

Realism Transformed: The Ontology of Universals in Avicennan Philosophy and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Theory of Mental Exemplars*

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Abstract: The onto-epistemological status of mental representations can be seen among the most controversial problems of Post-Avicennan philosophy. The problem has its roots in Ibn Sīnā's attempt to get a predicational unity between the layers of being on one hand and in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's criticisms of mental existence and universality of mental exemplars on the other. Al-Rāzī's criticisms led the prominent followers of Ibn Sīnā to reconsider the Avicennan principle of the preservation of essences in multi-layered being and Ibn Sīnā's conception of knowledge as an immaterial representation of nature. Against al-Rāzī's criticism, al-Ṭūsī tried to narrow the ontological extension of essences and to redefine universal predication. Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's involvement in the discussion took the restrictive efforts to the next level. In addition to al-Ṭūsī's restricting the ontological extensions of essences by only giving them an epistemological role, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī downgraded their epistemological roles as well and counted them just as individual exemplars (*mithāl*) in the individual's mind. In addition to al-Ṭūsī's hesitant rejection of universal natures in external world, he also clearly rejected the existence of universal natures in the external world. His first position led him to redefine the notion of correspondence and universality, and his second position led him to propose a non-explanatory interpretation of Ibn Sīnā's hylomorphic substances. In this paper, I will discuss the continuities and discontinuities of his interpretations with respect to Ibn Sīnā's strong metaphysical realism and his philosophical project's aim to construct the unity of essences in a multi-layered being.

Keywords: Avicenna, Post-Avicennan Philosophy, Metaphysical Realism, Problem of Universals, Ontology of Universals, Representation, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī al-Taḥṭānī.

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Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāzī al-Taḥṭānī's¹ theory of universality represents the culmination of a growing disengagement from Ibn Sīnā's metaphysical realism within the Avicennan tradition. Here, the Avicennan tradition as a phrase signifies the Avicennism after the 13th century that had developed mostly in the shadow of theological (*kalām*-based) criticisms.² As for the metaphysical realism from which Avicennists had gradually detached themselves, I mean the view claiming that most things in the universe exist independently of our thought in respect to their existence and essence. However, metaphysical realism is more than a view on objects' extramental existence; it also surpasses ontological assumptions and additionally contains epistemological and semantic assumptions. Accordingly, metaphysical realism not only suggests that the essential existence of objects are independent of our thought but also holds that knowing about these essences and the expressions used while speaking of them refer beyond being a mere name or term to the actual existent entities in the external world. Therefore, metaphysical realism appears to be a complete theory of reality encompassing the layers of existence, knowledge, and meaning. In this sense, metaphysical realism became a problem itself rather than a solution to the problem of universals throughout the Avicennism from Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī to al-Taḥṭānī. If one were to give a more precise name to Avicennists' tendency to disengage from metaphysical realism during this phase, one would call it a mentalist tendency.³ At this point, mentalism emerges as a new solution offered to the problem of universals in a way that still maintains its attachment with the realist attitude, albeit weakly, and indicates a shift from what is *external* to what is *mental* in demonstrating the commonality of general meanings. Based on the tendency described above, al-Taḥṭānī reexamined in the 14th century the final form of the metaphysical realism Ibn Sīnā had achieved, putting it through a seemingly radical interpretation with new interventions especially in respect to ontology and the semantics of universals.

- 1 Because Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāzī al-Taḥṭānī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī have the same ascription, I will refer them throughout the article as al-Taḥṭānī and al-Rāzī, respectively.
- 2 For different stages and types of Avicennism, see. Eşref Altaş, "İbn Sīnā Sonrası Felsefî Gelenek. İbn Sīnâcılık ve İşrâkîlik", *İslam Düşünce Atlası*, ed. İbrahim Halil Üçer (İstanbul: Konya Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2017), II, 611–24.
- 3 I use the term *mentalist* here based on the centrality of the word *mind* (*al-dhihn*) –as can be seen best in the distinction between mental (*dhihni*) and external (*khâriji*) existence– in Islamic philosophy and I prefer to use it in order to avoid out-of-context implications of terms such as *anti-realist*, *conceptualist*, *idealist*, *rationalist*, or *intellectualist* that can all be suggested to express the tendency to depart from realism. However, while the term *mental* may be constrictive, *mental* in these places can be defined in juxtaposition to *external* in the sense of being independent of mental/intellectual cognition.

As scholars of later periods such as Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī widely acknowledged al-Taḥṭānī's interventions representative of a strong mentalist tendency include the following respective steps: refuting Ibn Sīnā's notion of common external natures, stripping the intellectual universals (*al-kullī al-'aqlī* or the imprinted mental forms) from universality by having them only be individual mental forms present in an individual mind, and lastly claiming the second-order mental exemplars constructable through the individual imprinted mental forms to be the real universal natures. As a consequence of these steps, al-Taḥṭānī claimed Ibn Sīnā's natural universals (*al-kullī al-ṭabī'ī*) to be none other than these mental exemplars. I intend in the present article to elucidate on al-Taḥṭānī's interventions narrowing Ibn Sīnā's realist attitude and to cast light on the background that led him to make these interventions. In doing this, I will first present the origins of Ibn Sīnā's conception of universality, the tripartite universal and absolute essence, then discuss Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's criticisms opposed to this conception and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's responses to him. Subsequently, by way of discussing al-Taḥṭānī's theories of natural universal, mental exemplar, and correspondence, I will attempt to interpret these in relation to the previously reviewed tradition of debate. Therefore, I hope to put al-Taḥṭānī's theory of universals in a proper context and clarify his position on this within the line of metaphysical realism in the history of Islamic philosophy.⁴

4 In the recent years, important studies have been conducted on Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī al-Taḥṭānī's theory of universals. For these, see Ömer Türker, "Being and Meaning: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and His Followers on the Identity of Knowledge and Known", *Nazariyat* 1/1 (2014): 41–60; M. Kaş, "Mental Existence Debates in the Post-Classical Period: A Study in the Context of the Essence and Category of Knowledge", *Nazariyat* 4/3 (2018): 49–84; Wahid M. Amin, "Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī and the Problem of Universals: A Fourteenth-Century Critique of Avicenna's Theory of Universals", *Nazariyat* 5/2 (2019): 25–58. Ömer Türker's study is valuable in terms of pointing out how Ibn Sīnā, despite speaking of essence in itself as if it were an entity yet regarding it as a consideration (*i'tibār*), led the discussions on the manner in which this entity exists in the later period. Also, Ibn Sīnā's identification of essence itself with divine being is among the accentuated points in Türker's article. Moreover, this article has an aspect that justifies the mentalist tendency that I attribute to later Avicennism in terms of problematizing the negligence of the external existence Avicennists attributed to essence itself. Murat Kaş's study analyzed the relationship between the mind and external world based on a problem relative to the quiddity of knowledge and its category, and his study especially stands out in terms of its contributions to the problem of how later scholars formulated the categorical relationship between the mental and the external in the face of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's criticisms. Finally, Wahid M. Amin's article focused on al-Taḥṭānī's criticism toward the Avicennan conception of natural universal, drawing attention to the differentiation between al-Taḥṭānī and Ibn Sīnā based on the emphasis that al-Taḥṭānī had rendered natural universals to be mental. The present article interprets the mentalist tendency discussed in these studies as a common characteristic of the post-F. Rāzī Avicennism and aims to answer questions regarding in which philosophical context, why, and how this tendency regarded as the transformation of Avicennan realism had arisen.

I. Ibn Sīnā's Theory of Universals and the Problem of Predicational Unity

Ibn Sīnā's theory of universality can be viewed as a crossroad between the preceding Ancient-Hellenistic and subsequent medieval theories of representation and predication. The reason for this was Ibn Sīnā's attempt at solving the semantic and epistemological problems of universals, from which preceding metaphysical realist theories suffered, through an ontological intervention. The most important semantic problem Ibn Sīnā tried to solve had been passed on to him from his Neo-Platonist Alexandrian predecessors. In effect, this problem was not new as it had been passed on to the Alexandrians from their Athenian predecessors who had been trying to cope with Aristotle's criticisms of Platonic ideas. The problem arose around the following question: To what exactly do utterances that indicate general meanings (i.e., horse, human, and animal) refer? Do they refer to the immaterial and perfect idea of horse that does not resemble the sensible horses or to the idea of horse in the divine intellect? If neither of these, do they refer to the particular horse being seen outside or to the nature present in that horse that enables it to be called a horse? If it refers neither to intellectual nor material entities, does it refer to the concept of the horse as perceived in the human mind? If none of the above, is it merely just a word? Because Neo-Platonists were not nominalists, when they said horse they did not refer to the name given to that particular horse outside. They also did not use the word horse to refer to the self-subsisting idea of horse because they had abandoned the Platonic theory of separate ideas through the impact from Aristotle's critique of Platonic forms. As for the remaining three options, (i.e., the idea of horse in the divine intellect, the nature present within the particular horse, and the concept of horse in our mind) one can indeed refer to all of these by the word horse according to the Neo-Platonists; however, this time the word horse is being used in a different sense for each of these three things. Therefore, the word horse has three distinct connotations corresponding to a single utterance, and which is being indicated needs to be clearly identified when we speak of a horse. There, at least based on Ibn Sīnā's analysis, is a clear semantic inflation.

In fact, the reason for the semantic inflation Neo-Platonists had created lay in their efforts to overcome Aristotle's criticism he had raised against Platonic forms based on the conception of a logical universal (*to kathalou*) equally predicated of its particulars. Based on this conception, Aristotle claimed these forms to have no use either ontologically or epistemologically. One of the main emphases of Aristotle's critique is the ontological differentiation between intelligible substances (i.e.,

ideas) and their sensible participants. According to this critique, eternal and immutable forms cannot be predicated of temporal and changing sensible particulars. In Aristotle's opinion, this is because the properties of eternity and immutability are included in the definition of the idea of horse whereas they are not included in the definition of a particular horse that is temporal and changeable. This being the case, let alone predicating the intelligible horse to the sensible horse, due to the difference in the manner of their existence, the sensible horse cannot even participate in the eternal idea of horse. Taking his criticism further, Aristotle stated that he would ask the following question if Platonists claim that properties such as eternity and immutability do not belong peculiarly to the horseness but rather belong to the idea *per se* and function as a meta-property of all ideas: If the intelligible horse, apart from the properties of eternity and immutability that are found in all ideas, does not differ from the sensible horse at all, what is the benefit of establishing such an idea alongside the horses in this world, at least in terms of human knowledge regarding horses? With this critique, Aristotle left no doors open to the capacity of ideas being participated in and universal.⁵ In order to respond to Aristotle's criticisms about the epistemological roles ideas have, some Neo-Platonist philosophers like Iamblichus, Syrianus, and Proclus changed their attitude toward the epistemological roles of ideas by narrowing them down. While doing this, they also caused the numbers of ideas and natures to increase in order to demonstrate the possibility of participation. Counter to Aristotle's criticism that what is sensible cannot participate in what is eternal and immutable, these philosophers who spoke of three natures (i.e., unparticipated, participated, and participant), maintained while doing so that an idea has a transcendental aspect that on one hand precludes participability while on the other has a participable aspect in the lower existence. However, none of the Athenian Neo-Platonists defended a universal commonality between the sensible and intelligible substances. According to Proclus, the only way to speak of commonality between the participable aspect of forms and the things participating in them is the conception of generic causality. As Proclus stated, commonality through generic causality means objects' derivation from the one origin (*aph'*

5 See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 990b25–991a10; 997b5–7; 1058b36–1059a10. For the exposition of this criticism, see Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 2–3, Eng. transl. W. E. Dooley and A. Madigan (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), 196,24–28; 197,8–23; 197,23–28.

henos) and their return to the one and the same origin (*pros hen*).⁶ By taking this step, they chose to preserve the ontological function of forms (causality) at the cost of abandoning their epistemological function (universality). Despite the high price R. Sorabji referred to as deflation of the meaning and functions of forms,⁷ the problem of how to explain the commonality of forms in different layers of existence (i.e., intelligible, material, and mental) remained unsolved. Regarding the solution to this problem, Athenian Neo-Platonists could be content with the idea of commonality being provided by generic causality; however, for Alexandrian Neo-Platonists who were more devoted to the Aristotelian logic and theory of predication than their Athenian predecessors, the concept of generic causality was not enough for the project of harmonizing Platonized Aristotle with Aristotle himself.⁸ As such, the word horse had to signify a single meaning; if this were not possible, a commonality between meanings had to at least exist beyond the relation to the causal origin. The foregoing efforts of Alexandrian Neo-Platonists can be said to have reached their highest point with Simplicius. Simplicius, through a distinction made by former Neo-Platonists and also seen in his master Ammonius, associated forms' manners of reality that had previously been described as before-multiplicity (*pros tôn pollôn*), in-multiplicity (*en tois pollois*), and after-multiplicity (*epi tois pollois*)⁹ now with the common (*koinon*) cause, individuals' common

- 6 See Proclus, *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, Eng. transl. G. R. Morrow, J. M. Dillon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 880,9–12; Also see Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, Eng. transl. E. R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), Prop. 23; A. C. Lloyd, "Procession and Division in Proclus", *Soul and the Structure of Being in late Neoplatonism*, eds. H. Blumenthal and A. C. Lloyd (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1982), 19–45. For Syrianus' and Iamblichus' formulation of the doctrine of imparticipables see Syrianus, *On Aristotle's Metaphysics 13–14*, Eng. transl. J. Dillon, D. O'Meara (London: Duckworth, 2006), 108,31–109,27. For the details of Iamblichus' doctrine see J. M. Dillon, *Iamblichus Chalcidensis in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta* (Leiden: 1973), 33–35; A. C. Lloyd, "Porphyry and Iamblichus", *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. Armstrong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 298–301.
- 7 See R. Sorabji, "Universals Transformed: The First Thousand Years After Plato", *Universals, Concepts and Qualities, New Essays on the Meaning of Predicates*, ed. P. F. Strawson ve Arindam Chakrabarti, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 105–127.
- 8 For differences between Athenian and Alexandrian Neo-Platonists and for the details on Neo-Platonists' project for reconciling Aristotle's philosophy with Plato's philosophy, see İbrahim Halil Üçer, "Antik Helenistik Birikimin İslam Dünyasına İntikali: Aristotelesçiliğin Üç Büyük Dönüşüm Evresi", *İslam Felsefesi, Tarih ve Problemler*, ed. M. Cüneyt Kaya (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2013), 37–90.
- 9 Ammonius, *Interpretation of Porphyry's Introduction to Aristotle's Five Terms*, transl. Michael Chase (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), 42,5–21.889. For the history of this tripartite distinction and the Neo-Platonist theory of universals and predication, see Christoph Helmig, "Proclus and Other Neoplatonists on Universals and Predication." *Documenti e Studi Sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 19 (2008): 31–52.

nature, and abstracted common property.¹⁰ Based on his harsh criticism toward his Athenian Neo-Platonist predecessors, he can be noticed with the emphasis on “commonality” to have meant further than their idea of commonality in respect to generic causality. For instance, Simplicius stated that former Neo-Platonists could not form a real connection in sharing between the forms and the sensibles as these were devoid of any commonality; then he asks: Suppose one states that neither the human nor the horse exist ‘above’ and only their dissimilar causes and creative principles exist there. Is it possible here [between the things below and above] to speak of a formal similarity?¹¹ On the basis of this critique, Simplicius claimed the forms before-multiplicity, in-multiplicity, and after-multiplicity to be common in terms of having a kind of similarity (*apomoiointai*) and thus the word horse can be ascribed to all three due to this similarity.¹²

Ibn Sinā regarded the idea of similarity (*apomoiointai*) that lays the foundation for commonality to be inadequate with respect to Aristotle’s notion of a synonymous logical universal (*to kathalou*). According to Ibn Sinā’s analysis, this inadequacy stems from a problem definable as the *predicational disconnection of forms in different levels of existence* and tried to solve this problem in accordance with his essential aim toward *the predicational unity of forms in the different levels of existence*. By saying the predicational disconnection of forms, I am referring to how a term holds different meanings in respect to the different levels of existence (i.e., intellectual [*noétai*], enmattered [*ta enula*], and mental [*dianoétai*]) and thus its inability to be equally predicated of everything that is referred to by the same term. In contrast to this, the predicational unity of forms refers to a term’s synonymous (*mutawāfi*) structure in respect to the different levels of existence, and thus its being is equally predicated everything being referred to by the same term regardless of the level of existence.

With the purpose of formulating his solution, Ibn Sinā distanced himself from certain Neo-Platonist and Aristotelian assumptions that appeared to keep him away from this solution. Firstly, he completely abandoned the terminology

10 Simplicius, *On Aristotle Categories 5-6*, transl. Frans A. J. de Haas ve Barrie Fleet (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 82,35–83,20; 69,19–71,2.

11 Simplicius, *On Aristotle Physics 2*, transl. Barrie Fleet (London: Duckworth, 1997), 297,11–35. Simplicius’ criticisms were against his Athenian predecessors, who were defending commonality only through generic causality, and in favor of constructing a weak predicational unity; in these criticisms, he tried to establish a predicational unity even if it was weak.

12 Simplicius, *On Aristotle Physics 2*, 297,27–35.

of participation and adopted the terminology of predication. In line with this first step, Ibn Sīnā secondly left out the idea of Platonist self-subsistent forms¹³ and thirdly the idea of forms inherent in the divine intellect in the Neo-Platonist sense. Even if Ibn Sīnā were like Neo-Platonists believed to have accepted the notion of creative intelligible forms inherent in the divine intellect due to the role Ibn Sīnā attributed to the Active Intellect in the origination of natural and intelligible forms, he regarded the Active Intellect as a divine principle purely emanating existence and actuality, not as a receptacle for the multiplicity of forms. Therefore, Ibn Sīnā may no longer mention the state of being a horse (horseness) to be distinguished in the Active Intellect, or before-multiplicity in Ammonian terms.¹⁴ This step distanced Ibn Sīnā from the Neo-Platonist theory of intelligible divine forms. As a result, it fourthly led him to the idea of essences in themselves in a way that enabled him to attain the predicational unity of forms. According to the idea of the essence in itself that emerged from the distinction between essence and existence, to say horseness means horseness *qua* horseness without taking into consideration its presence here or there. This nature of horseness indicates the common principle preserved equally in individual horses and in individual human minds. Accordingly, the external and mental appearance of an essence is precisely the same, but this essence's external existence has external accidents such as being in matter and being individual associated with it, while its mental existence has mental accidents such as being a concept and being universal associated with it.¹⁵ However, its nature cannot be characterized in itself through universality, individuality, generality, specialness, unity, or multiplicity.¹⁶ Ibn Sīnā substituted this absolute essence, which he described as "divine being",¹⁷ for the Neo-Platonic intellectual forms that precede multiplicity. Nevertheless, unlike Neo-Platonists, he did not assign

- 13 For Ibn Sīnā's criticisms on why separated forms cannot be accepted, see Ibn Sīnā, *al-Mabda' wa al-ma'ād*, ed. Abdullah Nūrāni (Tehran, 1984), 85; Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. G. C. Anawati ve S. Zāyid (Cairo, 1960), VII/2-3; Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Burhān*, ed. E. A. al-Affīfī, (Cairo, 1956), II/10. Also see Michael E. Marmura, "Avicenna's Critique of Platonists in Book VII, Chapter 2 of the *Metaphysics of His Healing*", *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy, From the Many to the One, Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank*, ed. James E. Montgomery (Leuven & Paris & Dudley: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2006), 355-369.
- 14 For a detailed account on what Ibn Sīnā meant with preceding existence of universal meanings and how he established the relationship between separated intellects and forms see İbrahim Halil Üçer, *İbn Sīnā Felsefesinde Suret, Cevher ve Varlık* (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2017), 190-215, 264-277, 352-374.
- 15 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Manṭiq: al-Madkhal*, ed. İbrahim Madkūr, G. C. Anawati, Maḥmūd al-Khudayrī, Fuād al-Ahwāni (Cairo, 1952), 15.
- 16 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 197-202; Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Madkhal*, 65-66.
- 17 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 204, 17-295, 2.

a particular place for this meaning. Fifthly, he asserted the nature of horseness first and foremost to be existent in bodies as a constitutive part thereof (i.e., in multiplicity).¹⁸ Sixthly, Ibn Sīnā stated that, when this meaning is abstracted by

- 18 The most striking expressions from Ibn Sīnā on this issue are in *al-Ta'liqāt* (ed. Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, Qum: Maktabat al-İ'lām al-İslāmī, 1984): "The existence of accidents and material forms in themselves is their existence in their subjects = *al-a'rad wa al-şuwar al-māddiyya wujūduhā fi dhawātihā huwa wujūduhā fi mawḍū'ātihā*" (p. 65) Another expression in the same place is as follows: *lammā kāna imkānu wujūd al-şurat fi al-hayūlā 'alā an-yakūna wujūduhā fi nafsihā huwa wujūduhā fi al-hayūlā şarat al-hayūlā ḍarūriyyatan fi wujūd al-şurat wa muqawwimatan li-shakḥiyyatihā ve mu'ayyinatan lahā*" (p. 59). Ibn Sīnā's idea of the common nature seems to be closely related to one of the interpretations of the notion of universality ascribed to Alexander of Aphrodisias. Accordingly, one interpretation about Alexander's idea of universals is that universals do not precede particulars in terms of nature, there are no common natures in the external world, and universals only exist in the mind. Along with this interpretation whose verification Neo-Platonist commentators attributed to Alexander and is supported by his *De Anima*, Alexander also has another view arguing for the existence of common natures that cannot be qualified through universality within particulars based on *Quaestio* 1.11. This interpretation, included in the Arabic translations of *Quaestio* 1.11, was thought to be the precursor to Ibn Sīnā's idea on the common natures present in multiplicity. Whether or not this latter interpretation can be attributed to Alexander originally, even if it differs from Alexander in the causal explanation of the formation of common natures, considering that Ibn Sīnā defended such common natures, the Alexandrian (?) approach is important in terms of revealing the context of this stance in the history of philosophy. Apart from Simplicius, Dexippus also assessed the first interpretation to Alexander. See Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Categories* 5–6, Eng transl. F. A. J. de Haas and B. Fleet, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), 82,12–35. Dexippus, *On Aristotle's Categories*, Eng transl. J. Dillon, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), 45,14–31. Alexandrian passages supporting Simplicius' and Dexippus' interpretations are as follows: Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De Anima*, Eng trans. A. P. Fotinis, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Marquette University, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, 1978), 90,2–8; id. *Quaestiones* 1.1–2.5, Eng. transl. R. W. Sharples, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 1.11. Some parts of *Quaestio* 1.11 reflecting the idea of common nature that precedes mental universals and occurs in particulars, thus, supporting the second interpretation regarding Alexander's idea of universals was translated into Arabic by Abū Uthmān al-Dimashqī at the end of the 9th century. For these parts see Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, *Arisfū 'inda al-'Arab*, (Cairo: 1947), 79–280; for the publication of *Quaestio* 1.11a's Arabic translation with another version coming along with Badawī's publication and its German translation see Hans-Jochen Ruland, "Zwei arabische Fassungen der Abhandlung des Alexander von Aphrodisias über die universalialia (Quaestio I,11a)", *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, philologisch-historische Klasse* 9 (1979), 243–274. For a study suggesting that the approach attributed to Alexander by Simplicius and Dexippus is not Alexander's true view and indicating that in fact Alexander has a similar attitude to Ibn Sīnā see M. M. Tweedale, "Alexander of Aphrodisias' Views on Universals", *Phronesis*, XXIX/3 (1984), 279–303. For other studies demonstrating that, contrary to what Tweedale claims, universals do not precede in terms of nature in Alexander's opinion see P. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen*, C. 1. (Berlin: 1973), 156; Sharples responds to Tweedale's criticism based on a phrase in *Quaestio* 1.11 in the following study: R. W. Sharples, "Alexander of Aphrodisias on Universals: Two Problematic Texts", *Phronesis*, L/1 (2005), 43–55; A general analysis of Alexander's theory of universals in the context of universal's transformation in the ancient philosophy can be found here: R. Sorabji, "Universals Transformed: The First Thousand Years After Plato", 108–110. For a general analysis of Alexander's related views in the context of the distinction between form and universal see R. Sirkel, "Alexander of Aphrodisias' Account of Universals and its Problems." *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 49/3 (2011), 297–314. For an important study on the relation of Ibn Sīnā's understanding of universal to Alexander in Turkish see Hasan Akkanat, *Klasik Dönem İslam Felsefesinde Tümmeller, Ibn Sīnā Eksenli Bir Çözümleme*, (Adana: Karahan Yayınları, 2016), 128–149, 302–340.

the mind, it attains universality in the sense of being predicated of multiplicity. He then goes on to stress universality in this sense to only be able to occur in mental conceptualization.¹⁹

When applying the steps listed above to the theory of universals, Ibn Sinā employed two different divisions of universals, stating that they were well known before him. One of these divisions consists of three types of universals: natural universal (*al-kullī al-ṭabīʿī*), the intellectual universal (*al-kullī al-ʿaqlī*), and the logical universal (*al-kullī al-manṭiqī*). This division can be found approximated in Yahyā ibn ʿAdī, and Ibn Sinā probably included it in *al-Shifāʾ/al-Madkhal* based on Yahyā ibn ʿAdī's formulation.²⁰ According to Ibn Sinā, the natural universal refers to the nature of animality in itself commonly present in many, the intellectual universal refers to the abstracted concept of animal which is predicated of many, and the logical universal refers to the concept of logical universality in the sense of being predicable of many. Ibn Sinā's second division in *Al-Shifāʾ/al-Madkhal*, which has an apparent Ammonian influence, consists of three types of universals as well: Universals before multiplicity (*qabl al-kathrah*), universals in multiplicity (*fī al-kathrah*), and universals after multiplicity (*baʿda al-kathrah*).²¹ Because Ibn Sinā did not further elaborate on this division –giving the impression of a contradiction with Avicennan principles as provided above– he can be considered to perhaps have been referring here to Ammonius' division concerning creative intellectual forms (*noêtai ideai*) in divine intellect, enmattered forms (*enula eide*), and mental forms (*dianoêtai ideai*) in human mind. However, Ibn Sinā should be noted as having used both these two divisions he brings up in the 12th section of *al-Shifāʾ/al-Madkhal* interchangeably, except for the logical universal of the first division. Accordingly, the universal before multiplicity corresponds to the absolute essence, which is neither one nor many

19 Ibn Sinā, *al-Shifāʾ/al-ilāhiyyāt*, 209.

20 Ibn Sinā, *al-Madkhal*, 65. In his treatise titled *Maqāla fī al-buḥūth al-ʿilmīyya al-arbaʿa ʿan aṣnāf al-wujūd al-thalātha al-ilāhi wa al-ṭabīʿī wa al-manṭiqī*. Yahyā ibn ʿAdī divided universals as divine, natural, and logical. See Stephen Menn, Robert Wisnovsky, “Yahyā b. ʿAdī *On the Four Scientific Questions Concerning The Three Kinds of Existence*, Editio Princeps and Translation”, *MIDEO* 29 (2012): 73–96. For an important study discussing the similarities and differences between Ibn Sinā and Yahyā ibn ʿAdī regarding the ontology of universals based on the treatise by Yahyā ibn ʿAdī and his other treatises, see Marwan Rashed, “Ibn ʿAdī et Avicenne: Sur Les Types D'Existants”, *Aristotele e i suoi esegeti neoplatonici*, ed. Vincenza Celluprica ve Cristina D'Ancona Costa (Naples: Bibliopolis, 2004), 107–171. For Menn's review on the relation of Ibn Sinā's theory of universals and his idea of essence in itself to Yahyā ibn ʿAdī, see Stephen Menn, “Avicenna's Metaphysics”, *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 143–170.

21 Ibn Sinā, *al-Madkhal*, 65–66.

(i.e., natural universal); the universal in multiplicity corresponds to the presence of the said essence within the individuals, (i.e., the natural universal in multiplicity); and the universal after multiplicity stands for the intellectual universal in the sense of the abstracted concept being predicated of many. Considering that the universal before multiplicity –in the sense of essence in and of itself– can only and primarily exist in many, Ibn Sinā combined the universal before multiplicity with the universal in multiplicity under the category of the natural universal.

A few points are found worth noting regarding Ibn Sinā's two divisions. First of all, he uses the term "universal" homonymously in these divisions. For in many places, especially in *al-Shifā/al-Ilahiyāt*, Ibn Sinā maintains that one connotation of the term universal is being commonly present in many while the other is being commonly predicated of many. The first of these implies the external existence in multiplicity, whereas the second indicates the mental presence of a concept and its predication of multiplicity. In *al-Shifā/al-Ilahiyāt* V/I, Ibn Sinā focuses on the first connotation of the term universal using a language meant to explain the existence of essence in and of itself in many without being identified with the many. Contrastingly, in *al-Shifā/Ilahiyāt* V/II, he focuses on the second connotation of the term universal using a language meant to show that universals in the sense of being predicated of many can only exist in the human mind. Thus, the term natural universal or universal used in the expressions "before multiplicity" and "in multiplicity" corresponds to the first meaning; as Ibn Sinā states, universal in this sense exists in the external world. Meanwhile, the use of the term universal in the phrases intellectual universal and universal after multiplicity refer to the second sense (i.e., universal only exists in the mind). When it comes to the essence in and of itself, it is not qualified with universality and precedes all kinds of common presence and predication both conceptually and existentially. Additionally, when it inheres commonly in individuals in the external world and causes the thing to be as it is, it becomes the natural universal; when it is present in the mind and predicated commonly of objects, it becomes the intellectual universal. This two-fold use in *al-Shifā/al-Ilahiyāt* V/I and V/2, one ontological and the other epistemological, as will be shown in this article, had a decisive effect on the debates after Ibn Sinā concerning the ontology of universals and the sides of debates. Another point to consider about Ibn Sinā's treatment of universals is the expression "the presence of the reality of the natural things in God's knowledge before multiplicity" found in the 12th section of *al-Shifā/al-Madkhal*, where the divisions of natural, intellectual, and logical and of pre-, inter-, and post-multiplicity are made. Even though this expression at first seems to evoke in readers' minds the creative forms in the divine intellect as is found

in Neo-Platonism due to the phrase “before multiplicity,” one must bear in mind that the universal character of God’s knowledge in the way it is presented in *al-Shifā/al-Ilahiyāt* does not comply with the Neo-Platonist understanding of distinguished forms in the divine intellect. Also, one should note that no explanation is found in *al-Shifā/al-Madkhal* regarding how the reality of objects existed in God’s knowledge prior to multiplicity. Otherwise, the reader might face the risk of interpreting the part where Ibn Sinā points to the antecedent nature of divine knowledge as a reference to the Neo-Platonist theory of forms.²²

These two divisions of universals, being associated with each other, are explained by another division Ibn Sinā made regarding the aspects of essences. In *al-Shifā/al-Ilahiyāt* and *al-Najāṭ*, Ibn Sinā attested to the idea of predicational unity of the essences in different layers of being, stating that essences can be treated in the manner of a tripartite distinction (i.e., absolute/unconditioned [*lā bi-sharṭ shayʾ*]) with the condition of something additional (*bi-sharṭ shayʾ*) or with the condition of nothing additional (*bi-sharṭ lā shayʾ*).²³ The first corresponds to the essence in itself, the second corresponds to the natural universal as in the presence of the essence in itself within the external individuals that makes things as they are, and the third corresponds to the abstracted universal concepts in human mind. This tripartite distinction of essence is founded on Ibn Sinā’s essence-existence division and serves the purpose of maintaining the essence in both external and mental layers of existence. This purpose clearly shows the principle of predicational unity of essences in respect to the layers of external and mental existence and transforms into a methodological tool in Ibn Sinā’s hands for overcoming all kinds of problems stemming from the predicational disconnection of forms at different layers of existence.²⁴ Ibn Sinā’s essential strategy

22 For the relationship between the Divine Intellect and forms, see my book where I discussed in detail how forms exist in the Active Intellect . Üçer, *Suret, Cevher ve Varlık*, 190–215, 264–277, 352–374.

23 Ibn Sinā, *Kitāb al-Najāṭ*, ed. Muhammad Taqī Dānishpajūh (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tehrān, 1364/1985), 536–537; Ibn Sinā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 200,13–201,7.

24 I will separately discuss Ibn Sinā’s theory of essences in itself in a soon-to-be-published article titled “Unity of the Explanatory Levels: Essences in Themselves According to Ibn Sinā.” For Ibn Sinā’s theory of universals and his different divisions of universals see M. E. Marmura, “Avicenna’s Chapter on Universals in the *Isagoge* of his *Shifā*”, *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge*, ed. A. T. Welch, P. Cachia (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979), 34–56; M. E. Marmura, “Quiddity and Universality in Avicenna”, *Probing in Islamic Philosophy* (Binghamton: Global Academic Publishing, 2005), 61–70; T. Izutsu, “The Problem of Quiddity and Natural Universal in Islamic Metaphysics”, *Études Philosophique* (GIBO, 1974), 131–177. For how Ibn Sinā used the idea of essence in and of itself in relation to logic and sciences, see J. McGinnis, “Logic and Science: The Role of Genus and Difference in Avicenna’s Logic, Science and Natural Philosophy”, *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 18 (2007): 165–187; A. Bäck, “Avicenna on Existence”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* XXV/3 (1987): 351–67; A. Bäck, “The Ontological Pentagon of Avicenna”, *The Journal of Neoplatonic Studies* VII/2 (1999): 87–109.

was to construct an unconditioned state of essence and strictly preserve this state in the externally and mentally conditioned state of being. The following passage from *al-Shifā/al-Madkhal* is one of the best expressions of this strategy:

The essences of things may exist in concrete things or in conception (*taṣawwur*). For there are three aspects belonging to [essences]. One aspect of essence indicates what it is to be that that essence; it is not related to one of the two [kinds] of existence [i.e., external, mental] but is only what adheres to [the essence] insofar as it is thus. [A second] aspect belong to [essence] insofar as it is in concrete [things], so that at that time, the accidents peculiar to its existing as it does adhere to it. Also [a third] aspect belongs to [essence] insofar as it is present in the intellect, so that at that time, accidents peculiar to its existing as that adhere to it.²⁵

According to Ibn Sīnā, the first aspect of essence is immune to any implication of any kind of existential concomitant that may be attached to it. Because of this immunity, the essence in and of itself excludes all kinds of properties arising from its presence in any layer of existence. Indeed, what is instantiated in the external and mental layers of existence is the one and same essence. Once Ibn Sīnā had constructed the idea of such an essence, he applied this notion to every problem he inherited from the Ancient tradition stemming from the predicational disconnection of forms at different layers of existence. Problems such as the definition of substance, the category of knowledge, substantial properties, and the problem of the subject-matter of metaphysics are all addressed on the basis of this notion. For instance, when Plotinus stated substance as a word to be homonymous and therefore unable to be equally predicated of intelligible and sensible substances and then based this claim on the difference between two substances in properties such as eternality, immutability, corporeality-incorporeality, and intelligibility,²⁶ Ibn Sīnā responded to him with the following argument: The properties to which you refer have no relevance with substance. They are not the properties of the

25 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Madkhal*, p. 15.

26 Plotinus, *Enneads*, transl. Arthur Hilary Armstrong (London: Harvard University Press, 1988), VI.1.3. In order to eliminate the problem of disconnection between the intelligible and sensible realms of existence, Iamblichus developed a theory called *nōera theoria* that suggested different series of categories for each level of existence. For this theory, see John M. Dillon, "Iamblichus' *nōera theoria* of Aristotle's Categories." *Syllecta Classica*, VIII (1997): 65–77. For Plotinus' criticisms toward Aristotle's categories in the context of this idea, see Riccardo Chiaradonna, "The Categories and the Status of the Physical World: Plotinus and the Neo-Platonic Commentators", *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries I*, ed. Peter Adamson, Han Baltussen & M. W. F. Stone (London: Institute of Classical Studies, University of London: 2005), 121–136; C. Evangelou, "The Ontological Basis of Plotinus' Criticism of Aristotle's Theory of Categories", *The Structure of Being, A Neoplatonic Approach*, ed. R. Baine Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 74–80.

substance but of the layer of existence in which the substance is present. So, we cannot incorporate these properties to the definition of substance.²⁷ In this instance, how Ibn Sīnā used the principle of preservation of essences as an effective methodological tool both for criticizing his predecessors and constructing a unified explanatory frame is clearly recognizable.

Going back to the initial problem (i.e., the Neo-Platonic semantic inflation about what the word “horse” signifies), the new explanatory frame provided by Ibn Sīnā’s steps regarding the ontology of essences can be said to offer a relatively simple solution to this problem. Based on this solution, which makes possible both the semantic retrenchment and the predicational unity, using the word horse and saying “Horse is such and such” essentially indicates one thing: The essence of horse *qua* horse. Since this essence is stripped of any implication about the manners of existence and equally present at all layers of existence, homonymous predication is no longer applicable to it. Therefore, when someone says, “horse,” the same meaning occurs both in the external and mental layers of being.

27 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Mantiq: al-Maqūlāt*, ed. G. C. Anawati, M. el-Khuḍayrī, A. F. al-Ahwānī, S. Zāyid (Cairo, 1959), III/1, 91,7–93,14.

Before multiplicity	As self-subsistent ideas	As mental forms distinguished in the divine intellect	As essence in itself without being individualized within individuals, and universalized in the human mind
	X	X	√
In multiplicity (in the external world) [Common nature present in multiplicity - Natural Universal]	√		
After multiplicity (In mind) [Common nature predicated of multiplicity – Intellectual Universal]	√		

Table 1. *The Types of Presence of General Meanings According to Ibn Sinā*

Even though this new explanatory framework had achieved notable success in respect to solutions to the problems Ibn Sinā had inherited from his predecessors, the same framework left his successors a legacy abounding in new problems and controversies. The most contentious aspect of this legacy was simultaneously related to its most successful aspect: the ontological state of essence in and of itself: If essences can only exist either in concrete individuals or in the mind, where does the essence in itself exist and how is it related to other essences? Indeed, Ibn Sinā revealed his stance on this problem in various places, especially in *al-Shifā'*

al-Ilāhiyyāt V/1 and V/2. Accordingly, Ibn Sinā stated the essence in itself could be shared among concrete individuals while preserving its essential unity, and named this meaning to which mental universality is attached common nature. This means that the representation of the universal animal in the mind is not derived from a simple comparison of individuals, and there is a common nature exists in external individuals serving as a basis for mental representation. With the emphasis on the external common nature as a basis for universal representation, Ibn Sinā maintained his realist attitude regarding general meanings and the ontology of abstract things while also believing that he had overcome the problem of semantic unity and correspondence by way of claiming the concomitants of external or mental existence to not be included in the definition of nature mentioned above. As a follower of Ibn Sinā, al-Taḥṭānī re-interpreted his master's theory of universality and developed a new theory that bore the possibility of transforming the idea of reciprocity existing between external common nature and representation and thus the realist attitude of the philosopher. The problematic context shaping his reinterpretation was formed based on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's criticisms toward the Avicennan theory of mental representation and al-Ṭūsī's responses to him. For that reason, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's criticisms and al-Ṭūsī's responses need to be looked at before moving on to al-Taḥṭānī's interpretation.

II. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Three Criticisms: The Attack on Ibn Sinā's Ideal of Predicational Unity

Ibn Sinā's theories on essence in itself, universality, correspondence, and predication were preceded by some important philosophical principles. The immateriality of the human soul, the immateriality of fully abstracted universal forms, and the categorical distinction between the immateriality of the human soul and material existence fall within these principles. Conversely, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī clearly differed from Avicennan principles with regard to his understanding of knowledge and the human soul. According to him, (i) the human soul is not immaterial,²⁸ (ii)

28 Even though the question of whether the human soul is material or immaterial is a controversial issue in terms of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's psychology, Eşref Altaş in his recently published article discussed the matter in detail and revealed the human soul to at least be indescribable as immaterial according to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's latest position. For this idea that I also share and Altaş's discussion about the relative sources, see Eşref Altaş, "Fahredden er-Rāzī'ye Göre İnsanın Mahiyeti ve Hakikati –Mücerred Nefs Görüşünün Eleştirisi", *İnsan Nedir? İslam Düşüncesinde İnsan Tasavvurları*, ed. Ömer Türker, İbrahim Halil Üçer, (Ankara: İLEM Yayınları, 2019), 151–213.

mental forms in the human soul are not absolutely abstracted²⁹; (iii) knowledge is a relation;³⁰ and (iv) finally, no categorical distinction exists between mental and external material existence.³¹

Based on the principles above, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī raised three criticisms against Ibn Sīnā's *huṣūl*-centered conception of knowledge suggesting an immaterial representation of external forms in human mind. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī:

- a. Refuted mental existence and mental forms as absolute abstractions
- b. Refuted the universality of mental forms and claimed the commonality of external forms
- c. Claimed the inadequacy of occurrence theory (*huṣūl*) at explaining knowledge

The first two of these criticisms can be substituted under the strategy of attacking Ibn Sīnā's ideal of establishing predicational unity. Their aim is to weaken the strong connections Ibn Sīnā aimed to build between the different layers of existence in relation to the unity of essence in these layers. The third criticism is directly aimed at the central teaching (i.e., perfect representation of the common natures through their immaterial occurrence in the human mind [*huṣūl*]).

(a) Refuting mental existence and mental forms as absolute abstractions

According to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, even though mental forms are different from external existents in terms of species, they cannot be considered absolute abstractions as philosophers claim. In his words:

It is true that **the unconditioned** (*lā bi-sharṭ shay'*) animal exists. Because it is part of an object existing in the external world, it too exists in the external world. However, that the animal **with the condition of nothing additional** (*al-ḥayawān bi-sharṭ lā shay'* [intellectual universal]) exists is incorrect. Clearly it has no existence in the exter-

29 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fi al-ḥikmah wa al-mantiq*, ed. İsmail Hanoğlu, "Fahredden er-Rāzī'nin *Kitābu'l-Mulahaṣa fi'l-Mantik ve'l-Hikme* Adlı Eserinin Tahkik ve Değerlendirmesi", İsmail Hanoğlu (Doktora tezi, Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2009), II/220–21.

30 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliyah min al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*, ed. Ahmad Hījāzī al-Saqqā (Beirut: Dār al-kitābī al-ʿArabī, 1987), 103.

31 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, 216, 221; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-Mashriqiyyah*, ed. M. M. al-Baghādā (Beirut: Dār al-kitābī al-ʿArabī, 1990), II/377.

nal world. Nor however does it exist in the mind, for mental existence is not accepted. Even if it were, essences cannot be abstract from all attachments. Accordingly, even though considering the essence with respect to itself is different from considering it with respect to its conditions, **the essence can never be abstract**. Consequently, the falsity of the widely known premise asserting essences in the mind to be abstract becomes clear.³²

This passage contains three striking points. The first is Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's acceptance of unconditioned essence (i.e., essence in and of itself) and attributing to it an external existence as a part of individuals. This idea will then provide a Rāzian basis alongside the Avicennan basis in *al-Shifā/al-Ilahiyyāt* V/1 for logicians such as Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khunajī and Sirāj al-Dīn al-'Urmawī to claim the natural universal to exist in the external world as a part of individuals. The second point is Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's explicit refutation of mental existence, and the third is his attack against the principle of the preservation of essences.

Because Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī openly stated his refutation of mental existence, he does the same for the mental existence of abstract essences. However, the strength of al-Rāzī's attack on the mental existence of abstract essences is not grounded on his suppositions about mental existence. Saying that "even if one accepts mental existence" while attacking the heart of the Avicennan ideal of predicational unity (i.e., preservation of essences at different layers of existence), he applied a rather old and effective strategy: positing the existential differences that stem from mental existence as an obstacle to essential/logical predication. Accordingly, al-Rāzī stated that the supposedly abstract forms cannot be fully abstracted in the mind for they happen to have at least the property of being abstract and thus share a property of mental existence. This means that mental forms cannot be equally predicated *qua* universals of concrete external individuals because they cannot be identical with the concrete external essences that are the parts of individuals due to their recent distinctive existential states. This entails that mental forms (*al-ṣuwar al-'aqliyyah*) cannot be universal. In order to support his refutation of mental forms as universals, al-Rāzī developed another argument along the same line: The individuality of mental forms.

32 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, II/220-221; cf. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī al-ḥikmah wa al-manṭiq*, Süleymaniye Library, Şehid Ali Paşa 1730, 48b.

(b) Individuality of mental forms and the problem of predication

In his *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī claims:

The form present in the intellect has to be an individual form present in an individual soul the way accidents are present in the subject. The individuality of that form, its accidentality, its presence in that soul, and its conjunction with the other qualities of the soul are accidents strange to the essence of the human being... In that case, the impossibility of existents in the intellect to become abstracted from all strange accidents is proven.³³

In his *al-Muḥākamāt*, al-Taḥṭānī paraphrases the consequences of this view as follows:

Universal, being fully abstracted from accidents, differs from the mental form. The common thing (among the many) is an external existent that exists as a part of individuals. This part that exists [in the external world] is abstract from accidents as well.

So even though the mental form is individual, because this universality [in external being] is known through it, it [the mental form] is called universal accidentally and metaphorically. In short, abstract universal is the [external] that which has form. The [mental] form's being is called universal due to its being the form of this universal, not its being the universal in and of itself.³⁴

As will be seen later, even though al-Taḥṭānī was not in favor of this view, his statements aimed at portraying Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's thought as they were is sufficient for understanding how remote Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's theory was from the Avicennan way of thinking.³⁵ Accordingly, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī asserted the proper universal to be the common essence existing externally in individuals as a part of them and the form abstracted from essence in the mind to be an individual

33 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, ed. Ali Riḍā Najafzādah (Tehran: Anjuman-i āthār u mafakhir-i farhangī, 1383), II/239,1-3.

34 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Muḥākamāt (al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt bā-sharḥ Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī wa Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī)*, ed. Karim Fayḍi (Qum: Maṭbū'at-i Dīnī, 1383), II/382. cf. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, II/240.

35 To give a few examples of the criticisms against this view, Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī and Najm al-Dīn al-Kātībī can be mentioned. While analyzing this opinion, which Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī repeats in *al-Mulakkhāṣ*, both al-Kātībī in *al-Munaṣṣaṣ fī sharḥ al-Mulakkhāṣ* and al-Abharī in *Kitāb al-Shukūk* stated that claiming mental forms to not occur in the mind as abstractions is impossible both in itself and in terms of its consequences. See Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī, *Kitāb al-Shukūk*, Süleymaniye Library, Ayasofya 2319, 47a; Najm al-Dīn al-Kātībī, *al-Munaṣṣaṣ fī sharḥ al-Mulakkhāṣ*, Süleymaniye Library, Şehid Ali Paşa 1680, 206b.

form that cannot be qualified with universality in essence. If someone calls this mental form universal, they should only be considered able to do so accidentally and metaphorically because what is prime and as such universal is the external essence and the mental form can only be the secondary and accidental universal relative to the proper one. Describing the mental form as universal through this secondary use attains a metaphoric character due to departing from its proper use.

As seen in the previous section, what led Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī to arrive at such an opinion was his belief that the existential implications attached to the mental form and arising from mental existence render the mental form fully distinguished and particularized and ultimately deprive it of the commonality that is able to be predicated of all existents. Therefore, according to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, what is common in every animal is not the mental form but the common animality inherent in each. Because commonality is entirely specific to the external animality, only it truly deserves to be described as universal. Unlike Ibn Sīnā, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī thus called external meanings as universals and mental forms as particulars. In contrast with Ibn Sīnā, he also claimed external meanings to be proper universals and mental meanings to be metaphorical universals.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's claim that mental forms cannot be equally predicated of external existents due to their individuality is an apparent criticism against the Avicennan theory of representation (i.e., mental presence of external forms in an immaterial way [*huṣūl*]) and the principle of the preservation of essences at different layers of existence. In consequence, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's criticisms finally reach their climax on the question of how to define knowledge, as the following section analyzes.

(c) Claiming the inadequacy of occurrence theory (*huṣūl*) in explaining knowledge

In his *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī discusses the definition of knowledge as the immaterial occurrence (*huṣūl*) of external essences in the mind and criticizes it by focusing on the nature of representation and its incapability of producing cognition:

You have to know that when preceding philosophers (*al-falāsifat al-mutaqaddimīn*) accepted that knowledge consists in occurrence of the essence of the known in the knower (*huṣūlu māhiyyat al-ma'lūm fī al-'ālim*), they recognized the need to distinguish between the occurrence of intelligible black in the intellect and the occurrence of black on

the wall. However, they could not find any difference between these two situations and only said that, when black occurs in the intellect, it is unified with the intellect and the intellect with it. As for the black, which is present on the wall, it is not unified with the wall and the wall is not unified with it...³⁶

Whoever says that knowledge is the same as impression (*al-inṭibā'*) has to accept the identity [of the intelligibles and the intellect] (*al-ittiḥād*) in order to explain the difference between the occurrence of black in the soul and in the body. If he refuses this identity, he has to accept knowledge as something beyond impression (*inṭibā'*)³⁷

In this criticism, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī detects the potential inconsistency of the representational theory of knowledge. Accordingly, when preferring to explain mental cognition as the intellect's immaterial reception of forms and to construct the relation between the intellect and the intelligible as a kind of isomorphism, two options remain: Presence of this form in the mind means either its identification with the intellect or its simple occurrence in the intellect. Assuming acceptance of the theses of identification or strong isomorphism, the following syllogism becomes applicable: (i) When Ibn Sīnā knows this intelligible apple, he becomes identical with it, (ii) Ibn Sīnā has known this apple and is identical with it, (iii) al-Fārābī also knows the same intelligible and is identical with it, (iv) If A is identical with B, it is also identical with any C that is identical with B, (v) therefore, Ibn Sīnā is identical with al-Fārābī.³⁸ If one were to abandon the theory of identification suggesting a strong isomorphism between the intellect and the intelligible form in order to avoid such absurd conclusions, one would face the risk of reducing rational cognition to a simple resemblance between the forms in the intellect and those in the external world. In that case, distinguishing the occurrence of the form of an apple in the mind from that of its occurrence on the wall would be impossible. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī apparently did not find the answer that the form of an apple occurs materially on the wall materially but immaterially in the mind sufficient for distinguishing between these two occurrences. The reason for this was his assertion that knowledge must be more than a simple impression or presence (*ḥuṣūl*).³⁹

36 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, II/228,12–15.

37 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, II/229,4–6.

38 For a discussion on the identity and strong isomorphism, see İbrahim Halil Üçer, "From Identity to Representation: Ibn Sīnā on the Identity of Knower and Known in the Human Rational Soul." *Nazariyat* 4/2 (2018): 1–55.

39 While answering Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's criticisms against *ḥuṣūl* theory, Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī makes an important distinction between an object's mental and material occurrence: Cognitive presence (*al-ḥuṣūl al-idrākī*) and qualitative presence (*al-ḥuṣūl al-ittiṣāfī*). According to him qualitative presence of a form in something does not entail its cognizance. On the other hand, cognitive presence of a form

Based on the criticisms provided above, along with his assumptions regarding the nature of soul and knowledge, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī developed a different theory about the ontology of essences. Thus, he abandoned the Avicennan conception of knowledge as representation equal to nature by attacking the principle of the preservation of essences at the different layers of existence and burdening Ibn Sinā's followers with the task of preserving universality or preserving the epistemological role of mental forms.

III. Naşir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī: Narrowing the Ontological Scope of Essences and Redefining Universal Predication

Naşir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī took two critical steps in order to preserve the universality of mental forms. One is related to the ontology of essences in themselves. In this context, he maintained essences in themselves to not exist in the external world but to exist primarily in the Active Intellect. His second step in preserving mental forms' universality pertains to the refutation of the claim that mental forms are not universal. In this framework, he insisted mental forms to be unable to be directly described as universals as they have two aspects, only one of which can be called universal.

Al-Ṭūsī's first step can be regarded as an attempt to narrow the ontological scope of essences in contrast to Ibn Sinā's realist attitude defending the external existence of essences in and of themselves within individuals. The first stage of this attempt was to invalidate the external existence of common essences. In order to prove this idea, al-Ṭūsī gave the following argument in *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*:

The humanity that exists in Zayd is not the very same humanity that exists in 'Amr (*fa al-insāniyyat allatī fi Zayd laysat bi-'aynihā allatī fi 'Amr*). The humanity that is common to the two exists either in each or in both of them. If it exists in each of them (*fi kulli wāhidin min-humā*), this will lead to an impossibility such as the existence of one and the same thing in many places. If it exists in both of them (*fi-himā*), this will lead to a

in something does not necessitate being qualified with that thing. Accordingly, a wall is qualified with the blackness that occurs in it (= black wall) and such a qualitative presence doething. Accordingly, a wall is qualified with the blackness that occurs in it (= black wall) and such a qualitative presence does not require cognizance. Similarly, when the cognizable blackness form occurs in the mind, the mind perceives it but it does not need to be qualified with it (i.e., when blackness occurs in the mind, the mind is not called black). See Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāsid* (Istanbul: Hacı Muharrem Efendi Matbaası, 1305/1887), I, 226. For a more detailed discussion on this distinction, see. Ziya Erdiñç, "Teftāzānī'de Bilin Bir Özne Olarak İnsan", *İnsan Nedir? İslam Düşüncesinde İnsan Tasavvurları*, ed. Ömer Türker, İbrahim Halil Üçer (Ankara: İlem Yayınları, 2019), 243–292.

contradiction. For the existent part of humanity that exists in one of them would not be the humanity itself that can be shared by the other as well but would be a part of it. If so, the one humanity can only exist in the intellect (*fa-hiya inna-mā takūnu fī al-'aql faqaṭ wa hiya al-insāniyyat al-wāhidah*).⁴⁰

In the argument quoted above, al-Ṭūsī asserts the impossibility of the existence of one humanity among individuals in the external world and offers the above reasoning as a counterargument against Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's claim. However, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's claim mentioned below suggests the existence of a common humanity among individuals abstractly from external concomitants:

Humans are common in humanity, but they are different in other aspects such as shape, place, and magnitude (*miqdār*). The things through which commonality (=humanity) occurs (*mā bihi al-ishṭirāk*) are no doubt different from the things through which distinctions (=concrete accidents) occur (*mā bihi al-imtiyāz*). Thus, humanity is clearly other than shapes and magnitudes. Thus, for instance, the tall human that exists in the external world is indeed no more than a human qualified with tallness. When a composite occurs in the external world, its formative elements also occur there. Therefore, the human in terms of being human exists in the external world; at the same time, it is abstracted from [external] attachments in itself (*al-insānu min haythu huwa insānun mawjūdun fī al-khārij wa huwa ayḍan fī nafsihī mujarradun 'an al-lawāḥiq*). This is because when the things through which distinctions occur are separate from the humanity through which commonality happens, the human qua human is neither tall nor short and neither knowledgeable nor illiterate; instead, the human is only human.⁴¹

In al-Ṭūsī's concise account, the passage above is summarized as follows: The common humanity existing among individuals is abstract from the external concomitants within itself. (*anna al-insāniyyat al-mushtarakat al-mawjūda fī al-ashkhāṣ, fī nafsihā mujarradatun 'an al-lawāḥiq*).⁴²

Considering Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's explanation in *al-Muḥākamāt*, the concise steps of al-Ṭūsī's contra-argument to rebut this idea can be detailed as follows:

- a. The humanity that exists in Zayd is not the same humanity that exists in 'Amr.
- b. The humanity that is common to the two exists either in each or in both of them.

40 al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt (al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt bā-sharḥ Khwāja Naṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī wa Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī)*, ed. Karim Fayḍi (Qum: Maṭbū'at-i Dīni, 1383), II/383; comp: Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Muḥākamāt*, II/382–3.

41 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, II/239.

42 al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, II/383.

- c. Its existence in each of them (*fī kulli wāḥidin min-humā*) leads to an impossibility (i.e., the existence of one and the same thing in many places).
- d. Its existence in both of them (*fī-himā*) leads to a contradiction due to what is stated in (c) where the meaning of humanity itself cannot be found in one of them. In this case, one of them will have one portion of human meaning and the other person will have a different portion. However, this situation contradicts the initial assumption of humanity being common in both.
- e. As a result, **the one humanity** can only exist in the intellect (*fa-hiya innamā takūnu fī al-‘aql faqaṭ wa hiya **al-insāniyyat al-wāḥidah***).⁴³

The argument developed here is a repetition of the reasoning previously mentioned in Ibn Sīnā’s *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt* V/2 and intended for demonstrating the claim that universality in the sense of the one meaning that can be predicated of multiplicity can only exist in the mind. By this means and by claiming that he is giving the proper interpretation of Ibn Sīnā, al-Ṭūsī happens to find the Avicennan basis that justifies his interpretation against Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, who defended the existence of the common humanity in the external world. The Avicennan textual evidence upon which al-Ṭūsī based his opinion is as follows:

It is not possible for one meaning to exist as it is in many (*wa laysa yumkinu an yakūna ma‘nan huwa bi-‘aynihī mawjūdān fī kathīrin*). For if the humanity in ‘Amr by itself (not in the sense of definition) also exists in Zayd, then whatever occurs to this humanity in Zayd would necessarily occur to it in ‘Amr, excepting that among the accidents whose quiddity is predicated [only] with respect to Zayd. (...)

No one with a sound temperament can rationally perceive that **one humanity** is embraced by the accidents of ‘Amr and that this very same [humanity] had embraced the accidents of Zayd (*wa laysa yumkinu an ya‘qila man laḥū jibillatun salīmatun anna **insāniyyatan wāḥidatan** iktanafathā a-rāḍu ‘Amr wa iyyāhā bi-‘aynihā iktanafat a-rāḍu Zayd*). If you look at humanity without any other condition, then definitely do not consider these relations. For these are as we have taught you.

The impossibility of [a] nature to exist in the external world in a way to be a universal in actuality (i.e., that it alone is common to all) has become clear (*laysa yumkinu an-takūna al-ṭabi‘a tūjada fī al-a‘yān wa takūna bi al-fi’l kulliyya, ay hiya waḥdahā mushtarakatan li-al-jamī‘*). Universality occurs to a nature if [such a nature] comes to exist in mental conception.⁴⁴

43 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Muḥākamāt*, II/382-383.

44 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, V/2 208,10-209,5; cf. *Metaphysics of Healing*, 158,22-159,16.

Here, Ibn Sinā emphasized the one and single humanity to be unable to exist actually among many. At first glance, the passage above might be seen as a completely valid basis for refuting the idea of the common existence of humanity within individuals or among many, which al-Ṭūsī had ascribed to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. However, when looking at the following passages present in *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, V/1 which this time seemingly supports Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's opinion, one might ask whether the passages al-Ṭūsī consulted in order to determine Ibn Sinā's attitude regarding the point in question were adequate or not:

The fact that the animal existing in the individual is a certain animal does not prevent animal inasmuch as it is animal –[that is] not through a consideration of its being an animal in some state– from existing in it (*wa laysa yamna'u kawn al-ḥayawān al-mawjūd fi al-shakḥ ḥayawānan mā, an yakūna al-ḥayawānu bi-mā huwa ḥayawānun –lā-bi'tibār annahū ḥayawānun bi-ḥālīn mā– mawjūdan fihi*). This is because, if this individual is a certain animal, then a certain animal exists. Hence, the animal [inasmuch as it is animal] that is part of a certain animal does exist.⁴⁵

As for the animal abstracted [from any condition], that is without the condition of anything else, it has an external existence (*wa amma al-ḥayawan mujarradan lā bi-sharṭ shay' ākhar fa-lahu wujūdun fi al-a'yān*). For, in itself and in its true nature, it is without the condition of any other thing, even though it may be with a thousand conditions that associate with it externally. Thus [considered in terms of] pure animality, the animal exists in the external world (*fa al-ḥayawan bi-mujarrad al-ḥaywaniyyah mawjūdun fi al-a'yān*). This does not render it necessary for it to be separable. Rather, it is the thing in and of itself, devoid of the attendant conditions that exist in the external world but has been enclosed from the outside by conditions and states.⁴⁶

In the first passage, Ibn Sinā states that that horse's being an individual animal does not prevent the same horse from having animality in itself. This means that unconditioned essence in the sense of animal *qua* animal exists concurrently in both that horse and other individual horses. Ibn Sinā's proof for this idea has a mereological character. According to this proof, unless the animal in and of itself exists as a part of that individual animal, that individual cannot exist as an animal. The expressions in the second passage demonstrate Ibn Sinā's stance on the issue more clearly and indicate the animality to exist in the external world in a way abstracted from any externally attached concreteness. In fact, this is the framework upon which Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī based his claim that the common essence within

45 Ibn Sinā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, V/1, 202,3–8; cf. *Metaphysics of Healing*, 153,29–34.

46 Ibn Sinā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, V/1 204,6–10; cf. *Metaphysics of Healing*, 155,27–35.

external individuals is *per se* abstract. Whereas Ibn Sīnā asserted this when he defended the existence of unconditioned essences in the external world within the external individuals (i.e., when he introduced a moderate realism suggesting the general meanings to exist in the external realm not as actual universals but as constitutive elements of individuals, he was able to encounter radical realist criticisms maintaining the external existence of general meanings independently). According to Ibn Sīnā, such an attitude alleges that general meanings do not exist in individuals and that what does exist in individuals is an individual animal, not the animal *qua* animal (*li-anna al-mawjud fī al-ashkhāṣ huwa ḥayawānun ma lā-al-ḥayawān bi-mā huwa ḥayawān*),⁴⁷ for a meaning that is one in itself cannot accordingly be shared among individuals or in multiplicity. The reason for this is similar to al-Ṭūsī's reasoning while justifying the impossibility of the existence of one meaning (*al-insāniyyah al-wāḥidah* or *al-insān 'bi-aynihī*) in multiplicity. According to al-Ṭūsī's explanation, if the animal that is one in and of itself were to exist uniquely in one individual, what is unique to that individual not be sharable by another individual. In case of its being non-unique to an individual, this would entail the concurrence of a meaning that is one in and of itself in multiple things, which is impossible. As maintained by Ibn Sīnā, this weak and baseless criticism against his moderate realist attitude had arisen from a misconception about the essence of general meanings. The misconception Ibn Sīnā stressed here and analyzed in detail while attacking Platonic forms in *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt* VII/2-3 stems from assuming that the unified general meanings present in our mind, such as human or horse, are qualified with oneness in the extramental realm as well. These claims assume the phrases "humanity exists permanently and persistently" and "humanity is one or many" to be the same. Therefore, they argue that accepting humanity's perpetuity means accepting a single humanity in and of itself to be permanent and persistent; thus, a unique and single form of humanity exists in the external world.⁴⁸ Ibn Sīnā removed this fallacy with a formulation he repeatedly mentioned in his works: The essence in itself is neither one nor many, neither specific nor general, it is what it is in and of itself: the oneness, multiplicity, specialness, or generality attaches to the essence in itself when it exists in the mind or external world. Based on this, Ibn Sīnā concluded the essence in itself exists within individuals without being individualized, so it does not attain properties like the oneness and multiplicity

47 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, V/1, 202,10-11.

48 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, VII/2, 216,5-8.

that belong to things it occupies. This situation is similar to naming two books *al-Ishārāt* even though one fits onto a single page using *ghubārī* writing while the other is printed on a thousand pages using computer letters. It is the same *al-Ishārāt* seen in all forms of existence regardless of the unity and multiplicity in its existence, what it is printed on, or what size its print is. The content of a book called *al-Ishārāt* is found in all these books and is the same in all of them; however, *al-Ishārāt* by no means is any single one of them –in the manner that includes the particular qualities of those books – but again, nor is *al-Ishārāt* something that can exist independent of all those particular books. In summary, as is seen in this example, the essence in and of itself is a meaning that gives existence to its particulars, exists with them, and exists in them but does not identify with any single one of them in a unique sense.⁴⁹

In light of the above analyses, al-Ṭūsī, knowingly or unknowingly, must be said to have changed the course of the subject in his discussion with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and resorted to reasoning unrelated to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's indication and far from Ibn Sīnā's original view regarding the external existence of essences in and of themselves. Namely, referring to the passages in *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt* V/1 and as being in agreement with them, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī states essence in and of itself to commonly exist within individuals in the external realm but independently from the individuals' concomitants. However, al-Ṭūsī responded to him while producing a counterargument against Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's thesis by assuming Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī to state "a meaning that is **one in the external world** actually exists in multiple things" (i.e., he accepts the view Ibn Sīnā refutes in *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt* V/2) and to note that "one humanity" can only occur in the mind not in the external world. This shows that al-Ṭūsī had first rephrased the question "Does the essence in and of itself exist in the external world in a way that is common among individuals?" as "Does a meaning that is actually unique exist in the external world in a way that is common among individuals?" and answered it as "A meaning that is actually unique cannot exist in the external world in a way that is common among individuals." If one considers al-Ṭūsī to have not done so (i.e., al-Ṭūsī understood Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's claim correctly without changing the subject of the problem underlying the discussion [essence in and of itself] and attempted to prove that "an actual unique meaning" cannot exist among individuals in order to invalidate

49 The creative nature of essence and its precedence over particular essences in existence is emphasized in *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt* V/1 by Ibn Sīnā. See. *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, V/1 201,8-13; 204,16-205,2.

this claim), the situation gets worse. For in this case, from Ibn Sinā's own point of view, al-Ṭūsī would have made two mistakes. First, when al-Ṭūsī wanted to assert that essences in and of themselves cannot exist commonly among individuals in the external world, he would have attempted to disprove this claim with the same argument, which Ibn Sinā regarded as weak and groundless objection of a group pretending to be philosophers.⁵⁰ As stated above, Ibn Sinā stressed that a group had argued for the impossibility of the presence of one meaning in multiplicity in order to criticize the view that essence in itself can exist in common among the individuals in the external world; Ibn Sinā said that on the ground of this implausible view representing the radical realist attitude lies the fallacy of including unity and multiplicity in essence in itself. In this case, when al-Ṭūsī tries to fend off the claim of commonality of the essence in itself among individuals with the claim that *per se* one meaning cannot be shared among individuals, he not only happens to express a weak and groundless view for Ibn Sinā but also displays a misconception about the characteristic aspect of the essence in itself that cannot be attributed to unity and multiplicity. Similarly, al-Ṭūsī's second mistake arises from the difference between how he uses the reasoning he quotes from Ibn Sinā while invalidating Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's claim and the way Ibn Sinā uses the same reasoning in *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt* V/2. In other words, while Ibn Sinā had employed this reasoning to justify the idea that the essence in and of itself can exist commonly among individuals in the external world without attaining their properties but that *per se* one meaning is not sharable at all, al-Ṭūsī uses the same reasoning to prove that the essence in itself cannot exist commonly in the external world.⁵¹

When one asks what kind of philosophical attitude al-Ṭūsī tried to assume without considering how his approach was during his argument with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and its relation to Ibn Sinā's original view, he can be seen to have had a clear tendency to refute the external existence of common essences. His efforts toward preserving the universality of mental forms can be said to have led him to such an attitude. However, al-Ṭūsī's refutation of the common existence of external essences in the external world in order to preserve the universality of mental forms subjected him to the problem of how universal mental forms correspond to external essences. If no common essence exists in all individuals that the universal

50 Ibn Sinā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 208,10–209,2.

51 Another emphasis on how al-Ṭūsī changed *maḥall al-nizā'* in his discussion with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī is included also by Murat Kaş before. See M. Kaş, "Mental Existence Debates in the Post-Classical Period: A Study in the Context of the Essence and Category of Knowledge", 66.

essences in the mind can correspond to, then are these universal essences a mere abstraction? In fact, when al-Ṭūsī stated the natures represented in the mind to be unable to exist in the external world, he understood the correspondence by departing from Ibn Sīnā's conception of correspondence that "the same essence exists equally both in the mental and external existence," in the way that "If the represented nature exists in the external world, it will be the very individual that exemplifies it."⁵² Here, al-Ṭūsī can be noted to gradually shift from Ibn Sīnā's idea of "nature that is equal to representation" to the idea of "nature as representation." If this is decided as al-Ṭūsī's final position on the external existence of general meanings, he can then be said to be a kind of idealist; and even if he is not an idealist, he cannot be called a realist in the strict sense because he denies the common external existence of general meanings. To avoid such a circumstance, al-Ṭūsī reinterpreted Ibn Sīnā's theories of universals and predication and set *nafs al-amr* as an extramental basis for mental forms.⁵³

In al-Ṭūsī's treatise *Risālah fī qawl al-'ulamā fī nafs al-amr*, he maintains the two things that are different in existence and same in the meaning to be necessary for the claim of correspondence and truth. Accordingly, *nafs al-amr* plays the role of truth maker and refers to the correspondent essence *vis-à-vis* the intelligible essence present in the human mind.⁵⁴ In this sense, al-Ṭūsī discussed various options about what the place of *nafs al-amr* might be as having: (i) an independent material existence, (ii) a dependent material existence, (iii) an independent immaterial existence or (iv) a dependent immaterial existence. After falsifying the first three options, al-Ṭūsī stated *nafs al-amr* to exist in *al-aql al-kull* (i.e., in the Divine Active Intellect being the principle of the universe) as intellectual forms. Based on this interpretation, contrary to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's claim, truth-making essences do not exist in the natural world but only in the intellect.⁵⁵

Here, I will not go into a detailed discussion about how consistent the Ṭūsian interpretation is with Ibn Sīnā's original theory of universals. However, al-Ṭūsī's

52 al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, II/384.

53 For the new meanings that the term *nafs al-amr* has been attained since al-Ṭūsī and the analysis of these meanings in relation to the development of natural sciences and mathematics, see. İhsan Fazhoğlu, "Between Reality and Mentality –Fifteenth Century Mathematics and Natural Philosophy Reconsidered– ", *Nazariyat* 1/1 (2014): 1-39.

54 Naşir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, "Risālah fī qawl al-'ulamā fī nafs al-amr", *Mecmū'a-yi āsār-i Shams al-dīn Muḥammad Kishi*, ed. Najaf Jūgar (Tehran: Muassasa-yi Pāzhūhish-i Irān, 1390/2011), 176.

55 al-Ṭūsī, "Risālah fī qawl al-'ulamā fī nafs al-amr," 177–179.

step can be said to be a departure from Ibn Sīnā's moderate realist attitude, arguing that essences primarily exist within individuals in the external world because al-Ṭūsī assumed an attitude affirming that essences primarily exist in a separate mind (i.e., in *al-'aql al-kull*). As this argues general meanings to only be able to occur in a mind and not in the extramental realm by any means, this attitude is a perfect example of the mentalist tendency emphasized at the beginning of the current article.

Al-Ṭūsī maintained the epistemological and semantic consequences of his new claim about the ontology of the general meanings. These consequences also produced answers exclusive to al-Ṭūsī regarding the questions of what is known and what is meant by the words used in the conceptual-propositional expression of knowledge. These deserve further discussion; however, for the article's present purpose, I will proceed with the issue. As part of the analyses here, I will finally ask how al-Ṭūsī constructed the universality of abstracted mental forms. For up to this point, al-Ṭūsī should answer two questions in accordance with the new perspective depicted here: How do the individual meanings in human mind become universal, and what does the universality of these meanings indicate?

According to al-Ṭūsī, mental forms have two aspects. In terms of being an individual form in an individual mind, mental forms are individual, but in terms of its correspondence to individuals in the external world, they are universal.⁵⁶ This expression that seems to be a typical repetition of Ibn Sīnā's formulation⁵⁷ regarding two aspects of mental forms in *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, differs from the Avicennan position in its answer to the question of how the second aspect of the mental form is attributable with universality. In al-Ṭūsī's opinion, mental form's correspondence to the individuals in the external world means that when the mental form exists in the external world, the very individual is the one who exemplifies it.⁵⁸ In fact, this expression also appears to be a continuation of Ibn Sīnā's formulation that essences exist as the human when they exist in the external world and as the universal human when they are in the mind. Unlike Ibn Sīnā, however, al-Ṭūsī did not go beyond the notion of individualization or talk about

56 al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, II/383–84.

57 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt I*, 205,14–206,3: "Even if this form is universal in respect to individuals, it is particular in respect to the particular soul in which it inheres and is one of the forms in the mind. (*wa hādhihi al-ṣūrat wa in kānat bi al-qiyās ilā al-ashkhāṣ kulliyatan, fa-hiya bi al-qiyās ilā al-nafs al-juz'iyyat allati inṭaba'at fihā shakḥiyyatun*)."

58 al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, II/384.

correspondence with the common essences that themselves are not individuals but that exist in individuals. This is because, according to him, such common essences no longer exist in the external world. After interpreting universality in this way, al-Ṭūsī accused Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, who argued natural universals to exist in the external world within individuals, of confusing the nature of humanity with the mental-universal form of humanity.⁵⁹ The reason for this accusation is al-Ṭūsī's acceptance of the existence of the individual nature of humanity in the external world and denial of the existence of a common nature of humanity existing in all individuals, thus reducing the two universal meanings, of which Ibn Sinā claimed one to be external (i.e., common nature present in many) and the other to be logical/mental (i.e., common nature predicated of many),⁶⁰ into a single logical/mental one. Moreover, this accusation shows al-Ṭūsī to have regarded Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's claim about the external existence of common natures as a claim in relation to the external existence of abstracted universal-mental forms. In other words, al-Ṭūsī construed al-Rāzī's ontological assumption about formal natures (*al-kullī al-ṭabīʿī*) as an ontological assumption about abstracted universal-mental forms (*al-kullī al-ʿaqlī*). As al-Ṭūsī accused al-Rāzī of confusing formal natures with abstracted-mental natures, he focused on denying the external existence of abstract universal natures but left behind the problems al-Rāzī had pointed out and related to the commonality of formal natures in the external world. What makes al-Ṭūsī's attitude understandable is that al-Rāzī goes on to refuse the universality of mental forms based on a clear realism related to the external existence of general meanings; thus, in order to invalidate the starting point of al-Rāzī, al-Ṭūsī constrained himself to ignoring the common external existence of general meanings and to understanding as logical/mental forms almost everywhere Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī mentioned common general meanings. Because of this attitude, al-Ṭūsī prompted an apparent transformation not only in the ontology of general meanings but also in semantics with respect to Ibn Sinā.

59 al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, II/384.

60 Ibn Sinā, *al-Shifāʾ/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 211–212.

Before multiplicity [The Forms/Exemplars distinguished in the Divine Mind]	√
In Multiplicity (In the External World) [The Common Meaning - Natural Universal]	X
After multiplicity (In the Mind) [The Mental Universal predicated of multiplicity]	√

Table 2. The types of presence of the general meanings according to Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī

III. Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī al-Taḥṭānī: Downgrading the Ontological Status of Universal Natures and the Epistemological Status of Mental Exemplars

Al-Taḥṭānī's involvement in the discussion took the efforts of narrowing the ontological scope of essences one step further. In addition to al-Ṭūsī's narrowing by way of ascribing only an epistemological role to the essences, al-Taḥṭānī reduced their epistemological function as well and defined them as mere individual exemplars (*mithāl*) in the individual mind. Moreover, despite al-Ṭūsī changing the basis of his discussion with al-Rāzī from ontology to epistemology and his hesitant rebuttal of natural universals as will be seen below, al-Taḥṭānī takes on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's challenge on the right grounds and clearly denies the existence of universal natures in the external world. Now, beginning with the second operation, I will try to explain these two important steps.

(a) Downgrading the ontological status of universal natures

In contrast with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's criticism against mental existence and his claim about the common external existence of the essence in and of itself, al-Taḥṭānī completely denied the external existence of common essences. The following statement from Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī, the author of *Maṭāli' al-Anwār*, will provide an opportunity for al-Taḥṭānī in his *Sharḥ al-Maṭāli'* to criticize Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's claim:

Certainly the natural universal exists in the external world. For the “animal” is a part of “this animal” existing in the external world. The animal that is part of “this animal” is either animal in itself or animal with a condition. If it is the first, animal in itself would exist as is aimed to be proven. If it is the second, the statement would return to animal being a part of this animal. But because animals cannot be composed of infinite parts, this cannot cause infinite regression and ends in the animal in and of itself. If so, the unconditioned animal (*al-ḥayawān bi-lā sharṭ shay'*) exists and, because of this, the natural universal exists as well.⁶¹

In fact, al-Urmawī's above argument does not depend only on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's statements in *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* but is also a repetition of Ibn Sīnā's mereological argument in *al-Shifā/al-Ilāhiyyāt* V/1 for the existence of essences in the external world. In his response to this argument, al-Taḥṭānī pointed out that later logicians had been very preoccupied with the increasingly problematic existence of natural universals and that due to this tradition among logicians, he would also address this problem and add the original opinions he had acquired through straightforward reasoning and thinking removed from the blemish of simple imitation and fanaticism regarding what has been said about this problem (*wa nuḍifu shay'an min-mā sanaḥa la-nā 'alayhi ma'iran bi-mi'yāri ta'aqqulin mustaqīmin wa nazarin 'an shawā'ib al-taqlīd wa al-ta'aṣṣubi salīmun*).⁶² As will be seen below, al-Taḥṭānī accused al-Urmawī of confusing the meanings of the terms universality and nature in his answer to the mereological argument based on this approach indicative of his original position. On the grounds of this accusation, he attempted to clarify the meaning of universality, stating:

If what is meant by universality is the commonality among the many, such a thing can be attached to nature only in the intellect. In this case, saying that “universals exist in the external world” would mean that if an existent thing in the external world is present in the intellect, universality would be attached to it. But they did not abstain from saying that the commonality is attached [to the nature] in the external world, even the author of *al-Kashf* explained the universal [nature] to exist in the external world as a part of individuals, drawing upon the aforementioned proof. In the chapter “Inquiries into Genus”, the author also [al-Urmawī] refused the idea that concreteness (*tashakh-khus*) hinders commonality.⁶³

61 Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī, *Maṭāli' al-anwār*, in Q. al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Maṭāli'*, ed. Usāma al-Sā'idi (Qum: Dhaw al-Qurbā, 1395), I/232.

62 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī *Sharḥ al-Maṭāli'*, I/238.

63 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Maṭāli'*, I/239–40.

Several striking points are noted in this passage, the first being the phrase “the author of *Kashf*.” Two possibilities exist regarding the identity of this author: Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khunajī (d. 646/1248) as the author of *Kashf al-Asrār* or ‘Allāma al-Ḥilli (d. 676/1277) as the author of *Kashf al-Murād*. In fact, both defend the same view al-Taḥṭānī attributes to this author using the same argument. However, in *Hāshiyat al-Lawāmi’*, S. Sharif al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413) clarified the view of the author of *Kashf* by quoting directly from al-Khunajī’s *Kashf al-Asrār*. In *Kashf al-Asrār*, al-Khunajī’s defense of the existence of natural universals can be seen as follows:

As for the “natural,” because it is a part of individuals existing in the external world and gives its name and definition to the existents under it, no doubt is found regarding its existence in the external world.⁶⁴

However, al-Khunajī is not the only one who defended the external existence of essences in and of themselves using the mereological argument. Al-Ṭūsī and ‘Allāma al-Ḥilli argued for the same view using the same line of reasoning. In *Tajrid al-I’tiqād*, al-Ṭūsī states:

[There is another aspect for essence]; sometimes it is considered as “lacking any condition” and [in this respect] is a natural universal that exists in the external world. It is a part of individuals and correctly predicated of the whole of which it consists and to which it is attributed.⁶⁵

His commentator al-Ḥilli explained this view by appealing to Ibn Sīnā’s argument in *al-Shifā’/Ilāhiyyāt* V/1 asserting essences to exist *qua* the parts of individuals in the external world and an individual to exist without its parts to be impossible.⁶⁶ When compared to al-Ṭūsī’s denial of the existence of essences in themselves in the external world in *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, which the previous section has analyzed in detail, the line of reasoning here appears confusing. However, this confusion may be resolved by determining the kind of essence al-Ṭūsī talks about when he invalidates al-Rāzī’s claim of the external existence of essences in and of themselves. The first argument al-Ṭūsī designed to refute the existence of common natures in the external world considered al-Rāzī as if he had maintained

64 Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khunajī, *Kashf al-Asrar ‘an ghawāmiḍ al-afkār*, ed. Khaled Rouayheb (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 1389), 35,7–8; 35,15–36,2.

65 al-Ṭūsī, *Tajrid al-i’tiqād*, in ‘Allāma al-Ḥilli, *Kashf al-Murād fī sharḥ Tajrid al-i’tiqād*, ed. Ḥasanẓāda al-Āmulī (Qum: Muassat al-Nashr al-Islāmi, 1432), 128.

66 al-Ḥilli, *Kashf al-Murād*, 128.

the existence of abstracted forms or intellectual universals in the external world. In accordance with this consideration, al-Ṭūsī concluded the one humanity (*al-insāniyya al-wāḥidah*) to only be able to exist in the intellect. As for the existence of the humanity shared by Zayd and 'Amr that al-Rāzī had spoken about, al-Ṭūsī either said nothing or ignored this side of the argument.

Considering al-Ṭūsī's insistent silence on the ontological role of essences and his conscious effort to change the basis of all discussions on the existence of Ibn Sīnā's ontological common natures into the existence of intelligible universals, al-Ṭūsī can be said to apparently have wanted to maintain the existence of natural universals but defend the commonality attached to them only in the intellect. This means that he used the term universal in relation to these natures only metaphorically. Therefore, his repetition of Ibn Sīnā's argument from *al-Shifā'/al-Ilahiyyāt* V/1 proving the existence of natural universals mereologically in *Tajrīd* reflects his efforts at preserving the existence of formal natures as parts of particular composite substances (i.e., individuals in order to ensure the external constitution of physical objects). However, when al-Ṭūsī insisted on the existence of common natures in the external world, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī argued defending the commonality of mental exemplars with their correspondent external natures to be impossible as mental exemplars are nothing but individual forms in an individual mind and cannot be stripped from mentality. Thus, if al-Ṭūsī wanted to hold the position he had expressed in *al-Tajrīd* (i.e., defend the external existence of common formal natures as parts of individuals), he would still be unable to defend the commonality of mental forms (i.e., their universality). In the end, his attempt to maintain the universality of mental forms would be in vain. Here, al-Taḥṭānī intervened in the discussion and condemned both al-Rāzī, al-Khūnajī, al-Urmawī and, for repeating the same views with them, al-Ṭūsī and al-Ḥillī of accepting the external existence of unconditioned nature as a part of conditioned nature, (i.e. animality as a part of this animal). For, like al-Ṭūsī, al-Taḥṭānī also thought that as long as one assumes the existence of formal natures in the external world as parts of individuals, one cannot maintain the universality or commonality of mental forms. Based on this view, al-Taḥṭānī stated, "Natural universals in no way exist in the external world. What exists in the external world are only individuals."⁶⁷ After announcing his position, al-Taḥṭānī tried to eliminate the alternative interpretations on the existence of natural universals. He refuted all options

67 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Maṭāli'*, 241.

affirming the existence of natural universals in the external world and defended the universal natures having no existence whether as a part of individuals or as the individuals themselves. As he specified, three approaches exist to the questions regarding how the essences composed of parts such as genus and differentia exist in the external realm. According to one of these, genus and differentia are two parts of a species in the external world and are separate with respect to reality and existence (*al-ḥaqīqa wa al-wujūd*). However, their separation cannot be conceived at the level of common-sense. As for the second approach, genus and differentia are two parts of a species in the external world and are one with the species not in existence but in essence. According to the third, species is a simple entity with no parts in the external world at all; thus, parts such as genus and differentia only exist in the mind.⁶⁸ Al-Taḥṭānī rightfully revealed the falsity of the first view because predication requires unity in existence; if parts like animal and rational differ from species in terms of existence, they cannot be predicated of the species in the sense of essence (i.e., in a way that it can be said “it is it”). Al-Taḥṭānī ascribed to the second view of the later scholars (*mutaakhhirūn*). Accordingly, they stated that individuals, being the exemplars of species, have real parts corresponding to universal natures such as substance, body, animal, and rational but that these parts do not exist separately in an individual but as completely united with it. This means that the external world only has individuals but these individuals have united formal natures bringing them their essential unity. In fact, this line of thought signifies the view maintained by names such as al-Rāzī, al-Khūnājī, al-Urmawī and also later Avicennan philosophers like al-Ṭūsī and al-Ḥillī to be in conformity with Ibn Sinā’s mereological understanding. For al-Taḥṭānī, however, universal natures such as substance, body, animal, and rational can only exist in the mind and have no parts corresponding to them in the external world, whether they are united or disunited. All universal natures coincide with only one thing in the external world (i.e., individual substance). Therefore, individual substances according to al-Taḥṭānī are completely simple and have no actual parts.⁶⁹ Here, al-Taḥṭānī can be said to

68 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Risālah fī Tahqīq al-Kullīyyāt: Tümüeller Risālesi ve Şerhleri*, ed. Ömer Türker (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2013), 25.

69 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Risālah fī Tahqīq al-Kullīyyāt*, 25–33. For a depiction of the alternative views, see al-Jurjānī, *Hāshiyah ‘alā Sharḥ al-Maṭāli’*, 243. The debates that arose in the 14th century about the parts of the essence and how they occur in external particulars can be seen as a continuation of the debates on the existence-essence distinction and the problem of *i’tibārāt* in the 12th and 13th centuries. For these debates, see Robert Wisnovsky, “Essence and Existence. Thirteenth-Century Perspectives in Arabic-Islamic Philosophy and Theology”, *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Receptions of Avicenna’s Metaphysics*, ed. Dag Nikolaus Hasse & Amos Bertolacci (Berlin: De Gruyter: 2012), 123–52; Fedor

have clearly reinterpreted Ibn Sīnā's theory of hylomorphic substance. During this reinterpretation, al-Taḥṭānī abandons Ibn Sīnā's explanatory attitude.⁷⁰ Ibn Sīnā's explanatory attitude means he assumed individual composite substances to consist of some parts and a need to exist for an explanation about how parts are combined so as to constitute the composite substance. On the contrary, al-Taḥṭānī did not need to explain the composition of parts; instead, he considered the individual substance as one in and of itself. Based on this assumption and as a respond to a criticism directable against his claim that existence of animality as a part of some said individual animal is necessary for the existence of said individual animal, al-Taḥṭānī stated:

What is necessary is that the animal exists in the sense that the thing which the animal is predicated of exists. As for the existence of the nature of animality, it is forbidden, let alone something necessary.⁷¹

Al-Taḥṭānī, eliminating all options including Ibn Sīnā's own opinion in *al-Shifā/al-Ilahiyāt V/1* and the Avicennist reading of al-Rāzī, al-Ṭūsī, al-Khūnaji, and al-Ḥilli that assume the external existence of universal natures, went on to reconsider the solutions offered by al-Ṭūsī against al-Rāzī's criticism regarding the universality of mental forms.

(b) Ranking in mental forms: Mental universals as first-order mental-particular forms, natural universals as second-order mental-particular forms

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's second and third criticisms (i.e., refusing the universality of mental forms and claiming the inadequacy of presence [*ḥuṣul*] theory) led al-Taḥṭānī to reconsider the universality of the Avicennan mental exemplars. As mentioned above, al-Ṭūsī answered al-Rāzī's first criticism by making a distinction between two aspects of mental forms following Ibn Sīnā. In *R. Fī Taḥqīq al-Kulliyāt*, al-Taḥṭānī

Benevich, "The Essence-Existence Distinction: Four Elements of the Post-Avicennian Metaphysical Dispute (11-13th Centuries)", *Oriens* 45/3-4 (2017): 203-258; Jari Kaukua, "Ṭībārī Concepts in Suhrawardī: The Case of Substance", *Oriens* 48 (2020): 40-66.

70 For the explanatory and unexplanatory approaches toward the hylomorphic substance theory, see David Charles, "Matter and Form: Unity, Persistence and Identity," *Unity, Identity and Explanation in Aristotle*, ed. Theodore Scaltsas, David Charles and Mary Louise Gill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 75-105.

71 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Maṭālī'*, p. 243.

clarified al-Ṭūsī's answer to depend on how mental form is considered in respect to itself and in respect to its being a shadow or exemplar of things. Therefore, al-Ṭūsī said that if the mental forms are regarded as a mental or immaterial exemplar of things (*ṣūratun wa mithālun lā ta'aşşula la-hū fi al-wujūd, bal huwa ka-al-ẓill li-umūr*),⁷² its individuality would not be found to contradict its universality. However, al-Ṭūsī's solution did not satisfy al-Taḥṭānī; he considered it disputable (*fihī naẓar*) and proposed another solution. According to al-Taḥṭānī, universality does not belong to any aspect of individual mental forms present in the mind as accidents present in their subject. Instead universality is known through first-order mental forms and is a quality that belongs to the distinguished (*al-ma'lūm al-mutamayyiz*) second-order mental forms. Al-Ṭūsī defending universality as an aspect of this individual form and what corresponds to many being no different from this very form should be remembered here. However, al-Taḥṭānī claimed the feature of correspondence to not belong to this form but to be the concomitant of a second form apart from it:

This concomitant does not belong to the form present in the mind for it exists in the external world and is an accident that cannot be same as the substantial individuals. Undoubtedly, a difference in concomitants signifies a difference in determinants.⁷³

Here, al-Taḥṭānī treats al-Ṭūsī's universal forms as a mental quality that is an instrument for a second consideration of the universality form (*kayfiyyatun taḥşulu fi al-'aqli hiya ālat al-ta'āqqul*). According to him, universality can only belong to a second-order form that uses this mental quality as an instrument (*al-mutamayyiza bi-waşıţati tilka al-şūra fi al-dhihn*). Al-Taḥṭānī regarded first-order mental forms as accidental qualities in an individual mind and, following the Avicennan tradition, named these first-order forms abstracted from the external world as intellectual universals (*al-kullī al-'aqli*); departing from the Avicennan tradition, however he stated, "As for the intellectual universal (*al-kullī al-'aqli*), it is in no way universal for it has no individuals [corresponding] to it."⁷⁴

When al-Taḥṭānī refutes the universality of the Avicennan abstracted essences (*al-kullī al-'aqli*), he should be noted to justify this refusal based on their not having correspondent particulars in the external world. For al-Taḥṭānī, if correspondent external particulars are posited to intellectual universals, these particulars would

72 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Risālah fi Taḥqīq al-Kullīyyāt*, 23.

73 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Risālah fi taḥqīq al-kullīyyāt*, p. 23.

74 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Risālah fi taḥqīq al-kullīyyāt*, p. 24.

have to exist either independently (e.g., Platonic forms) or dependently as the parts of the individuals. Yet both of the options are impossible for the reasons he presented when rejecting the existence of universal natures as being parts of individuals.

The main idea lying behind al-Taḥṭānī's refutation is the following principle he expressed: "All external existents are concrete/individual beings and no concrete/individual being is common among many in the external world."⁷⁵

This fundamental principle oriented all the solutions of al-Taḥṭānī and his criticism of his Avicennan predecessors. According to him, concreteness (*tashakḥkhuṣ*) prevents commonality (i.e., when a meaning gains concreteness, it can no longer be shared among other concrete individuals). In his *Sharḥ al-Maṭāli'* criticizing his Avicennan predecessors for accepting the existence of natural universals as the parts of individuals in the external world, he assumes that they accepted the idea that concreteness (*tashakḥkhuṣ*) does not hinder commonality and had violated this principle by accepting such a position.⁷⁶ According to al-Taḥṭānī, when one accepts this position, escape from al-Rāzī's second criticism (i.e., the individuality of mental exemplars and the problem of predication) becomes impossible.

In fact, al-Rāzī's refutation of the universality of mental exemplars and his claim of the existence of essences in the external world essentially damaged this principle, due to him saying that philosophers had asserted the abstractness of the essences in the mind, yet due to essences being surrounded by mental accidents, asserting such an abstractness contrary to the philosophers' claims is impossible. And if one cannot achieve such an abstract presence, one cannot maintain the essential unity of a mental exemplar with its correspondent in the external world. Therefore, al-Rāzī concluded from this that essences can in no way be abstract and can exist only as parts of individuals in the external world. This assertion has the capability of destroying the foundation of the Avicennan notion of the human rational soul, knowledge, mental existence, and universality. According to al-Taḥṭānī, former Avicennists such as al-Ṭūsī and al-Ḥillī apparently were unable to recognize this point and had not taken al-Rāzī's criticisms seriously. For this reason, they had defended the existence of common natures as the parts of concrete beings inconsistently without realizing the consequences of this assumption.

75 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Risālah fī taḥqīq al-kulliyāt*, p. 24.

76 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Maṭāli'*, I/239-40; cf. al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, p. 128.

However, this idea prevented them from accurately constructing the universality of the mental exemplars or intelligible forms. For if one accepts a common nature in concrete individuals while accepting a mental abstraction or a shadow of this nature, claiming a correspondence or essential unity between these two different beings would be impossible.

For this reason, al-Taḥṭānī (i) refuted the existence of common natures or natural universals in the external world, (ii) downgraded the epistemological status of intellectual universals (i.e., al-Tūsī's universal mental exemplars) and stripped them of universality, and (iii) invented a second form that becomes known and distinguished through first-order forms and asserted that the actual natural universal or essence in and of itself is no other than this second-order form, concluding in his words that:

Predicating the [word] universal of these three concepts [logical, intellectual and natural universals] occurs homonymously. The [real] universal among them is only the natural universal.⁷⁷

In his *Super-commentary on Sharḥ al-Maṭāli'*, Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjānī recognizes this critical point and clarifies the implications of al-Taḥṭānī's position as follows:

This is what he said [in *R. fi taḥqīq al-kullīyyāt*]. And this [position] is based on the view that what is imprinted in the intellect from external things are not their essences but their forms and shadows, which are different from their essences in reality. A group [of thinkers] accepted this view, but it is not a noteworthy [position], for this view requires the shadows to be able to have a unified being [with the correspondent particulars] only metaphorically.⁷⁸

Here, al-Jurjānī can be seen to have marginalized al-Taḥṭānī's view and pointed out its discontinuity in respect to the traditional Avicennan position. As a requirement of this position, al-Taḥṭānī treated the imprinted forms in the intellect through abstraction not as a perfect exemplar (*mithāl*) or representation (*tamaththul*) of the correspondent essences but as imperfect abstractions that cannot be called universals. In this case, these mental exemplars can only be qualified metaphorically with mental existence. If a mental exemplar has no correspondent external existence, talking about its mental existence becomes meaningless and its universality can only be gained indirectly.

77 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *R. fi taḥqīq al-kullīyyāt*, p. 25.

78 S. Sharif al-Jurjānī, *Hāshiya 'alā Sharḥ al-Maṭāli'*, p. 196.

Before multiplicity [Forms/Exemplars or mental forms that are undistinguished in the Divine Mind]	?
In multiplicity [Common meaning that are present in multiplicity]	X
After multiplicity – The First Level (In the Mind) [Mental forms that are abstracted from multiplicity – Mental Universal]	X
After multiplicity – The Second Level (In the Mind) [Mental forms that are predicated of multiplicity – Natural Universal]	√

Table 3. Types of presence of the general meanings according to al-Taḥṭānī

Conclusion

As a solution to the problem Ibn Sīnā had inherited from the Ancient-Hellenistic tradition definable as the predicational disconnection between different layers of existence, the conception of essence in and of itself, which is a product of the notion of the predicational unity between different layers of existence, brought a new perspective to the problems of universals that had gone on since Plato. According to this perspective, while universals correspond to meanings that are present commonly in the external individuals, they also correspond to mental representations that can be equally predicated of external individuals. However, the essence in itself is maintained equally in the external world and the mind independent of all implications relative to the modes of existence. The fact that Fakr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, who upheld the external existence-related aspect of Ibn Sīnā's moderate realism suggesting the commonality of formal natures, criticized the same theory's mental existence-related aspect suggesting the universality of mental forms, urged the post-Rāzī Avicennists to prove the universality of mental forms. In order to do so, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī denied the external existence of general meanings, which Ibn Sīnā believed had cooccurrence in the external world

using a mereological argument yet claimed they could only exist in the mind by defending their universality in the sense that mental forms occur in the external world as external individuals. However, even though al-Ṭūsī refuted the common external existence of general meanings, in order to ensure the construction of physical entities in the external world, he accepted the existence of formal natures as constituent factors in *Tajrīd al-i'tiqād*. On the contrary to al-Ṭūsī, al-Taḥṭānī, in a way that justified al-Rāzī's criticisms, stated formal natures to be unable to exist in the external world whether as parts of common general meanings or as parts of physical objects and admitted that, if they did exist, universality not be attributable to mental forms in the mind. Saying that because no external meaning exists for corresponding to the mental forms in the mind, these can only be described as individual forms in an individual mind, al-Taḥṭānī argued that what provides universality are the second-order mental exemplars indicating a second abstraction through the first order individual mental forms. For him, the only meanings deserving to be described as universal are these second-order exemplars, and their universality means they occur as actual individuals when they exist in the external world, not that they represent the general meanings that correspond to them. In fact, this attitude al-Taḥṭānī reached, which signaled a clear departure from Avicenna's moderate realism that assumed the external existence of general meanings and mental representations being equal to them, was the peak of the mentalist tendency, which is what al-Rāzī had criticized based on a realist attitude. In an effort to preserve the universality of mental forms, this tendency made the constitution of physical objects problematic on one hand while leading to a big problem regarding the truth-maker ground for the general meanings in the mind as they depart from the external ground on the other.

We can make some preliminary assumptions in order to trigger further research regarding the consequences of such an interpretation that renders Avicenna's philosophy ineffective in consistently proving the construction of physical objects in the external world and weakens the chances of Avicennan physics in this way. Accordingly, the mentalist tendency depicted throughout the article can be said to have led to the predominance of the new metaphysical approaches in ontology in order to prove the external construction of physical objects. Interpretations of the followers of the *waḥdat al-wujūd* the notion of divine existence, which is a primary factor in the construction of physical objects, as natural universals and their attempt at reconstructing the realist attitude metaphysically, can be given as a particular example of these new attitudes. In an environment where the opportunities of Avicennan physics had been weakened in Avicennism and where

kalam atomism had lost its power, this attempt of the *waḥdat al-wujūd* approach gained widespread acceptance. On the other hand, the solution to the problem regarding the truth-making basis of the general meanings in the mind, which al-Ṭūsī had tried to find based on the forms inherent in the Active Intellect through the *nafs al-amr* conceptualization, were not widely accepted in later periods and gave rise to a search for the more accurate truth-making basis of general meanings. This literature, which would manifest itself as discussions on *nafs al-amr*, can also be studied as a search for a basis able to encompass both the external and mental in a way that will eliminate the weaknesses the Avicennan mentalist tendency had caused and that will bring forward the Avicennan essence in and of itself again.

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