion and identity is quiddities. Hence, the feared outcome (*maḥdhūr*) does not follow.
>
> [*Iṣfahānī says: If it is ambiguous, it is superadded in all cases*:] What follows from ambiguity is that it is not essential in all cases. Otherwise, there would be no differing [at all]. It does not follow from this that it is accidental in all cases, as it may be essential for one and accidental for another.[33]

Jurjānī notes that all Iṣfahānī succeeds in proving here is the invariable superaddition of unqualified existence, not of proper existence, since existence *qua* ambiguous does not require that it relate to all its subjects in one particular way (i.e., as accidental, identical, or a part) in all cases; it is rather the quiddities that entail a particular sort of relation. After all, (unqualified) existence's invariable superaddition to its individuals tells us nothing about these individuals' relation to quiddities; this

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32   Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd*, in Iṣfahānī, *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid*, ed. Eşref Altaş et al., 2:65.

33   Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd*, in Iṣfahānī, *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid*, 2:68–9.

relation is instead determined by the quiddities in which this existence subsists. This determination in turn provides no basis for judging that proper existence is either essential or accidental to its quiddity in relation to all quiddities, meaning that it may well differ in this respect. Jurjānī will go on to reply to a prior attempt at a rebuttal by the little-known Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ḥillī al-Kāshī,[34] who argues that Iṣfahānī's proof does not demonstrate existence's superaddition to quiddities; Jurjānī replies that, if Iṣfahānī's construal of ambiguous predication is correct, his proof does in fact stand.[35] But given the correct construal of ambiguous predication, Iṣfahānī's proof proves the invariable superaddition of unqualified existence only, whereas proper existence may be superadded to or identical with quiddity.

It is unclear whether Jurjānī here is aware that Iṣfahānī's full understanding of ambiguity is in fact the same one that Jurjānī himself upholds. On the one hand, in his gloss on Iṣfahānī's *Maṭāliʿ al-anẓār*, Jurjānī has nothing to say about Iṣfahānī's articulation of the correct view of the ambiguity of existence (which we have seen in Text 4) in response to Bayḍāwī's attempt to leverage the doctrine in support of the distinction.[36] Jurjānī comments only on two nearby places where Iṣfahānī asserts without qualification (as in Text 9) that ambiguity entails superaddition.[37] Jurjānī's gloss in both cases pushes back against Iṣfahānī's assertion, though allowing that it may be taken in multiple ways:

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34   Al-Ḥillī al-Kāshī (not to be confused with ʿAllāma Ḥillī) composed an (as yet unedited) earlier gloss on Iṣfahānī's text, one that Jurjānī responds to in various parts of his much better-known gloss; see Muhammed Yetim, "The Life of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ḥillī al-Kāshī, a Little-Known Commentator of the *Tajrīd al-ʿAqāʾid* Literature, His Academic Lineage, and His Works," *Nazariyat* 5, no.1 (2019): 195–208.

35   Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd*, 2:69 –70.

36   Jurjānī himself elsewhere critiques Bayḍāwī's proof for invariable superaddition from ambiguity, though more on formal grounds: he wryly notes that Bayḍāwī's argument is "is as though it were said: 'Existence is either univocal, and therefore conjoined [rather than identical with quiddity] in all cases, and so the denial [that existence is invariably superadded] fails; or it is ambiguous, and thus its real essence is conjoined [with quiddity] in all cases too—otherwise, one of the feared outcomes results.'" The implication is that it makes no sense to argue that these two different kinds of predication entail exactly the same relationship between referent and subject.

37   Iṣfahānī, *Maṭāliʿ al-anẓār*, 1:278, 280. The latter of these is a verbatim reproduction of the final objection and response from Text 6. At both 278 and 280, it is worth noting, Iṣfahānī is replying to objections seeking to undermine the conclusion that existence is superadded to—i.e., distinct from—essence at all, and so it is perhaps unsurprising that he would speak in broad strokes.

Text 12 If he means that [existence] is superadded in all cases, his conclusion is denied. But if he means that [it is superadded only] in some cases, albeit that his conclusion is correct, it does not correspond to the universal claim.[38]

This gloss suggests that Jurjānī was in fact unsure whether Iṣfahānī is a partisan of the same invariable superaddition as Bayḍāwī; even if Iṣfahānī holds the correct view, Jurjānī says, he should not make his claim in such absolute terms, if only for clarity's sake. But on the other hand, Iṣfahānī replicates the same argument from Bayḍāwī's *Ṭawāliʿ* together with his own response from the *Maṭāliʿ* (Text 4) elsewhere in the *Tasdīd*,[39] and here Jurjānī does note (correctly) that Iṣfahānī is rebutting Bayḍāwī's claim that ambiguity entails the superaddition of existence in the Necessary.[40] It is probable, then, that Jurjānī sees himself in Text 10 and Text 12 as taking issue only with Iṣfahānī's presentation of his argument, not with Iṣfahānī's actual view.

Qūshjī relays the hypothetical objections together with Iṣfahānī's responses; he also reproduces Jurjānī's criticism of these responses, summing up the controversy: invariability in accidentality "would only follow were existence univocal—and why should it not be ambiguous?"[41] However, Qūshjī does not share Jurjānī's discontentment with Iṣfahānī's omission of proper existence, observing that all Ṭūsī and Iṣfahānī are trying to prove in the first place is the invariable superaddition of unqualified existence—and that, indeed, this is all that can be proven at all:

Text 13 I say: [Iṣfahānī's] claim is only that unqualified, shared existence is superadded to quiddity, as the author indicates by drawing out the question of commonality (*ishtirāk*) from this question when he says, "Thus, [existence] differs from quiddity," which we have explicated here. [There is] no way to prove (*ithbāt... mimmā lā sabīl ilāyhi*) that, in terms of existences, there is something beyond quiddities and unqualified existence and its remit (*ḥiṣṣatihi*), [something] superadded to quiddity and accidental for it.

Let it not be said: it will be stated [by Iṣfahānī] that existence is ambiguous, and thus accidental for its individual instances, which are proper existences, thereby proving that in existents is something beyond unqualified existence and its remit.

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38 Jurjānī, *Ḥawāshī al-Maṭāliʿ al-anẓār* in Bayḍāwī, *Ṭawāliʿ al-anwār*, 2:278. His comment on Iṣfahānī's assertion at 280 refers the reader to his objection at 278.

39 Iṣfahānī, *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid*, 2:182 −4.

40 Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd*, 2:183.

41 ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Zāriʿī al-Riḍāyī (Qom: Intishārāt Rāʾid, 2014), 101–3 (quotation at 102).

> For we say: It has been previously said that [Iṣfahānī] does not prove that what is ambiguous is accidental with respect to its individual instances.
>
> Furthermore: the discussion concerns the proof that this something is superadded to quiddity. If this is accepted, it must at least be something acquired [from without] (*kasbīyan*), and how then could they claim necessity (*ḍarūra*) for existence's superaddition to quiddity? [...] Proving [its] necessity by this means is an [implicit] concession regarding it that what is claimed is nothing but the superaddition of shared, unqualified existence, as is not hidden.[42]

Iṣfahānī, says Qūshjī, is only trying to prove here that unqualified existence is superadded to (that is, distinct from) quiddity; his silence on the question of proper existence, criticized by Jurjānī as an oversight, is in fact deliberate. Now, perhaps Jurjānī would not care that this omission was intentional and would still judge it a shortcoming in Iṣfahānī's argument, which should address the superaddition (invariable or no) of proper existences as well. But Qūshjī preemptively replies that there is no way for Iṣfahānī to incorporate proper existences into his proof because there is no way to prove the reality of proper existences in the first place. Qūshjī does not give his rationale for this verdict; what criteria, for instance, would proper existences need to satisfy to qualify as real? Would they need to be concretely real? Qūshjī's only hint here is his obscure reference to the "remit" of unqualified existence; as will become clear in sections 3 and 4, Qūshjī thinks that even if proper existences are taken to be purely conceptual, there is no way to distinguish them meaningfully from unqualified existence. Again, though, he does not go into these details in Text 13.

Qūshjī instead sketches a further argument for why unqualified existence is all that "existence" refers to when we talk about its superaddition: there is no way, says Qūshjī, to make superaddition a necessarily invariable rule in the case of the proper existence that is an extrinsic attribute of quiddity, since this would undermine the classic Avicennian argument for the essence-existence distinction, namely that we can conceive of a quiddity without necessarily conceiving of its existence along with it (cited by Ṭūsī as one of several reasons for quiddity's distinction from existence). That nothing about a quiddity's state of existence can be inferred from the quiddity itself, Qūshjī concludes, shows that we cannot extrapolate anything about these alleged proper existences from quiddities; presumably he allows that we can extrapolate the rule of invariability for unqualified existence, meanwhile, on the grounds that unqual-

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ified existence is not an extrinsic attribute of quiddities but a secondary intelligible, and thus by definition attaches or is "superadded" to primary intelligibles.

So much for superaddition. We might ask, though, where Qūshjī's suspicion of proper existences leaves the ambiguity of existence. Qūshjī does not reject ambiguity, on the one hand; on the other, without the proper existences that Ṭūsī, Iṣfahānī, and Jurjānī invoke, it is unclear how he would accept the Ṭūsīan account of existence's ambiguity between the Necessary Existent and contingent existents. I return to this question in the following sections; as we will see, Qūshjī gives every indication of accepting the doctrine, though on different terms than his interlocutors do.

Qūshjī maintains his skepticism of proper existences, meanwhile, in a subsequent response to Jurjānī's criticism (occurring in the same section as Text 10) of one of Ṭūsī's arguments for the essence-existence distinction. Jurjānī's complaint again concerns the omission of proper existences: Ṭūsī's "proof, were it complete, would prove that proper existence is also superadded in quiddities whose specificities can be intellectually grasped without their existence's being [simultaneously] grasped."[43] Qūshjī, again, is not convinced that there are any such proper existences:

> **Text 14** I say: You [sc. Jurjānī] must be aware that this can only be so once you prove two premises to us: (1) Among existents is an individual instance of the unqualified existent, over and above the quiddity and unqualified existence and its remit. (2) This individual instance is known to us, either in its essence or in some manner by which it is distinguishable from everything apart from it.[44]

Qūshjī reiterates his skepticism that we can pick out a given proper existence that is not covered by the "remit" of unqualified existence. Notably, he specifies neither here nor in Text 13 that these proper existences would need to be concretely real (which we might suppose is required so that one such existence can be identical with a concrete essence in the case of the Necessary). Rather, he seems to allow that they might be invoked on a purely conceptual level as long as there is something distinguishing them from unqualified existence's remit—a possibility that we will see him treat in more detail in section 3. At this point, though, we should note that Qūshjī has not yet offered a compelling argument against the notion of proper existence. His argument in Text 13 only calls into question whether we could deem such existences in-

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43   Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd*, 2:70.

44   Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*, 108–10.

variably superadded; Jurjānī would likely reply to his challenge in Text 14, meanwhile, that there is no way to explain either the diversification of existence among existents or the unique necessity of the Necessary's existence without invoking proper existence. Although Qūshjī does not consider these hypothetical replies here, he will go on to mount more definite arguments for an alternative ontology that has no need of proper existences to account for the diversification of existence among contingents or to distinguish the Necessary's existence from that of contingents.

3. How Is Existence Diversified among Contingents?

Before addressing the special case of the Necessary Existent, Qūshjī argues that there is no reason to posit proper existences even in the case of the contingent quiddities from which they are supposedly distinct, and he suggests that this in fact follows from Ṭūsī's own premises. Here is the key passage, where Ṭūsī suggests that existence is diversified not at the level of proper existences, but at the level of the quiddities that are subjects for these existences:

> **Text 15** [Existence] has no genus, but rather is simple, and thus has no differentia. It is multiplied through the multiplicity of subjects and said ambiguously (*bi l-tashkīk*) of its accidental [instances] (ʿalā ʿawāriḍihā).[45]

Ṭūsī says that existence is utterly simple, and so it is not diversified through differentiae (which would make it complex), but through its subjects. All three tiers of Ṭūsī's ontology are implicitly present: he mentions the accidental instances (i.e., proper existences), what is predicated ambiguously of these accidents (i.e., unqualified existence), and the subjects for their accidence (i.e., quiddities). Evidently, though, existence is not diversified at the level of these accidental instances, but rather "through the multiplicity of its subjects." Iṣfahānī agrees, explaining that each individual existence is qualified by its unique connection to its subject:

> **Text 16** Existence is a concept that cannot be multiplied through differentiae, as it is simple; rather, it is multiplied through the multiplicity of subjects, that is: the quiddities to which existence occurs. For the existence that occurs to a human being is not the existence that occurs to a horse, aside from their sharing in the concept of existence, by means of its connection (*iḍāfa*) to human being and horse. And it is predicated of [those

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things that] occur to subjects—that is, its individual instances that occur to quiddities—
ambiguously. For an ambiguous predicate is a universal that applies to its individual in-
stances not equally but variably. […] Thus, existence is predicated ambiguously of [those
things that] occur to subjects, which are the existences of quiddities.[46]

On Iṣfahānī's account, unqualified existence is differentiated into individual in-
stances by means of its connection to different subjects (human being, horse, etc.):
one existence becomes differentiated from another by merit of its connection to one
individual subject over another.

Jurjānī, however, thinks that both Ṭūsī and Iṣfahānī have left a large gap in their
argument for existence's diversification through its subjects, one that comes down
once again to a neglect of the role of proper existences: unqualified existence has
indeed been shown to be simple, but there is no reason to suppose that proper ex-
istences are similarly simple or uniform, which calls Ṭūsī's conclusion into question:

> **Text 17** [T]he preceding proof, given its validity, only proves the simplicity of unqualified
> existence, not the simplicity of its individual instances. It could be that its individual
> instances are simples that are diverse in [their] quiddities through their essences, or that
> they are composites that are diverse in [their] quiddities, either through their essences or
> through their species-making differentiae for that which is a genus for them. Unqualified
> existence would then be simple and accidental for these quiddities that differ in essences
> or through differentiae. It would then not follow that the multiplication of its instances
> is not through differentiae but rather through subjects.[47]

Iṣfahānī, explicating Ṭūsī's assertion of existence's simplicity, has previously of-
fered a mereological proof for this thesis.[48] According to Jurjānī, though, Iṣfahānī's
proof only shows that universal, unqualified existence is simple—he has not proved
that individual instances of this existence are simple. Hence, it does not necessarily
follow that the multiplication of unqualified existence is through quiddity-subjects—
it could be through something else, such as differentiae (if these instances are com-
posites) or the essences of the instances themselves (if the instances are simples).[49]

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46   Iṣfahānī, *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid*, 2:122–3.

47   Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd*, 2:122.

48   Iṣfahānī, *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid*, 2:121.

49   Jurjānī goes on to add that individual existences would differ by means of their subjects if exist-
     ence were a species-nature (and thus predicated univocally); however, because it is an ambigu-
     ously predicated concept, its individuals must differ from each other either through differentiae
     or through their essences as a whole. Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd*, 2:122.

Qūshjī reiterates Jurjānī's criticisms from Text 17.[50] But he also adds a more radical one: Iṣfahānī's construal could be taken to imply that there are no "individual instances" (i.e., proper existences) distinct from unqualified existence at all, but rather only unqualified existence and its manifold connections to its individual subject-quiddities:

> **Text 18** Furthermore: If the distinction of some proper existences from others is purely by means of the connection to their subjects, as this speaker [sc. Iṣfahānī] has mentioned, then proper existences refer to unqualified existence, taken together with the connections. [And] since with each connection is another existence, either unqualified existence is the whole of their [sc. the proper existences'] quiddities (if the connection is made external to it); or [unqualified existence is] a part of them (if [the connection] is included), so that the author's claim [that existence is multiplied through the multiplication of its subjects] would be incorrect.[51]

Qūshjī qualifies Jurjānī's suggestion with the argument that Ṭūsī's model as reconstructed by Iṣfahānī need not posit any such proper existences as distinct from unqualified existence at all.[52] If, as Iṣfahānī claims, what is multiplied is not the number of proper existences but rather quiddities (i.e., subjects), then what is connected to quiddities is simply unqualified existence, whose instances are differentiated from each other through their relations to different quiddities. Hence, these individual existences will amount to either (1) nothing but undifferentiated unqualified existence, to which an external relation to an individual quiddity attaches; or (2) unqualified existence plus a relation, making unqualified existence a part of an existence-plus-relation composite. Option (2) seems to be one of the possible alternatives Jurjānī proposes, which, Qūshjī observes, would invalidate Ṭūsī's claim in Text 15, since existence would in this case be diversified at the level not of quiddities, but of these existence-relation composites. Option (1), meanwhile, saves Ṭūsī's claim while also removing proper existences from the picture; thus, although he does not explicitly argue for one option over the other, it is clear that Qūshjī's preference is

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50   Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*, 180.

51   Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*, 180–1.

52   Qūshjī may here be responding to Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, who rejects the notion that proper existence could amount to unqualified existence together with its connection to a subject, as this would introduce composition into God's essence; see *al-Ilāhiyyāt min al-Muḥākamāt bayna sharḥay al-Ishārāt*, ed. Majīd Hādī Zāda (Tehran: Miraas Maktoob, 2002), 62. Qūshjī elsewhere in his commentary addresses this apparent threat of divine composition; see section 4 below.

for (1). On this reading, there is no such thing as proper existences that are distinct from their subjects and are particular, complex instantiations of universal, simple, unqualified existence: there are simply various quiddities on which the single notion of unqualified existence is concomitant.

One question that we might take to be in the background here, even if neither Jurjānī nor Qūshjī addresses it explicitly, is whether proper existences are concrete or not. Iṣfahānī, for his part, seems to treat proper existences (though he does not use this term) as concretely individuated through their subject-quiddities; at the very least, a proper existence cannot be the same sort of general secondary intelligible that unqualified existence is, since Iṣfahānī says that the existence of one kind of thing is inapplicable to any other. It is less clear where Jurjānī stands: he suggests that proper existences might be differentiated by means of either their essences (making them simple entities) or differentiae (making them composite entities), but he does not specify whether either of these scenarios would entail that proper existences are concrete. Still, we might suppose that Jurjānī needs proper existences to be concrete for them to be able to do any metaphysical work distinct from what unqualified existence is already doing; this would in turn make some sense of Qūshjī's resistance to this notion, since a concrete existence would seem to prompt the infamous regress problem (according to which a concrete existence would need another concrete existence in order to exist, and so on *ad infinitum*[53]).

A closer look, though, suggests that the disagreement does not hang on proper existence's being concrete. For one, neither Jurjānī nor Qūshjī seems much concerned with concreteness as a criterion for proper existences: Jurjānī mentions no such requirement, and Qūshjī does not bring up the regress problem. For another, as will become clear in section 4, Jurjānī does take proper existence to be conceptual as a way of saving the identity view of God's existence. This being the case, we might wonder why Qūshjī is so unwilling to admit another purely conceptual item into his ontology. It would not be a metaphysically costly addition, after all: a conceptual item only requires that we be able to distinguish it mentally, not that it correspond

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53   The regress problem was discussed extensively by postclassical thinkers. For an overview, see the introduction to the chapter on "The Essence-Existence Distinction" in *Heirs of Avicenna*, 64-69, as well as the many relevant excerpts from the thinkers themselves in the ensuing chapter. See also the discussions in Zamboni, *At the Roots of Causality*, 55-64, 164-181; and in Benevich, "The Essence-Existence Distinction," 217-226.

to any discrete concrete entity. At the very least, Qūshjī has made no case against the possibility of positing proper existences on a purely conceptual level, and it is difficult to see how he could make such a case. But then, Qūshjī would likely respond that he does not need to disprove proper existences: the burden of proof falls rather on Jurjānī to prove them, i.e., that they are knowable and entail something beyond unqualified existence's remit, as Qūshjī has specified in Text 14. And as Qūshjī has said in Text 13, there is simply no way to do this. Jurjānī would perhaps say (as we allowed that he might in response to Text 14) that such metaphysical difficulties as the diversification of existence require us to posit proper existences, even if we cannot prove them to Qūshjī's satisfaction. But Qūshjī's point is that we can in fact get on fine without taking this route, here by taking existence to be diversified through its external connections to quiddities (for the more serious problem of the Necessary's existence, meanwhile, Qūshjī has a solution that similarly dispenses with proper existence, as we will see shortly in section 4). So while there may not be a decisive argument against purely conceptual proper existences, there is nothing that demands we conceive of them in the first place, either.

Before moving on, we should note one further clue to Qūshjī's stance on the ambiguity of existence. Immediately following Text 18, Qūshjī affirms Ṭūsī's verdict that (unqualified) existence is predicated ambiguously of these quiddities, and repeats Iṣfahānī's stock examples of ambiguity—e.g., existence is said of cause and effect in degrees of priority and posteriority, of substance and accident in degrees of worthiness and lack thereof, etc.—without note. He makes one significant addition of his own (absent from both Iṣfahānī's and Jurjānī's commentary), though:

> **Text 19** Moreover: [existence] is more prior and worthier in respect of the existence of the Necessary, and more intense and stronger."[54]

Despite his skepticism toward proper existences, then, Qūshjī clearly wants to affirm the ambiguity of existence between the Necessary and contingents. Qūshjī does not go into the ontological implications of this affirmation here; however, again in section 4, we will get a better sense of how precisely he considers existence to differ between the Necessary and contingents such that is predicated ambiguously.

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54   Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*, 181.

4. Is Existence Superadded to the Necessary Existent?

We have seen from Text 1 and Text 2 that proper existence is a crucial prerequisite
for Ṭūsī's defense of the identity view of the Necessary's existence: although unqual-
ified existence is always distinct from (i.e., superadded to) quiddity, proper existence
may be either superadded to quiddity (in the case of contingents) or identical with
it (in the case of the Necessary). If we remove proper existences from this picture,
as Qūshjī wants to do, we will want an alternative solution to one of Ṭūsī's main
worries, namely that any distinction between the Necessary's existence and essence
will mean that its existence will depend on its essence (or vice-versa), and that the
Necessary will therefore be in some manner contingent, not necessary. Qūshjī, who
shares Ṭūsī's concern for the unconditional necessity of the Necessary, rises to this
challenge, while also responding to prior and inadequate answers. The context is the
following passage from Ṭūsī:

> **Text 20** Necessity includes the essential and the extrinsic. It is impossible for the essen-
> tial to be affirmed of the composite. The essential is not a part of anything else, nor is its
> existence and its relation superadded to it. Otherwise, it would be contingent. The exist-
> ence that is an object of knowledge is predicated by means of ambiguity. That which is
> proper to it, meanwhile, is not, nor is it a species nature, as per the preceding. Hence, its
> particulars may differ in accidence and lack thereof.[55]

Iṣfahānī reads this passage as detailing three concomitants for the Necessary Ex-
istent: (1) it cannot be composite, (2) it cannot be part of something else, and (3) its
existence cannot be superadded to it.[56] He devotes the lion's share of his commen-
tary on this section to this third concomitant, constructing an argument against the
superaddition of existence for the Necessary that may be outlined as follows.

If existence is not identical with the Necessary's essence, either:

(1) Existence does not subsist in it at all, and thus it does not exist.

(2) Existence subsists in it as an attribute, which depends on a cause, which must in turn be
either:

　a. The Necessary's real essence, which will thus be prior to its existence (as cause to effect)
　in terms of either:

55　Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*, 115–16.

56　Iṣfahānī, *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid*, 2:176–80.

i. The real essence's existence—hence, this existence will be prior to itself.

ii. Another existence—which will in turn need a cause, leading to a regress.

b. Something other than its real essence

i. Thus, the Necessary's existence depends on something external, making it contingent.

Taking his cue from al-Ḥillī al-Kāshī, Jurjānī takes issue with Iṣfahānī's initial disjunct regarding the subsistence of existence, that is, that God's existence must subsist through his essence in some way (either as identical with it or as its attribute or else God will not exist at all. He points out that this existence that apparently needs to "subsist" in one of these ways has in fact been previously given as a secondary intelligible:

Text 21 It has been said: This proof depends on [the assumption that] existence has a concrete reality (*ʿayn khārijīya*); otherwise, it has no need of a concrete cause. It has been previously [established] that [existence] is one of the secondary intelligibles, and it will be [discussed] again.

Let it not be said: This [has to do with] unqualified existence, whereas our discussion has to do with its [sc. the Necessary's] proper existence.

For we say: it must be proved (*lā budda min dalīl ʿalā*) that the proper [existence] is not one of the secondary intelligibles. How could it not be, if its [sc. the Necessary's] being concrete is a connection (*iḍāfa*) for it to the concrete?[57] And if by "its proper existence" he means something else, he must prove it (*lā budda min bayānihi*).

And if it is said: What he [sc. Iṣfahānī] claims is that its existence is not an existing attribute superadded to its essence, and so his discussion is complete.

We say: it does not follow from this that [the Necessary] has a concrete existence that is the same as its essence, as this is their fundamental intention, because it is possible for the truth of this claim to be through the negation of existence as something concrete, not through its being verified together with the absence of its being superadded.[58]

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57 A marginal note in several manuscripts clarifies: "That is, the Necessary's being [concrete] is a connection that belongs to the Necessary in the concrete, in which case its proper existence would be one of the secondary intelligibles." Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd* in Iṣfahānī, *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid*, 2:180 (footnote "B").

58 Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd*, 2:179–80; cf. Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*, 289.

Since the existence heretofore discussed by Ṭūsī and Iṣfahānī is purely conceptual in nature, Jurjānī discounts the need for this existence to subsist concretely through God's essence in order for God to exist—indeed, this would presumably be impossible, since unqualified existence *qua* unitary and common has no concrete standing. Jurjānī then considers a possible rejoinder from a fellow partisan of the three-tier ontology: existence taken as unqualified is indeed a secondary intelligible, but proper existence is concrete, with the result that the question of its subsisting in the Necessary's essence cannot be dismissed as easily as Jurjānī does for unqualified existence. But Jurjānī replies that it has not been demonstrated that this proper existence is concrete in the first place, and so there is no point in arguing that any such proper existence must concretely subsist in the Necessary's essence for it to exist. As we have seen in section 3, construing proper existence as conceptual has the additional benefit of significantly lowering the standard of proof that this existence needs to satisfy: as long as there is something (i.e., its unique relation to a particular subject, here the Necessary's essence) to distinguish it from unqualified existence, there is no reason Jurjānī cannot posit a further, purely conceptual item like proper existence.

Thus, by Jurjānī's lights, while Iṣfahānī successfully shows that God's existence is not a superadded, concretely subsisting attribute for his essence, he does not show that this existence is identical with God's essence, since it could conceivably fail to be both superadded and subsistent because it is purely conceptual in nature—which is precisely what Jurjānī argues:

> **Text 22** If God's existence is superadded to his essence, then necessarily his essence is characterized by it in the fact of the matter (*fī nafs al-amr*). Otherwise, he would not be existent in [the fact of the matter], and a thing's being characterized by existence must have a cause by which it becomes characterized by existence. This cause is either the thing's essence or something else—and so on, to the proof's conclusion.
>
> In this case, [Iṣfahānī's] proof can be made complete by not depending on its [sc. the Necessary's] existence's having a concrete reality (*ʿayn khārijīya*). This will grant the object of inquiry, which is that its [sc. the Necessary's] existence is the same as its essence.[59]

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59   Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd*, 2:181; cf. Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*, 290.

Jurjānī has criticized Iṣfahānī's proof for the identity view, but he thinks it can be salvaged. After summing up the problem with taking the Necessary's existence as an attribute that subsists in it (as reconstructed by Iṣfahānī in the outline above), he claims that the partisan of the three-tier ontology can do this simply by making the Necessary's proper existence conceptual in the same way as unqualified existence. It is unclear why, though, if the Necessary's proper existence is a secondary intelligible just as surely as is unqualified existence, Jurjānī considers this proper existence identical with its essence—it seems one could just as easily make the case that it is to be considered superadded, Jurjānī himself having referred to it as a "connection" belonging to the Necessary in Text 21. Perhaps Jurjānī's point is just that it is extensionally identical with the Necessary's essence, though in this case, it is unclear how this identity would be any different from the extensional identity of existence and quiddity in any existent. Whatever the case, Jurjānī would probably say that it makes little difference whether we take a purely conceptual characteristic to be (extensionally) identical with or (intensionally) superadded to its subject, as this will not compromise the simplicity of its subject either way.

After relaying Jurjānī's rebuttals in Text 21 and his revised proof for the identity view in Text 22,[60] Qūshjī responds by challenging Jurjānī's (and Iṣfahānī's) initial assumption that there is any problem for the identity view to solve in the first place:

> **Text 23** I say: One can answer that what necessitates a cause is contingency, as has been previously verified. Hence, a thing's being characterized by something—it being possible, if it is contingent, for this thing to be either characterized or not characterized by this thing—must in this case have a cause that makes this thing characterized by this something. For the garment, inasmuch as it can be either characterized or not characterized by whiteness, requires a cause that makes it white. Likewise, Zayd, inasmuch as he can be characterized by existence or, again, not so characterized, requires a cause that makes him characterized by existence. If a thing's being characterized by something is not contingent, meanwhile, but rather necessary or impossible, then there is in this case no need for a cause. For four's being characterized by evenness, inasmuch as it is necessary and it cannot but be characterized by it, does not in this case need a cause that makes it characterized by it.
>
> Having given this preface, we say: The essence of the Necessary (exalted be he), inasmuch as his being characterized by existence is necessary and he cannot but be characterized by it, in this case has no cause by which he becomes characterized by existence.

> For it belongs to a cause to preponderate (*sha'n al-ʿilla ʿan yurajjiha*) one of two equal extremes over the other, and so, if there are not in this case two equal extremes, then what need is there for a cause and its preponderance?[61]

As previously outlined, Iṣfahānī indicates the problem that results from taking the Necessary's existence as a superadded attribute that subsists in it through some cause: any construal of it in this way will introduce contingency into the Necessary. But Qūshjī replies that a thing's being characterized by an attribute of some kind does not of itself mean that this attribute has a cause and is therefore contingent. He draws a comparison with the number four and its attribute of being even: unlike a garment with the attribute of whiteness, four does not require a cause for its attribute, which is necessary for it. It is not immediately clear why Qūshjī thinks that this necessity translates to being uncaused: Rāzī, who uses this same example to problematize the Avicennian claim that the divine essence's necessitation of its attributes precludes any multiplicity in the Necessary, concludes that any necessitated attribute external to the quiddity, such as "being even" for four or even "necessity" for God's essence, "is contingent of itself and caused (*muʿallala*) by something else."[62] Qūshjī may instead have in mind the Avicennian principle that a certain kind of essential (*dhātī*) or "per se" attribute that is primary for its subjects can be taken as having no cause: the attribute of evenness for four is a good candidate for such an attribute, in contrast with "whiteness" for the garment, which would be a common accident with an external cause.[63] It seems most likely, though, that Qūshjī means "cause" in the more narrow sense of an efficient cause, which is the kind of cause that "preponder-

61   Notably, Qūshjī rephrases Jurjānī's objection to the concreteness of the Necessary's proper existence to be an expression of skepticism as to there being any such proper existence at all: "It must be proved that there is in this case a proper existence beyond unqualified existence and its remit, and moreover, that it is not among the secondary intelligibles." Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*, 291–2.

62   Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 2:133. I thank Peter Adamson for this reference.

63   Avicenna mentions this kind of per se attribute, that is, the "primary accident without a cause," in *al-Shifāʾ: al-Manṭiq: al-Burhān* IV.3, ed. Abū al-ʿAlāʾ ʿAfīfī (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-amīriyya, 1956), 287; see the discussion of such attributes in Riccardo Strobino, *Avicenna's Theory of Science: Logic, Metaphysics, Epistemology* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 188–92. "Four is even," meanwhile, is one of Avicenna's stock example of a *fiṭrī* proposition, that is, one that the intellect grasps immediately upon conceptualizing its terms, without any need for either demonstrative reasoning or sense-experience; see Avicenna, *Burhān* I.4, 64, as well as the discussions in Strobino, *Avicenna's Theory of Science*, 49–51; and Mohammad Saleh Zarepour, "Avicenna's Philosophy of Mathematics," (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2019), 177–81. It is unclear, though, if evenness for four would satisfy *Burhān* IV.3's criterion of primacy, since Avicenna in *Burhān* I.4 does say that a *fiṭrī* proposition requires a "support" (*muʿīn*) or middle term for the intellect to assent to it, albeit one that is internal to the intellect, not acquired from without.

ates" in the case of two otherwise equally possibly existent outcomes. Hence, in the case of the garment that either may or may not be white, an efficient cause is needed to tip the scale, as it were, in favor of the existence of whiteness; four, by contrast, cannot but be even, without any efficient cause's needing to make it so. Similarly, whereas existence for Zayd is a pure accident for his quiddity and requires an efficient cause, existence for the Necessary is intrinsic to its quiddity and has no cause.

Now, Qūshjī's case here would probably fail to convince certain readers of Avicenna that the Necessary's existence, if distinct from its essence, can nonetheless be free from all contingency; various postclassical thinkers, after all, acknowledge other sorts of conditions apart from causes that serve to render their subjects contingent.[64] However, Qūshjī has made a strong case for what he has set out to prove: that we can give an account of the Necessary's existence without either conceding that its existence is caused or resorting to the identity view (and, therefore, without positing a proper existence for it that is distinct from unqualified existence). It is in this light too that we should probably interpret his earlier endorsement of existence's ambiguity between the Necessary and contingents in Text 19: although Qūshjī would deny (like Rāzī) that existence, as a single, shared concept, can differ among its subjects to the point of being accidental for one and identical with another, he nonetheless asserts that it is an essential attribute for the Necessary in a way that it is not for contingents, just as evenness is essential for (though not identical with) four in a way that whiteness is not for the garment.[65]

Qūshjī thus holds a variation on the distinction view. This does not make him a full-blooded Rāzīan: he has already made it clear that he considers existence to be purely conceptual (where Rāzī takes it to be concretely existent), and in Text 23 he has argued that the Necessary's existence has no cause (where Rāzī makes it an effect of the Necessary's essence). But Qūshjī certainly rejects the identity view: he takes existence (i.e., unqualified existence) to be superadded to all quiddities, including the Necessary's. Indeed, Qūshjī goes on to enumerate many prior arguments for both

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64   For postclassical debates on preponderance, see Zamboni, *At the Roots of Causality*, 238–42; for debates over the conditions yielding contingency, 212–18.

65   Avicenna himself provides one such case study in ambiguous predication, where the attribute in question ("having interior angles whose sum is equal to two right angles") is a per se attribute for one subject (a triangle) and a pure accident for another (an unspecified equilateral plane figure, which may or may not be a triangle); he explicitly compares this case of ambiguous predication with that of existence. See *al-Shifāʾ, al-Manṭiq, al-Jadal* II.2, ed. Ibrahim Madkour et al. (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-amīriyya, 1965), 117–20 I discuss this case study in "From Focal Homonymy," 359–60.

the distinction view and the identity view, and ultimately finds fault with all of them:
he categorically rejects that (per Rāzī) the Necessary could have a concrete existence
that is superadded to its quiddity, but he is also skeptical of the Ṭūsian solution, mo-
tivated as it is by its concern for preserving the unconditional necessity of the Nec-
essary's existence.[66] On this latter front, Qūshjī says, Ṭūsī and the other philosophers
who follow his lead (including Jurjānī) are simply being inconsistent: they have sup-
posed that a thing "requires" or "depends on" its existence to exist, when they have
already agreed that this existence is a mere secondary intelligible that refers only to
a thing's being established in the concrete in the first place. Qūshjī reiterates his as-
sessment in response to a representative argument for the identity view:

> **Text 24** Among [the attempts to prove the identity view is the following]: If the Neces-
> sary had [both] quiddity and existence, and thus if the Necessary were the conjunction
> [of these], its composition would follow. And if this is in terms of the intellect, and if it
> is one of the two, its requiring [it] follows, since it is an immediate truth that quiddity
> requires existence for its ascertainment, and that existence because of its accidentality
> requires quiddity. [...][67]

> I say: We deny that quiddity in its ascertainment requires existence. For existence is the
> same as ascertainment, not something by which [something is] ascertained, as has been
> made previously clear.[68]

Where the defender of the identity view claims that quiddity and existence are
co-dependent (with the implication that these cannot be two distinct entities in the
Necessary if it is to be entirely necessary), Qūshjī replies that this is not the case:
there is no prerequisite of "existence" for quiddity's ascertainment, existence instead
being the same as this ascertainment.[69] By implication, this ascertainment does not

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66   See Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, 292–302.

67   Here I omit an aside in which Qūshjī again addresses the supposed distinction between unquali-
      fied and proper existence: "And if it is said: 'Specific existence too requires unqualified existence,
      since it is an immediate truth that it is impossible for the specific to be ascertained apart from
      ascertaining the general.' We say: Ascertaining the specific is the same as ascertaining the general,
      as in this case there are not two [separate] ascertainments, one of them for the specific and the
      other for the general, such that each of them would require the other." There is an echo here of his
      point from Text 18: given that both are purely conceptual, proper existence really just seems to be
      unqualified existence taken with its connection to an individual quiddity.

68   Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, 301–2.

69   Here Qūshjī paraphrases Ṭūsī's own verdict elsewhere in the *Tajrīd*: "Existence is not a meaning
      whereby quiddity is realized in reality, but rather is [this] realization." Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd al-i'tiqād*, 107.

depend on quiddity either, since it is not a concrete attribute, but rather a status that the mind imputes to the quiddity. None of this means that partisans of the identity view (Ṭūsī, Iṣfahānī, Jurjānī) are wrong about the lack of composition in the Necessary or the uncaused status of its existence and essence, both of which Qūshjī has argued for by other means. But it does mean that they have no compelling support for the identity view.

Conclusion

We have seen how Iṣfahānī carries over Ṭūsī's three-tier ontological framework, using it to harmonize the Ṭūsīan understanding of the ambiguity of existence with an (admittedly much weaker) version of the superaddition of existence that Rāzī defended. In particular, Iṣfahānī thinks that the ambiguity of existence can be invoked to prove the invariable superaddition of (unqualified) existence, which is in turn diversified into many different (proper) existences through its individual connection to each individual quiddity. While unqualified existence is thus superadded to all quiddities, it is purely conceptual, not concrete, and therefore introduces no contingency or composition into the Necessary Existent. Proper existence, meanwhile, may be either accidental for or identical with its subject; Iṣfahānī can thus affirm the identity view of the Necessary's essence and (proper) existence, while also saving Rāzī's intuition concerning existence's invariable status as an attribute distinct from its subjects.

Jurjānī agrees with the broad strokes of this picture, but criticizes Iṣfahānī on certain points of presentation, especially regarding how proper existences are understood. For Jurjānī, it is crucial that proper existences be understood as predominantly (but not invariably) superadded to quiddities, as complex entities comprising unqualified existence together with a differentiating connection to an individual quiddity, and as purely conceptual rather than concretely subsistent attributes for their subjects. Iṣfahānī comes in for criticism because he does not (by Jurjānī's lights) establish these characteristics of proper existence; it is not clear, though, that Jurjānī disagrees with Iṣfahānī on any points of his ontology.

Qūshjī, conversely, is not convinced of the three-tier ontology—specifically, of the notion of proper existences distinct from unqualified existence. Hence, where Jurjānī argues that Iṣfahānī should have given greater prominence to proper existences given their key role, Qūshjī argues that they can in fact be discarded without abandoning any of the results that the three-tier ontology is designed to achieve.

Qūshjī thus agrees with Iṣfahānī that ambiguity entails superaddition, and disagrees with Jurjānī that proper existences play any role here; he also takes Jurjānī to task over the role of proper existences in diversifying existence, replying that it is unqualified existence's individual connections to quiddities that does this work. In the case of the Necessary Existent, meanwhile, one need not invoke proper existence or affirm the identity view at all, because the Necessary exists intrinsically: its existence requires no cause and thus poses no threat to the Necessary's unconditional necessity. There is therefore no need to posit proper existences, though Qūshjī stops short of contending that they cannot be posited at all (since, on Jurjānī's view, they are purely conceptual items). While more traditional Avicennians may find cause for complaint in his account of causality, Qūshjī has thus achieved a sparser ontology while still preserving the harmonization of ambiguity and superaddition: existence is invariably superadded, with no concession made to the identity view; and it is ambiguous between the Necessary and contingents not because it is identical with the Necessary, but because it is an essential attribute for it where it is an external accident for contingents. Although certain followers of Ṭūsī would be unhappy with these readings of the doctrines in question, Qūshjī is arguably continuing the trend that earlier such commentators as Ḥillī and Iṣfahānī began, infusing Ṭūsī's ontological framework with further Rāzīan insights.

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