NAZARİYAT

Weak Discourses on People's Lips Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī against Representationalism and Conceptualism*

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Abstract: The development of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī' thought on Avicennian and post-Avicennian representationalism and conceptualism is marked by increasing skepticism and critical engagement. Avicenna's representationalism posits that knowledge is relies on mental forms whose quiddities are identical to those of the objects of knowledge. Some post-Avicennians reformulate this account by viewing mental forms as different from the objects in quiddity (i.e., as mere images). Al-Rāzī is critical of both Avicennian representationalism and representationalism *simpliciter*. He rejects two foundational premises of Avicennian representationalism—that mental existence is different from concrete existence, that pure quiddity is existentially indifferent—based on the non-equivocity of existence, as well as Avicennian representationalism itself, because it would lead to the impossibility of knowing the extra-mental concomitants of quiddities. Against representationalism *simpliciter*, al-Rāzī contends that one of its premises—knowledge necessarily requires a specific non-relative accident inhering in the knower—is insufficiently justified, as well as demonstrably false based on his doctrine that knowledge is a pure relation. Avicenna's conceptualism concerns three classes of things, i.e., non-existent objects of knowledge, definitional parts of simple quiddities, and secondary intelligibles (logical properties). Post-Avicennian conceptualists go beyond the *Shaykh*, expanding the third class to include properties like existence, unity, thingness, modalities, relations in general. Al-Rāzī's attack against conceptualism about non-existent objects of knowledge criticizes both the general premise that existence is extensionally unlimited and the specific premise that imaginative objects have extra-mentally non-existent quiddities. Al-Rāzī also elaborates arguments against conceptualism in general, based on correspondence and on the removal of the mind.

Keywords: Epistemology, Conceptualism, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Ontology, Representationalism

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Introduction

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's attitude towards representationalism and conceptualism underwent significant development, becoming more and more critical over time. This contribution will highlight the stages of this development and explicate the specific reasons which made al-Rāzī increasingly suspicious of such doctrines.

The paper is structured into seven sections. The first section lays down preliminary clarifications concerning the exact meaning of representationalism and conceptualism. The second section presents Avicenna's representationalism and conceptualism, tackling their foundational premises. Understanding Avicenna's perspective is crucial for explicating Rāzī's own position, for his understanding of these matters is primarily based on Avicenna's, just as his attacks are primarily directed at the *Shaykh*. The third section highlights the evolution of representationalism and conceptualism in the early post-Avicennian period (XI–XII centuries). The fourth section draws a picture of al-Rāzī's own stance on these doctrines. The fifth section discusses al-Rāzī's case against Avicennian and post-Avicennian representationalism. The final two sections present his case against conceptualism, respectively in the case of non-existent objects of knowledge (section six), and in the case of definitional parts of simple quiddities and secondary intelligibles (section seven).

It is essential to note that the paper aims to articulate al-Rāzī's critique of these doctrines rather than proposing a positive alternative doctrine on his behalf.

1. Preliminary Clarifications

We need to start by defining representationalism and conceptualism, as well as by outlining how the two interact in the Islamic tradition.

In the context of this discussion, 'representationalism' refers to a class of doctrines about the conditions of intellectual knowledge. Such doctrines hold that knowledge of a given object requires as a necessary condition the mediation of a mental form corresponding to that object. Here 'mental forms' refer to non-relative mental properties or attributes that bear a specific type of relation, which can be termed 'representation' or 'correspondence,' with the objects of knowledge. This preliminary description explains the general role of mental forms and their overall ontological category without specifying their intrinsic nature, as different types of representationalism conceive of them in incompatible ways. The status of mental forms as conditions of knowledge is not fully specified either. While they are necessary for knowledge according to representational-

ism, we need to leave the question of their sufficiency indeterminate, as different types of representationalism may disagree as to whether mental forms are strictly necessary (but not sufficient) or both necessary and sufficient for knowledge.

We can give a preliminary definition of 'conceptualism' by saying that the term refers to doctrines about ontological status. These doctrines assert that a certain thing or class of things only exists in the mind and not in the extra-mental world or in concrete. Conceptualism has two parts, one affirmative and the other negative. The affirmative part is the doctrine that a thing or class of things exists in the mind, irrespective of whether it also exists concretely. To the best of my knowledge, this doctrine lacks a specific designation. The negative part of conceptualism is the doctrine, often called 'anti-realism', asserts that a thing or class of things does not exist in concrete, irrespective of whether it exists in the mind. It is important to note that anti-realism, and not conceptualism, is the logical contradictory of realism (i.e., the doctrine that a thing or class exists concretely).

A possible objection needs to be considered: according to the given definition, conceptualism can never hold true of anything. This is because the mind itself exists concretely, and everything existing in the mind must, by virtue of existing in the mind, also exist concretely. Consequently, whenever the positive part of conceptualism (asserting that a certain thing exists in the mind) holds true of something, the negative part of conceptualism (asserting that a certain thing does not exist in concrete) does not hold true of it, and vice versa. The problem arises due to the ambiguity of the formula 'existing in concrete' and can be solved by discriminating between two distinct meanings of such expression. The first is 'existing in concrete in an unqualified sense, regardless of whether it is by virtue of existing in the mind or not by virtue of existing in the mind.' This meaning can be true of things that exist only in the mind and is leveraged by the above-mentioned objection. However, this meaning is not the one intended by the preliminary definition. The genuine referent is a second, more specific meaning: 'existing in concrete in a negatively qualified sense, that is, not by virtue of existing in the mind.' This meaning cannot be true of things that only exist in the mind, making the problem raised by the objection merely apparent.

At this juncture, we may refine the earlier definitions. Realism would be the doctrine affirming that something exists in concrete not by virtue of existing in the mind. Anti-realism would consequently be the doctrine denying that something exists in concrete not by virtue of existing in the mind. Finally, conceptualism would be the conjunction of the doctrine affirming that something exists in the mind and the doctrine denying that it exists in concrete not by virtue of existing in the mind. While techni-

cally more precise than the preliminary definitions, these refined definitions introduce complexity and potential confusion, especially if one were to encounter them without considering the specific objection they aim to address.

The notion of conceptualism outlined thus far is completely abstract and needs to be determined by identifying specific of referents. Conceptualism can be trivially true of certain referents. Examples such cognitive states (e.g., belief, conviction, knowledge) illustrate this point: by definition, any cognitive state that exists does so in a mind, not outside it. Another illustration is found in mental forms, which have been described as mental properties or attributes.[1] The two examples differ in the sensibleness of denying the existence of the referents in question, not in the triviality of conceptualism about them.[2] The inquiry about conceptualism will not linger on trivial cases. The non-trivial cases discussed in the Avicennian and post-Avicennian tradition concern three classes of things: non-existent objects of knowledge, definitional parts of simple quiddities, and secondary intelligibles.

Conceptualism about these non-trivial matters relates to representationalism in that the latter is a necessary condition for the former: if mental forms were not necessary for knowledge, one could not defend conceptualism about those non-trivial matters. Let us delve into the rationale for this connection, in each of pertinent case. Conceptualism about non-existent objects of knowledge reduces them to their corresponding mental forms. Conceptualism about the definitional parts of simple quiddities is based on the distinction between *ibhām* [indeterminacy] and *taʿyīn* [determination], which in turn are specific properties of mental forms. Conceptualism about secondary intelligibles conceives them as specific properties of mental forms.

2. Avicenna on Representationalism and Conceptualism

One cannot properly approach representationalism and conceptualism in the post-Avicennian Islamic tradition, and particularly in al-Rāzī, without first delving into Avicenna's position on these matters. The *Shaykh* lays down the foundations which subsequent authors assume or criticize in the discussions concerning representationalism and conceptualism.

1 I thank one of my anonymous reviewers for helping me notice that conceptualism is trivially true of mental forms as well.

2 Rejecting the existence of mental forms is not as far-fetched as rejecting the existence of cognitive states. That being said, conceptualism about mental forms remains trivial in the sense that, were mental forms to exist, they would trivially exist in the mind and not concretely.

In general terms, representationalism holds that knowledge of a certain object requires the mediation of a mental form corresponding to that object. Avicenna specifies this account by clarifying the nature of mental forms as well as that of knowledge itself.[3] In terms of quiddity, the mental form is identical to the known object. The specificity of the mental form *qua* mental form is that such quiddity is taken with the additional qualification of being existent in the mind.[4] Despite sharing in quiddity with the object of knowledge, mental forms are accidents, and more specifically accidents of quality, with respect to the mind they exist in.[5] The knowledge of a certain object is the mental form sharing the quiddity of that object, taken *qua* having a specific relation to that object. So, knowledge is an accident of quality inhering in the mind and possessing a relation.[6]

From now on, I will speak of 'Avicennian representationalism' and 'Avicennian mental forms' to single out Avicenna's doctrine, which is the main target of al-Rāzī's critiques. Some post-Avicennian authors (e.g., al-Suhrawardī) defend types of representationalism that bear only surface-level resemblance to Avicenna's, in that they reject the fundamental tenet that mental forms and objects of knowledge share in quiddity.[7]

At this point, we can present a general account of Avicenna's conceptualism. Avicenna adopts a conceptualist stance about various types of things, which can be sorted in three classes. The first encompasses [a] (extra-mentally) non-existent objects of knowledge. Here, Avicenna collapses the distinction between the object of knowledge and the corresponding mental form. The object of knowledge is the mental form itself, or the quiddity which is part of the mental form. This class encompasses non-existent things that have existed or will exist, possible non-existent things, impossible non-existent things, privations, properties of non-existent things (e.g., the temporal priority

3 On Avicenna's representationalism see Ö.M. Alper, 'Avicenna on the Ontological Nature of Knowledge and its Categorical Status', *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 2/1 (2006), 25–35; D. Black, 'Intentionality in Medieval Arabic philosophy', *Quaestio* 10 (2010), 65–81; 'Imagination and Estimation: Arabic Paradigms and Western Transformations', *Topoi* 19/1 (2000), 59–75; 'Mental Existence in Thomas Aquinas and Avicenna', *Mediaeval Studies* 61 (1999), 45–79; 'Avicenna on the Ontological and Epistemic Status of Fictional Beings', *Documenti e Studi Sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 8 (1997), 425–453; 'Estimation (*Wahm*) in Avicenna: The Logical and Psychological Dimensions', *Dialogue* 32/2 (1993), 219–258; J. Kaukua, 'The Problem of Intentionality in Avicenna', *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 25 (2014), 215–242; M. Sebti, 'Le Statut Ontologique de L'image Dans la Doctrine Avicennienne de la Perception', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 15/1 (2005), 109–140., M.S. Zarepour, 'Avicenna on Empty Intentionality: A Case Study in Analytical Avicennianism', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* (2022), 1–20.

4 See Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, Ed. M. Zariʿī (Qom: Muʾassasa Būstān-i Kitāb, 2002), 237.8-14.

5 See Avicenna, *Kitāb al-shifāʾ, al-Ilāhiyyāt*, Eds. A.G. Qanawātī, M.Y. Musā, S. Dunyā, and S. Zāyid (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-ʿāmma li-shuʿūn al-matābiʿ al-amīriyya, 1960), I, 140.4-15.

6 See Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 331.11–332.6

7 See section 3.

of the past over the present), and properties that belong to existent things but are relative to non-existent things (the temporal priority of the present over the future, the capacity of a cause for producing an effect based on an unrealized condition)[8].

The second class of purely mental matters in Avicenna's conceptualism encompasses [b] the definitional parts of simple quiddities. In *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, Avicenna explicates how the mind can come to conceive of an extra-mentally simple quiddity as composed out of definitional parts, meaning genus and differentia. For him, not all quiddities whose definitions have parts necessarily have corresponding extra-mental parts. The parts of a definition correspond to the extra-mental parts of a quiddity only if the quiddity in question is a species of substance composed of matter and form (where the genus corresponds to the former, the differentia to the latter). If the quiddity in question is a species of accident, or a species of substance not composed of matter and form, then the parts of its definition do not correspond to extra-mental parts.[9]

Let us take one such quiddity, the species of accident 'line', and its definitional parts 'measure' (genus) and 'in one dimension' (differentia). These definitional parts do not correspond to concretely existent parts of the quiddity 'line'.[10] The reason why the mind conceives the definitional parts as distinct from one another is that, although in concrete 'line' does not have corresponding parts, the mind might grasp the quiddity of 'line' indeterminately, thus construing a mental form which encompasses multiple simple species in an imprecise way ('measure' encompassing 'line, 'surface', 'volume'). Then, the mind takes this imprecise mental form and adds another mental form to it (the differentia 'in one dimension'), thereby determining it as only one of those simple species ('line'). Avicenna stresses that the difference between 'measure' and 'line' does not correspond to any real composition in the quiddity in question, being rather construed by the mind based on different modes of knowing, namely by *ibhām* or *ghayr taḥṣīl* [indeterminacy] and by *taʿyīn* or *taḥṣīl* [determination].[11] Consequently, the definitional parts of simple quiddities exist only in the mind, not in extra-mental reality.

8 See Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 33.12–34.7, 159.15–160.9; *al-Mubāḥathāt*, Ed. M. Bīdārfar (Qom: Intishārāt Bīdār, 1992), 131.8-12. Contingency is an important exception to this rule, as Avicenna's case for the temporal precedence of matter over what comes-to-be requires it to be an extra-mentally existent property, see Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 283.15–284.7; *Mubāḥathāt*, 131.3-5.

9 See Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 215.17–216.9, 248.4-8.

10 The issue of whether 'line' has other types of parts that do not correspond to definitional parts is beside the point here.

11 See Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 239.2-13. This distinction is probably related (or equivalent) to the distinction between vague and precise knowledge which Avicenna discusses in *Shifāʾ*, *Madkhal*, 34.19-21; *Kitāb al-Shifāʾ*, *al-Ṭabīʿiyyāt, al-Nafs*, Eds. I. Madkūr, A. G. Qanawatī, and S. Zāyid (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-miṣriyya al-ʿāmma li-l-kitāb, 1975), 213.18–215.7.

> In existence, the notion [of 'measure'] is nothing but one of those [i.e., 'line', 'surface', or 'volume']. However, the intellectual activity of the mind creates a separate existence for it.[12]

> Although there is for sure some sort of multiplicity, it is not multiplicity in the sense of being made of parts, but rather multiplicity in the sense of being something indeterminate or determined. Indeed, something determinate in itself can be considered inasmuch as it is indeterminate for the mind, so that there is a sort of otherness. However, when it is determined, it is not another thing, except by the consideration we mentioned, which belongs to the intellect alone. Determination does not change it, but rather ascertains it.[13]

The distinction between indeterminacy and determination is not applicable to extra-mentally existent quiddities. Consequently, this distinction is specific to mental forms, for otherwise there would be no way to ground the fundamental contention that knowledge can be either indeterminate or determined.

The third and final class of purely mental matters includes [c] secondary intelligibles, which Avicenna understands as specific properties of mental forms *qua* mental forms. In most cases, Avicenna just assumes that certain properties fall under this description. This is what happens with things like being subject of predication and being predicate, being essential and being accidental, being genus and being differentia, etc. These are properties that attach to quiddities *qua* mentally existent and taken either in relation to other mentally existent quiddities or in relation to extra-mental individuals.[14] In some specific cases, Avicenna explicitly discusses if and why a certain property falls under the description 'specific property of mental forms *qua* mental forms'. A good example is universality, i.e., the property of being shared by many (regardless of whether the many exist in actuality or in potentiality).[15] Avicenna argues that this cannot be a property of extra-mental existents. Then, he reconceptualizes it as the property of having the same relation of correspondence to many individuals.[16] This mental form 'horse' is universal in the sense that its relation of correspondence to this individual horse is identical to its relation of correspondence to that individual horse.

12 See Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 239.14-15.
13 See Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 240.3-8.
14 See Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Madkhal*, 15.1-11.
15 See Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 195.5-10.
16 See Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 204.13–206.7.

For the purpose of this inquiry, the class of secondary intelligibles as per Avicenna will be treated as equivalent to the class of logical properties, i.e., those properties that constitute the subject-matter of logic. This is because logical properties are nothing but Avicenna's secondary intelligibles inasmuch as they are taken with one of their own properties, which is the capacity of mediating the acquisition of inferential knowledge from immediate knowledge.[17] Therefore, discussing the ontological status of secondary intelligibles is essentially a discussion about the ontological status of logical properties. From now on, I will use 'logical properties' to refer to secondary intelligibles according to Avicenna's understanding. It is worth noting that other conceptualists significantly expand the class of secondary intelligibles to include many elements Avicenna does not consider to be properties of mental forms *qua* mental forms.

Avicenna's representationalism and conceptualism are based on three foundational premises. The first is the understanding of mental existence as a proper type of existence, intensionally distinct from concrete existence and not subordinate to it. In other words, the essence of mental existence is neither identical to that of concrete existence nor inclusive of it. The *Ilāhiyyāt* of *al-Shifāʾ* reads as follows:

> When you say, 'that essence is existent'–in concrete reality, or in souls, or in an unqualified sense which comprehends them all–this has an attainable and comprehensible meaning.[18]

The notion of existence can be taken *muṭlaqan* [in an unqualified way] and in that sense it encompasses existence *fī l-aʿyān* [in concrete reality] and existence *fī l-anfus* [in souls], which can be understood as specifications of that unqualified notion. Consequentially, mental existence is not a sub-type of concrete existence: if it were, there would be no need to have an unqualified notion of existence encompassing the two, because existence in concrete reality would already include existence in the mind as a

17 See Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Madkhal*, 15.1-11; *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 205.14–206.2; 209.6–211.7. Avicenna argues that a mentally existent quiddity is particular inasmuch as we consider it with respect to its existence in a particular mind, while it may be universal inasmuch as we consider it with respect to the extra-mental individuals: Its universality comes down to an identity of relation with each of those individuals (its relation to any of them is identical to its relation to any other). As noted by Avicenna himself, this allows for second-order universals (and, consequently, for potentially infinite higher orders of universality), in the sense that a mental quiddity may be ascribed universality (identity of relation) with respect to those mental quiddities that are first-order universals (the second-order universal being to the first-order universals like the these are to the extra-mental individuals).

18 Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 31.13-14.

sub-type. This point is further corroborated by passages of *al-Madkhal* where Avicenna argues that each of the two types of existence has accidents (=extra-essential properties) specific to it, and not to the other.[19] If mental existence were a sub-type of concrete existence, all accidents of the latter would also be accidents of the former, which is explicitly rejected by Avicenna.

Such passages allow us to conclude that mental existence is distinct in intension from concrete existence and not subordinate to it. In other words, mental existence is neither identical to concrete existence nor identical to the sum of concrete existence and some additional specification. However, Avicenna's position on mental existence remains puzzling because, when it comes to extension, mental existence is more specific than and included in concrete existence. The reason is that what exists in a mind exists in concrete by virtue of the mind existing in concrete. Consequently, the extension of mental existence corresponds to a subset of the extension of concrete existence—everything mentally existent is also concretely existent, by mediation of minds being concrete, while not everything concretely existent is mentally existent. Avicenna implicitly recognizes this when he acknowledges that, from a certain perspective, mentally existent universals are particular by virtue of existing in a particular mind.[20] It is not clear how one may reconcile the above-mentioned intensional distinction and non-subordination of mental existence with its extensional inclusion within concrete existence.

Avicenna's thematization of mental existence as an intensionally distinct, non-subordinate type of existence is foundational for his representationalism and conceptualism in two senses. First, it is a necessary condition for the next premise. Second, it grounds the possibility for the properties of mental forms to differ from those of extra-mental things which share with them in quiddity (quidditative identity means that their difference in properties must be grounded in existential difference). Difference in properties grounds conceptualism about definitional parts of simple quiddities and about secondary intelligibles.

The second foundational premise is the existential indifference of pure quiddity. Pure quiddity is quiddity considered in an unqualified way, devoid of any positive or negative qualification. Taken in this way, quiddity is indifferent with respect to its ex-

19 See Avicenna, *Kitāb al-shifāʾ*, *al-Madkhal*, Eds. A. G. Qanawatī, M. al-Khudayrī, and F. al-Ahwānī (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-amīriyya, 1952), 15.1-17; 34.5-10.

20 See Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 205.14–206.2; 209.6–210.3.

istential status—it may exist in the mind and it may exist in concrete reality.[21] The existential indifference of pure quiddity depends on the distinctiveness of mental existence, while not being reducible to it. The pure assertion that some classes of things have mental existence and some classes have concrete existence does not automatically entail that some classes of things can have both mental and concrete existence. This addition is precisely the content of the existential indifference of pure quiddity. Based on the previously mentioned differentiation between the specific accidents of mental existence and the specific accidents of concrete existence, quiddity *qua* mentally existent has certain specific accidents not found in quiddity *qua* concretely existent, and vice versa. This premise is foundational in the sense that it is a necessary condition for affirming Avicennian mental forms.

The third foundational premise is the unlimited extension of existence, namely the claim that everything which is subject of attribution and object of knowledge possesses existence in some form or another. This premise is foundational for Avicenna's representationalism and conceptualism because it constitutes the sufficient condition for affirming the two in the specific case of knowledge of concretely non-existent objects. In the representationalist-conceptualist perspective, a concretely non-existent object of knowledge is the same thing as its mental form. The two differ in terms of how they are considered, as I will elaborate later.

Avicenna implies that the unlimited extension of existence is immediately known.[22] Followed by Bahmanyār and al-Lawkarī, he argues that anything which is object of knowledge and subject of attribution must be intentioned, and what is absolutely non-existent cannot be intentioned, so any subject of attribution must be existent.[23] This applies to every subject of attribution, regardless of whether the specific property ascribed to it is positive or negative.

The unlimited extension of existence is inferentially corroborated by Avicenna's argument from attribution, which considers the ascription of any positive property to any subject (X is attributed to Y), derives the attributive existence of the property for the subject (X exists as an attribute of Y), further derives the intrinsic existence of the

21 See Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Madkhal*, 15.1-17; 34.5-13; *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 196.6-16.

22 See Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 30.3-4, 32.3-16.

23 See Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 32.12-16; Bahmanyār, *al-Taḥṣīl*, Ed. M. Muṭahharī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i dānishgāh-i Tehrān, 1996), 288.15–289.5; Lawkarī, *Bayān al-ḥaqq bi-ḍamān al-ṣidq*, *al-ʿIlm al-ilāhī*, Ed. I. Dībājī (Tehran: al-Maʿhad al-ʿālamī li-l-fikr wa-l-ḥaḍāra al-islāmiyya, 1994), 30.6-10

property from its attributive existence (X exists in itself because it exists as an attribute of Y), and finally deduces the intrinsic existence of the subject from the intrinsic existence of the property (Y exists in itself because X cannot exist in itself if its subject does not exist in itself).[24]

Avicenna's argument from attribution has the problem that it only works for subjects of positive properties, not for subjects of negative properties or subjects denied positive properties. This limitation renders the argument insufficient for proving that every object of knowledge and subject of attribution must exist. One could hypothesize that some object of knowledge is only subject of negative properties, thereby rendering the argument ineffective. The subsequent tradition attempts to address the problem in two ways. One passage of Bahmanyār's *Taḥṣīl* tries and make the case that the subjects of negative properties (or the subjects which are denied positive properties) must be existent because the negative judgement which is true of them is still a *ḥukm mawjūd* [existent judgement]: the point seems to be that the subject is a part of the judgement, the judgement is an existent thing, and the part of an existent thing must be existent as well.[25] Another passage of the *Taḥṣīl*–further developed and clarified by al-Razi–takes a different path, arguing that any object of knowledge must have a positive property, i.e., distinction. This opens the door to the argument from attribution: if distinction has attributive existence for a subject, then the subject has intrinsic existence. This entails the unlimited extension of existence, given that distinction is true of any subject of attribution.[26] The issue in question is not the focus of the present paper, however, as it does not directly impact the debate on representationalism and conceptualism.[27]

24 See Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 32.12–33.11; *Kitāb al-Shifāʾ, al-Manṭiq, al-ʿIbāra*, Ed. M. M. Khuḍayrī (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-miṣriyya al-ʿāmma li-l-taʾlīf wa-l-nashr, 1970), 79.12–80.10. The epistemic status of the argument from attribution is unclear. It might be a dialectical reasoning based on assumptions granted by a hypothetical opponent, or an instance of *tanbīh* [drawing-attention] to the intuitiveness of the unlimited extension of existence, or a genuine demonstration based on premises that are essentially better known than the unlimited extension of existence. If Avicenna indeed believes the unlimited extension of existence to be known immediately, then he should support either the first or the second option.

25 See Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 289.3-4. I am grateful to Yusuf Daşdemir for helping me understand this point.

26 See Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 489.4-7: Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya fī ʿilm al-ilāhiyyāt wa-l-ṭabīʿiyyāt*, Ed. Z. ʿĀ. al-Mūsawī (Hyderabad: Dāʾrat al-maʿārif al-ʿuthmāniyya, 1924), I, 41.7-10; *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī l-ḥikma wa-l-manṭiq*, Eds. I. Hanoğlu and S. Fūda (ʿAmmān: al-Aṣlayn fī dirāsa wa-l-nashr, 2021), I, 295.14.

27 For further information on the argument from attribution, the debates on the existential import of affirmative and negative propositions, and adjacent matters, see Y. Daşdemir, 'The Problem of Existential Import in Metathetic Propositions: Qutb al-Din al-Tahtani Contra Fakhr al-Din al-Razi', *Nazariyat* 5/2 (2019), 81–118; J. Kaukua, 'Avicenna on Negative Judgement', *Topoi* 39 (2020), 657–666.

3. Representationalism Revised, Conceptualism Expanded

Although most post-Avicennian authors continue to support forms of representationalism and conceptualism, the period separating Avicenna from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī sees doctrinal and terminological evolutions concerning both doctrines.

Avicenna's representationalism remains broadly popular in the subsequent tradition. Authors such as Bahmanyār, al-Lawkarī, al-Sāwī, and al-Shahrastānī explicitly defend his position on mental forms (they are the mentally existent quiddities of the objects of knowledge).[28] Bahmanyār is seemingly the first author to defend the position (later criticized by al-Rāzī) that mental forms are both necessary and sufficient for knowledge.[29]

Not all early post-Avicennian defenders of representationalism accept Avicenna's version of it, however. Suhrawardī for one argues that mental forms differ from the objects of knowledge in terms of quiddity, not in terms of existence (against Avicenna), presumably because he rejects the essential distinctiveness of mental existence.[30] Benevich suggests that Khayyām and Abū l-Barakāt may be the precursors of Suhrawardī's idea, even though his case for this hypothesis is debatable.[31] Again according to Benevich, Suhrawardī holds that mental forms have their own, special 'representational' quiddities, in the sense that their very natures would somehow include or entail the fact of being representations of extra-mental things.[32]

28 See Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 296.16–297.5; 489.4-11; 493.13–493.17; 497.3–498.11; Lawkarī, *Bayān*, *al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*, 103.3-7; Sāwī, *al-Baṣāʾir al-Nāṣiriyya*, Ed. Ḥ al-Murāghi Ghaffārpūr (Tehran: Muʾassasat al-Ṣādiq li-l-ṭabāʿa wa-l-nashr), 53.18-19; Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām fī ʿilm al-kalām*, Ed. A. Guillaume (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 147.14–149.2.

29 See Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 497.3–498.11. Bahmanyār explicitly argues that the knowing or having cognition of a certain object is the same as the existence of its form in the mind.

30 See Suhrawardī, *Kitāb al-mashāriʿ wa-l-muṭāraḥāt, al-ʿilm al-thālith* in Corbin, Henry (ed.), *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica*, vol.1 (Leipzig-Istanbul: Brockhaus-Maṭbaʿ al-maʿārif, 1993), 225, 331.

31 See F. Benevich 'Representational Beings: Suhrawardī (d. 1191) and Avicenna's Mental Existence', Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales 87/2 (2020), 308–315. Benevich's strongest argument is that the two explain the difference between concrete and mental existence by appealing to *tashkīk* [modulation], and things whose instances of existence are graded by *tashkīk* must be different in quiddity. While I am sympathetic to this reasoning in a vacuum, I wonder whether it adequately represents Khayyām and Abū l-Barakāt's positions. The Islamic tradition does include authors (Bahmanyār, al-Ṭūsī) who would reject Benevich's argument, in that they hold instances of existence graded *tashkīk* to be intrinsically different (the explanation of the difference does not require any reference to quiddity). On this see F.O. Zamboni, 'Is Existence One or Manifold? Avicenna and his Early Interpreters on the Modulation of Existence (*taškīk al-wuǧūd*),' *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 30 (2020), 121-150. The question is whether Khayyām and Abū l-Barakāt are among such authors.

32 See F. Benevich, 'Representational Beings,' 289–317. The reader should note that Benevich works with a narrow definition of representationalism holding that mental forms differ in quiddity from the objects

Sharaf al-Dīn al-Masʿūdī also rejects the first foundational premise of Avicenna's representationalism (i.e., the essential distinctiveness of mental existence from concrete existence). In his *Shukūk* on Avicenna's *Ishārāt*, he presents a semantic reduction of mental existence: being mentally existent means nothing but being an object of the mind's intellection.[33]

More generally, in the post-Avicennian period the terminology itself bear the marks of the different positions about the exact nature of mental forms. In addition to *ṣuwar* [forms], several authors refer to mental forms as *muthul* [images], *ashbāḥ* [resemblances], or *ashkhāṣ* [figures], denoting critical or doubtful attitudes towards Avicenna's version of representationalism.

Conceptualism gains increased significance and broader application after Avicenna. Authors tend to discuss it more frequently and more systematically, and their debates involve higher stakes, involving the assessment of Avicenna's arguments for key metaphysical doctrines such as the quiddity-existence distinction, the eternity of the world, and divine unicity. Furthermore, many post-Avicennian thinkers progressively expand the set of purely mental existents to include more and more classes of things.

The most significant terminological evolution of the period is the rise to dominance of the term *iʿtibārī* [matter construed by consideration]. This is probably due to the crucial function performed by *iʿtibār* [consideration] in Avicenna's own discourse. However, Avicenna's use of *iʿtibār* is significantly different from the post-Avicennian use of *iʿtibārī*. Avicenna's *iʿtibār* generally designates the epistemic operation of deriving a certain property for a certain subject by taking this subject together or without a certain qualification. Such an operation is neutral with respect to the issue of the ontological status of the property thus derived.[34] The fact that a property is epistemically deduced from *iʿtibār* does not entail that it is ontologically produced by *iʿtibār*, so to speak.[35] On the other hand, the post-Avicennian *iʿtibārī* precisely means 'ontologi-

of knowledge (he thereby excludes Avicenna's position from being a type of representationalism). The difference with my account is merely terminological.

33 See Masʿūdī, *al-Mabāḥith wa-l-shukūk ʿalā l-Ishārāt*, in A. Shihadeh, *Doubts on Avicenna. A Study and Edition of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Masʿūdī's Commentary on the Ishārāt* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2016), 246.10–247.4.

34 A good example is *imkān* [contingency]. Contingency can be ascribed to quiddities inasmuch as these are taken from a certain *iʿtibār*, i.e., without the qualification that their cause is existent and without the qualification that their cause is non-existent, see Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 266.14–267.8. Remarkably, this does not imply that contingency is *iʿtibārī* in the sense of 'construed by a mental operation'. Indeed, Avicenna implies that contingency is extra-mentally real, see Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 283.15–284.14.

35 *Iʿtibārī* in the sense of 'construed by *iʿtibār*' is rare in Avicenna's texts, but not completely absent, see Avicenna, *Mubāḥathāt*, 131.3-8.

cally produced by *iʿtibār*', specifically designating something that is purely mental and has no direct extra-mental referent. Other terms used for designating the *iʿtibārī* are *farḍī* [matter construed by postulation] and *taqdīrī* [matter construed by supposition], these being particularly popular among authors related to the Ashʿarite tradition (e.g., al-Shahrastānī, al-Rāzī himself). Such terminological variations appear inconsequential to the issue at stake here. All such terms convey the idea that some operation of the mind is the active and sole producer of the matter in question, which has no direct extra-mental referent. From now on I will refer to the *iʿtibārī/farḍī/taqdīrī* as 'mentally construed matter.'[36]

The progressive expansion of conceptualism in the post-Avicennian tradition can be appreciated by considering some key examples. These are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather representative of a trend.[37]

The process starts already with Bahmanyār. For one, he systematizes Avicenna's conceptualist understanding of the definitional parts of simple quiddities, integrating it within the general account of the definitional parts of quiddities mentioned at the beginning of logic.[38] Bahmanyār goes beyond Avicenna by expanding the set of mentally construed matters in three cases at least. The first is thingness, which he explicitly holds to be a secondary intelligible.[39] The second case is existence. Bahmanyār's position on the ontological status of existence is complicated and cannot be properly explained here. In short, we can say that he believes existence as a particular to be a concrete property of quiddities, and existence as a universal to be a secondary intelligible, just like thingness.[40] The third case is contingency. Again, his position is complicated. He does follow Avicenna in saying that contingency is a genuinely existent property

36 Similar formulations can be found in R. Wisnovsky 'Essence and Existence in the Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Islamic East (Mashriq): A Sketch', in D.N. Hasse and A. Bertolacci (eds.), *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 27–50.; J. Walbridge and H. Ziai (eds.), *Suhrawardī: The Philosophy of Illumination. A New Critical Edition of the Text of Ḥikmat al-ishrāq with English Translation, Notes, Commentary, and Introduction* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1999), xxv.

37 For more information on post-Avicennian conceptualism see F. Benevich 'The Reality of the Non-Existent Object of Thought', *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy* 6 (2018), 31–61; 'The Essence-Existence Distinction: Four Elements of the Post-Avicennian Metaphysical Dispute (11–13th Centuries)', *Oriens* 45 (2017), 203–258; J. Kaukua, *Suhrawardī's Illuminationism. A Philosophical Study* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2022), 56–93; R. Wisnovsky, 'Essence and Existence', 27–50.

38 See Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 9.1-16.

39 See Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 286.4-6.

40 See Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 282.7-12, 286.6.

of matter, while also conceding that, were one to take that property *qua* relative to the things that can exist in matter and are not presently existent in it, the resulting relative property would be mentally construed.[41]

Al-Khayyām's account abandons most of Bahmanyār's nuances in favour of straightforward conceptualism about existence as such, without discrimination between universal and particular.[42] He also believes the modalities (necessity, contingency) to be mentally construed. This is to be expected, for the modalities are said of quiddities relative to existence: if something is mentally construed, all properties relative to it are mentally construed as well.

Al-Ghazālī defends a conceptualist understanding of the modalities, and especially contingency, as part of his refutation of Avicenna's arguments for the world's eternity.[43] This approach continues in al-Shahrastānī[44] and is arguably expanded on by Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī, many of whose critiques against those arguments are based on conceptualism about time, existence, the modalities, and relations in general.[45] It should be noted that al-Shahrastānī's position on mentally construed matters is ambiguous and possibly inconsistent: he apparently accepts that things like existence and the genera are mentally construed, while systematically insisting that, if God shared with the created in some positive property (existence, or a genus), then He would be composite. This would only make sense if al-Shahrastānī were a realist about the properties in question, or about some other obscure properties of which they are the manifestation.[46]

The expansion of conceptualism arguably culminates in al-Suhrawardī, whose account is systematic in terms of approach and maximalist in terms of extension. Al-Suhrawardī's approach is systematic in the sense that he makes the discussion of mentally existent matters one of the main cornerstones of his philosophy, explicitly and exhaustively addressing them at the start of his metaphysics. Additionally, he takes

41 See Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 481.15–484.10.

42 See Khayyām, *al-Risāla fī l-ḍiyāʾ al-ʿaqlī fī mawḍūʿ al-ʿilm al-kullī*, in M. Ḥ. Ismāʿīl (ed.), *Jāmiʿ al-badāʾiʿ* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2004), 143.16–144.5; *al-Risāla fī l-wujūd*, in J. N. Ghulamriḍā (ed.), 'Sukhani darbara-yi *Risāla fī l-wujūd* az Ḥakīm ʿUmar b. Ibrahīm Khayyām', *Farhang* 29-32 (1999), 106.5–9.

43 See Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, Ed. M. Bouyges (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1927), 70.10–72.4.

44 See Shahrastānī, *Nihāya*, 34.2-6.

45 See Ibn Ghaylān, *Ḥudūth al-ʿālam*, Ed. M. Muḥaqqiq (Tehran: Anjuman-i āthār-i farhangī, 2004), 53.21–55.13, 55.19-20, 62.6–66.7, 74.1–75.12, 83.4-18.

46 The latter option may be behind a very obscure statement mentioned in Shahrastānī, *Shukūk suʾila l-qāḍī ʿUmar b. Sahlān al-Sāwī min jihati l-imām Muḥammad al- Shahrastānī wa-ṭalaba ḥalluhā*, MS Kazan, Kazan Federal University, Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, 1125-A, 111b.7–112a.1.

pains to explicate how conceptualism about matters like existence and the genera invalidates certain crucial Avicennian arguments (e.g., for God's simplicity, for God's unicity, for the self-subsistence of God's existence).[47]

Al-Suhrawardī's position on conceptualism is maximalist in the sense that he expands the set of mentally construed matters to include the highest number of elements seen in the tradition up to his time. He defends conceptualism about thingness, existence, unity and multiplicity, *quidditativity* (in the sense of 'being a quiddity') and similar properties, the modalities, universality and particularity, genera and differentiae in general, substantiality and accidentality, causal efficiency, relations in general, and privations.[48]

Suhrawardī also thematizes the signs enabling us to infer which matters are mentally construed. One is self-predication: all properties which can be predicated of themselves (e.g., existence, modalities, unity, relations) are mentally construed.[49] Here he generalizes a point made by previous conceptualists (like al-Khayyam, Ibn Ghaylān) about existence in particular. Al-Suhrawardī also singles out another, distinct sign of mental construal, i.e., reciprocal predication: All couples of properties that can be predicated of one another (e.g., existence and unity, existence and contingency, unity and necessity) are mentally construed.[50]

The primary takeaway of this cursory exposition is that the conceptualism of most post-Avicennian authors surpasses Avicenna's in positing the class of mentally construed matters, which eventually comes to include all categorical and trans-categorical properties. This diverges from Avicenna's own position. For the purposes of present inquiry, I will categorize mentally construed matters within the class of secondary intelligibles, for many authors explicitly or implicitly understand them in this way. While this categorization might be questionable in certain cases, it serves as a reasonable approximation for my purposes here.

47 See Suhrawardī, *Kitāb al-talwīḥāt*, *al-ʿilm al-thālith*, in Corbin, Henry (ed.), *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica*, vol.1 (Leipzig-Istanbul: Brockhaus-Maṭbaʿ al-maʿārif, 1993), 33.12–34.13; *Kitāb al-muqāwamāt, al-ʿilm al-thālith*, in Corbin, Henry (ed.), *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica*, vol.1 (Leipzig-Istanbul: Brockhaus-Maṭbaʿ al-maʿārif, 1993), 189.3-10; *Mashāriʿ*, 389.15–391.7.

48 For a general account of Suhrawardī's position on the mentally construed matters, see Kaukua, 2022, 56–93.

49 The conceptualist contention is that, if any of these were extra-mental, their self-predication would lead to an infinite regress (e.g., unity would be one by an additional unity, and so on).

50 If any of these couples were extra-mental, specific 'mixed' regresses would ensue (e.g., existence would be one by an additional unity, which would be existent by an additional existence, and so on).

4. Representationalism Challenged, Conceptualism Contracted

Anti-representationalism and anti-conceptualism are not unknown to the post-Avicennian tradition before al-Rāzī, despite being minority and (arguably) underdeveloped positions.

Abū l-Barakāt criticizes representationalism in the context of his theory of perception, holding that perception (both sensual and intellectual) can grasp its object directly, without requiring the mediation of a representation.[51] What holds true of perception in general holds for knowledge in particular, as knowledge is either the same as perception or a type of perception. Despite rejecting representationalism, Abū l-Barakāt continues to affirm the existence of mental forms in some capacity (properly speaking, representationalism is the doctrine that mental forms are necessary for knowledge, not merely the doctrine that mental forms exist).

Traces of anti-conceptualist arguments can be seen in works by prominent conceptualists like Khayyām, Ibn Ghaylān, and Suhrawardī.[52] Anti-conceptualism about matters like existence and contingency is defended by Abū l-Barakāt and al-Sāwī.[53]

As for Al-Rāzī himself, he can be described as on a trend of increasing scepticism towards representationalism and conceptualism in both their Avicennian and post-Avicennian formulations. An early work like *al-Mabāḥith* accepts the main contention of Avicenna's representationalism (mental forms are quidditatively identical to the objects of knowledge), even though al-Rāzī specifies (*contra* Bahmanyār) that mental forms are only necessary (not sufficient) for knowledge.[54] There, al-Rāzī also supports Avicenna's conceptualism about non-existent objects of knowledge and their properties, univer-

51 See F. Benevich, 'Perceiving Things in Themselves: Abū l-Barakāt al-Baġdādī's Critique of Representationalism,' *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 30 (2020), 229–264.

52 See for example Khayyām, *Risāla fī l-wujūd*, 106.11-12, 107.10-11; Ibn Ghaylān, *Ḥudūth*, 75.13–76.3.

53 Abū al-Barakāt defends realism about existence (which is incompatible with conceptualism about it) in Abū al-Barakāt, *Muʿtabar*, III, 63.9–64.10, even though the same passage also defends conceptualism about the definitional parts of simple species (e.g., 'colour' and 'expanding the pupil' for 'blackness'). Al-Sāwī is credited with supporting realism about existence and contingency by Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, 167.3-7; *Mashāriʿ*, 354.5-18, 352.10–353.7. Al-Rāzī's acquaintance with Abū al-Barakāt's work is well known. Al-Sāwī and *al-Baṣāʾir* are explicitly mentioned in the *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma* and in a 'lost' section of the *Maṭālib* that has recently come to light, see Rāzī, *Sharḥ ʿUyūn*, I, 111.10–11; *al-Juzʾ al-awwal min al-Maṭālib*, 13a.1, 15a.1. For more information on the lost section and its content, see E. Altaş 'In Pursuit of the Lost Volumes of *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*,' *Nazariyat* 6/2 (2020), 169–182.

54 See Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, I, 319.20–324.10. On Bahmanyār's position that mental forms are both necessary and sufficient, see Note 30.

sals, secondary intelligibles in general, and the definitional parts of simple species.[55] He also agrees with most post-Avicennian conceptualists in considering contingency mentally construed, *contra* Avicenna himself. This general attitude is also present in another early work, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, where al-Rāzī considers contingency, coming-to-be, causal dependence, and relations in general to be mentally construed.[56] That all being said, even these early writings mention some of the anti-representationalist and anti-conceptualist arguments that are further developed in al-Rāzī's later works.[57]

A crucial turning point is represented by middle works such as *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* and especially *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*. Here al-Rāzī explicitly and systematically attacks Avicennian representationalism, rejecting Avicennian mental forms as such.[58] It is unclear whether at this stage he also rejects the need for mental forms in an unqualified sense, i.e., mental forms taken regardless being quidditatively identical to the objects of knowledge or quidditatively different from them.

Given that mental forms are placed at the foundation of Avicennian (and post-Avicennian) conceptualism, al-Rāzī's rejection of them has a domino effect. He further goes against Avicenna by rejecting conceptualism about non-existent objects of knowledge (and their properties), universals, and the definitional parts of simple species. He adds that, even if one accepted Avicennian mental forms, there would still be independent grounds for rejecting conceptualism about these matters.[59] Al-Rāzī is also critical towards the mentally construed matters defended by post-Avicennian conceptualists: when he presents the hypothesis that a certain property may be mentally construed, he generally adds a rejoinder refuting that hypothesis.[60]

Some exceptions do remain to this overall tendency. Al-Rāzī sometimes mentions conceptualist positions without refuting them, especially in *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*.[61] However, similar exceptions just mean that al-Rāzī is inconsistent in deploying his critique of conceptualism, not that he consciously backtracks on it. Indeed, while he (rarely) men-

55 See Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, I, 41.6–43.5, 56.18–58.17, 119.9-12, 319.20–322.21.

56 See Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl fī dirāyat al-uṣūl*, Ed. S. Fūda (Beirut: Dār al-dhakhāʾir, 2015), I, 332.10-12, 379.2-4, 416.13-17, 417.1-9, III, 44.1-7.

57 Arguments against the representationalism appear in Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, I, 321.6–21. One argument against conceptualism about causal dependence is present in Rāzī, *Nihāya*, I, 410.7-14.

58 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 297.5–299.14, 475.6-8; *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, II, 216.13–228.12.

59 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 46.14–49.5, 302.15-16, 303.12-15, 309.2-5.

60 See for example Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, II, 570.11-12, 630.1-2.

61 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 61.7-9, 69.9-12, 348.14–349.1, 376.4-5.

tions the appeal to conceptualism without the standard objections against it, he never mentions answers to those objections.[62]

The anti-representationalist and anti-conceptualist trend consolidates in al-Rāzī's late works (*al-Arbaʿīn*, *Lubāb al-Ishārāt*, *al-Maṭālib*, *al-Muḥaṣṣal*, *al-Risāla fī l-khalq*, *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*).[63] When it comes to the case against representationalism, *al-Maṭālib* is particularly significant because, in addition to arguing against Avicennian mental forms, al-Rāzī explicitly attacks the doctrine that mental forms are *muthul* [images] or *ashbāh* [resemblances] quidditatively different from the objects of knowledge, considering it incoherent.[64] Another important clue that *al-Maṭālib* dismisses representationalism *simpliciter* (not just a specific type of representationalism) comes from the case against the doctrine that knowledge requires a non-relative accident existing in the mind.[65] I will discuss these point in detail later.

Al-Rāzī has very strong words against conceptualism in his late works. In *al-Risāla fī l-khalq wa-l-baʿth* he explicitly expresses his frustration with the popularity of conceptualism as a way of solving the problem of the ontological status of relations.

> This discourse is on people's lips despite being extremely weak and ephemeral.[66]

62 One might object that, precisely because al-Rāzī sometimes presents conceptualist (or representationalist) positions without mentioning his standard proofs against them, we are not justified in concluding that his intention is to reject conceptualism (or representationalism): It might be that sometimes he considers contrary proofs for the sake of the argument. I do not think that the objection holds water, for three reasons. First, it is reasonable to go with the preponderance of evidence when determining intent, and al-Rāzī explicitly rejects conceptualism (and representationalism) far more often than not. Second, it is reasonable to contend that an author rejects a certain position if he has unanswered arguments against that position while having no unanswered argument in support of it. These conditions are satisfied in the case at stake. Third, intent itself is not as important as the fact of the matter, which is that al-Rāzī presents no answer to the arguments against representationalism and conceptualism.

63 See for example, Rāzī, *al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, Ed. A. Ḥ. Al-Saqqā, (Cairo: Maktabat al-kulliyya al-azhariyya, 1986), I, 40.15-20; *Lubāb al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, Ed. A.Ḥ al-Saqqā (Cairo: Maktaba al-kulliyyāt al-azhariyya, 1986), 136.3-6; *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Fatih 3145, 105b.5–106b.1, 112b.8–113a.15, 164a.9–164b.10, 172a.15–173a.8; *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya mina l-ʿilm al-ilāhī*, Ed. A. Ḥ. al-Saqqā (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿarabī, 1987), I, 102.15–103.2, IV, 260.14-21; *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-mutaʾakhkhirīn mina l-ʿulamāʾ wa-al-ḥukamāʾ wa-l-mutakallimīn*, Ed. Ṭ. ʿA. Saʿd (Cairo: Maktabat al-kulliyyāt al-azhariyya, 1978), 34.5-8, 75.10-14; *al-Risāla fī l-khalq wa-l-baʿth*, MS Istanbul, Köprülü Kütüphanesi, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 816, 17b.2-12, 27b.12–28a.2; *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma* (Tehran: Muʾassasat al-Ṣādiq li-l-ṭabāʿa wa-l-nashr, 1994), I, 82.19–83.19, III, 100.25–102.4.

64 See Rāzī, *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 1b.9–5a.14.

65 See Rāzī, *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 6a.14–7b.3.

66 Rāzī, *Risāla fī l-khalq*, 17b.3.

He does the same in *al-Maṭālib*, with respect to conceptualism about the ontological status of existence.

> Most of the later philosophers rely on the doctrine that existence exist in that it is part of mental existents, not a part of concrete existents. They do not say that what is existent in concrete is such that its existence must be additional to it. In this way, the regress is stopped. This is Khayyām's position in his treatise *On Existence*, as well as al-Farīd al-Ghīlānī's position in his book *On the Coming-to-be of the World*. This is extremely weak.[67]

To the best of my knowledge, logical properties represent the only exception to this tendency in al-Rāzī's late works, as we see him explicitly support conceptualism about them (see section 7). Although very problematic for the consistency of his position, this limited, specific case should not lead us to believe that Rāzī's opinion shifted once again in the other direction, supporting conceptualism and representationalism in general. The preponderance of evidence proves otherwise.

The detailed explanation of the reasons behind the evolution of al-Rāzī's thought away from representationalism and conceptualism will be carried out in the next sections. In general terms, the reader should note that al-Rāzī's rejection of representationalist and conceptualist positions is not always related to the defence of any positive doctrine at all. For instance, al-Rāzī appears not to have a positive doctrine about the ontological status of certain matters. In certain cases, he rejects all options on the table (existence in the mind, existence outside the mind, absolute non-existence). Relations are a good example: they cannot be mentally existent, they cannot be extra-mentally existent, and they cannot be absolutely non-existent.[68] Al-Rāzī is acutely aware of similar antinomies and their importance, to the point that he mentions them as part of the sceptical case against the possibility of knowledge.[69]

5. Against Representationalism

Al-Rāzī's critique of representationalism is primarily directed at its Avicennian formulation (knowledge requires Avicennian mental forms), even though he arguably criticizes representationalism *simpliciter* (knowledge requires mental forms in an unqualified sense) as well.

67 Rāzī, *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 172a.16–172b.2.

68 See Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, I, 99.9–106.7; *Sharḥ ʿUyūn*, I, 98.21–99.3, 103.11–105.15; *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 159a.6–165a.6.

69 See Rāzī, *Risala fi l-khalq*, 10a.9–17b.12, 18b.12–28a.15.

Let us start with Avicenna's representationalism, which is based on the distinctiveness of mental existence, the existential indifference of unqualified quiddity, and the extensional unlimitedness of existence. Al-Rāzī attacks all these premises. This section will focus on the first two, as the extensional unlimitedness of existence concern the special case of knowledge of (extra-mentally) non-existent objects (discussed in section 6).

The distinctiveness of mental existence must be taken to mean that mental existence constitutes its own distinct type of existence, intensionally non-subordinate to concrete (extra-mental) existence. Al-Rāzī outright rejects this, arguing that the mind has concrete existence, and what exists in a concrete existent must have concrete existence as well, so what exists in the mind has concrete existence.[70] By itself, this remark may not be sufficient to refute Avicenna's position, though, as one might grant that the extension of mental existence is narrower than that of concrete existence (everything that has mental existence also has extra-mental existence, and not the other way around), while claiming that this does not lead to the intensional reduction or subordination of mental existence to concrete existence: something might have both existences at the same time.

Al-Rāzī's *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* and *al-Mabāḥith* provide us with the elements to construct a Rāzian refutation of this possible answer.[71] Let us start from the assumption that what is in the mind has both mental and concrete existence (because the mind in a concrete existent, and what exists in a concrete existent has concrete existence). At this juncture, we need to consider the relation between the mental existence and the extra-mental existence of what is in the mind. We get that the two existences are either [a] distinct in essence, or [b] identical in essence and distinct in number, or [c] identical in both essence and number. For al-Rāzī, option [a] is absurd because it leads to the equivocity of existence, which is explicitly rejected by both Avicenna and al-Rāzī himself. Option [b] entails the absurdity that a single thing has two identical instances of existence. This leaves us with option [c], which entails that mental existence is in no way distinct from concrete existence. Such conclusion should not be taken to mean that what is in the mind is also outside of the mind (which is contradictory), but rather that what is in the mind does not have multiple (essentially or numerically) different

70 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 299.4-6. A similar remark also appears in Khayyām, *Risāla fī jawāb ʿan thalātha masāʾil*, in M.Ḥ. Ismāʿīl (ed.), *Jāmiʿ al-badāʾiʿ* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2004), 136.4-6, 136.22–137.4; Abū al-Barakāt, *Muʿtabar*, III, 2.18–3.3, 21.18–22.9.

71 See Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, I, 321.10-19; *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, II, 220.14–221.1.

instances of existence, and that the type of existence possessed by what is in the mind is not essentially different from the type of existence possessed by what is outside the mind. Al-Rāzī stresses this last point in *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, where he says that existing mentally should be taken to mean 'existing in the mind like the accident exists in the subject of inherence' (*tūjadu fī l-nafsi ka-wujūdi l-ʿaraḍ fī l-maḥall*), and nothing else.[72]

One might object that this whole argument misses the mark because it draws an immediate implication between [a] essential difference and the equivocity of existence, thereby failing to discuss the option that mental and concrete existence differ by *tashkīk* [modulation]: while they share in some aspect, they differ in that concrete existence is prior to and more deserving than mental existence.[73] This objection is predicated on a specific understanding of *tashkīk* (multiple instances of modulated predicates are essentially different from one another) which is not shared by al-Rāzī. Indeed, he implies that *tashkīk* shares with *tawāṭuʾ* [univocity] precisely in the fact that their multiple instances share a single essence. The two types of predication are species of a single proximate genus.[74] In sum, for al-Rāzī the instances of existence are identical in essence despite being modulated (the reason why the existence of this is prior to the existence of that is to be found in the quiddity of this and the quiddity of that, not in the nature of existence itself).

The existential indifference of pure quiddity (Avicenna's second foundational premise) means that quiddity taken without conditions may exist both mentally and extra-mentally. Al-Rāzī's refutation of this premise builds on the previous rejection of mental existence as a distinct type of existence. *Al-Mulakhkhaṣ* simply argues that, in light of that rejection, one immediately knows that an accident existing in the mind cannot have the same quiddity as an extra-mental substance (e.g., the sky, the earth). *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* further explicates that the non-distinction of mental existence coupled with the indifference of quiddity would entail that no difference (except in number) remains between the mental matter and its extra-mental counterpart: they would be the same in quiddity (because of the indifference of quiddity) and in existence (because of the non-distinctiveness of mental existence). In other words, the exact same identity

72 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 299.6-10.

73 The idea that concrete and mental existence differ by *tashkīk* is mentioned by Khayyām and Abū l-Barakāt, even though they do not formulate the idea in the context of a defence of Avicennian representationalism, see Khayyām, *Risāla fī jawāb*, 136.22–137.4; Abū l-Barakāt, *Muʿtabar*, III, 21.18–22.9.

74 See Rāzī, *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*, I, 11-19.

that obtains between any two extra-mental things having a certain quiddity would also obtain between an extra-mental thing and its mental form.[75]

At this point, we can approach al-Rāzī's arguments against Avicennian representationalism itself, which are of two types. The first simply notes that Avicennian representationalism requires the existential indifference of unqualified quiddity, which can be shown to be absurd based on what we saw.[76]

The second type of argument contends that, even if we accepted the existential indifference of quiddities, Avicenna's representationalism would make it impossible to know the extra-mental concomitants of those quiddities.[77] Let us consider an example. Representationalism posits that, for us to know fire, the quiddity of fire must exist in our mind. An objection could arise: if that were the case, then the mind would be heated, because heat is a necessary concomitant of the quiddity of fire, and the quiddity of fire exists in the mind. The advocate of representationalism answers counters this by asserting that the mind is not heated because heat is an extra-mental concomitant of the quiddity of fire, not a mental concomitant of it. In other words, heat necessarily follows fire on condition that fire exists in the external world. However, al-Rāzī raises a question about the extra-mental concomitant itself. Does one's knowledge of heat require the quiddity of heat to exist in one's mind? If it does not, Avicenna's representationalism is rejected. If it does, then the mind must be heated because, unlike in the case of fire, there is no difference between the quiddity of heat and the fact that the subject of heat is heated. Furthermore, if the adversary applies the previously mentioned reasoning to heat itself–arguing that the quiddity of heat heats due to a second-order extra-mental concomitant–an infinite regress would follow since the second-order extra-mental concomitant can also be known.

A special formulation of this type of argument focuses on existence. For al-Rāzī, existence is an extra-mental concomitant of quiddities (indeed, it is the most fundamental of their extra-mental concomitants, the extra-mental concomitant which is condition for any other extra-mental concomitant). If one knew existence through the mental form of existence existing in one's mind, then the knower would exist twice (once because the knower is an existent thing, and once because the knower knows

75 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 299.11-14; *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, II, 221.1-10

76 See Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, I, 321.10-19; *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, II, 220.14–221.10; *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 1b.19–4b.15.

77 See Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, I, 321.6–322.18; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 297.6–298.6; *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 3b.1–4b.7.

existence through the mental form of existence). There is no difference between the essence of existence and the fact that the subject of existence exists.[78]

The argument from the knowledge of the extra-mental concomitants is particularly important for al-Rāzī, and it is rather easy to explain why. In most cases, the extra-mental concomitants of quiddities are what is most evidently known: one may not know the quiddity of fire, but one certainly does know the extra-mental concomitant which is heat. In light of this, we can better appreciate why al-Rāzī deems the impossibility of knowing extra-mental concomitants a fatal flaw of Avicennian representationalism.

In addition to presenting arguments against representationalism, al-Rāzī underlines the weakness of the two arguments supporting it. One is an analogy with the impression of the forms of sensible objects in mirrors: mirrors reflect things by bearing their forms, just like minds know things by bearing their quiddities. Arguments by analogy do not provide certitude and, besides, it can be demonstrated that the forms of sensible objects are not impressed in mirrors.[79] The other argument is from non-existent imaginative objects: we can imagine things that do not (or even cannot) exist concretely, so these must exist in our mind. Al-Rāzī's rejection of this proof will be considered in the next section, what matters here is that he dismisses the argument.[80]

We come to the issue of whether al-Rāzī attacks representationalism *simpliciter*, not just Avicenna's specific formulation of it. The question comes down to whether he rejects the doctrine that knowledge requires images or figures whose quiddities are not identical to those of the objects of knowledge.[81] Although *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* and *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* do not explicitly tackle the issue, *al-Maṭālib* gives us the elements to reconstruct al-Rāzī's position.

First, he stigmatizes the proponents of the doctrine of images as incoherent, presumably because they start by assuming Avicennian mental quiddities and then transition to images as an *ad hoc* solution to problems like those raised by al-Rāzī himself.[82]

78 See Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, I, 14.6-11, 16.5-9.

79 For a discussion of the mirror analogy in post-Rāzian thought, see M. Kaş, 'Mental Existence Debates in the Post-Classical Period of Islamic Philosophy: Problems of the Category and Essence of Knowledge,' *Nazariyat* 4/3 (2018), 56–58.

80 See Rāzī, *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 4b.7-5a.14.

81 The hypothesis that al-Rāzī may accept mental forms as images of the objects of knowledge, quidditatively different from them, has been suggested by B. Ibrahim, *Freeing Philosophy from Metaphysics: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Philosophical Approach to the Study of Natural Phenomena* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, McGill University: Montreal, 2013), 269–270 and M. Kaş, 'Mental Existence Debates', 62–63. They probably formulated the hypothesis in question because they lacked access to the 'lost' volume of *al-Maṭālib*.

82 Rāzī, *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 2a.16-21.

Second, he notes the lack of convincing proofs for a necessary premise of representationalism *simpliciter*. This premise is that knowledge requires a non-relative accident inhering in the knower's mind (which is necessary for representationalism because mental forms have precisely been defined as non-relative mental properties possessing a relation of 'representation' with the objects of knowledge). According to al-Rāzī, the arguments presented for this premise can only prove that knowledge requires something additional to the substance of the knower, without being able to determine whether the additional thing is a non-relative accident which in turn possesses a relation (the premise required by representationalism) or a purely relative accident which attaches directly to the knower without the mediation of a non-relative accident.[83] We can deduce that for al-Rāzī's representationalism *simpliciter* is insufficiently justified, because one if its premises is insufficiently justified.

Third, al-Rāzī argues against the above-mentioned premise, based on his tenet that knowledge itself is nothing but a specific type of relation. If a non-relative accident possessed the specific relation in question, the bearer of knowledge would be the accident itself, not the substance of the knower (knowledge is the same as that relation).[84] This is absurd, because the knower is what has knowledge, so knowledge must attach to the substance of the knower, not to a non-relative accident inhering in the knower.[85] Based on this, we can conclude that representationalism *simpliciter* is not only insufficiently justified, but also demonstrably false for al-Rāzī.

When I say that al-Rāzī rejects representationalism *simpliciter*, I only mean that he rejects mental forms (however construed) as necessary conditions for knowledge. This is not the same as rejecting the existence of mental forms altogether, or even rejecting that mental forms are present alongside knowledge without being conditions for it. Al-Rāzī is silent about these issues.

83 Rāzī, *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 7b.4–8b.18.

84 Rāzī, *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 8b.19–9a.15. The position that knowledge is a pure relation is also defended in Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, III, 103.9–104.2.

85 Al-Rāzī grants that this argument fails to refute the hypothesis that knowledge requires a non-relative accident not in the sense that the relation attaches to the non-relative accident, but rather in the sense that the relation attaches to the knower while being produced by the non-relative accident (which acts as its efficient cause). However, he considers the hypothesis unjustified (no reason exists to affirm the existence of this causally efficient, non-relative accident), dialectically irrelevant (none of his adversaries understands knowledge and its conditions in this way), and demonstrably false (it can be proven that no efficient cause exists except God).

6. Against Conceptualism: Non-Existent Objects of Knowledge[86]

Among the three foundational Avicennian premises, one acts as the sufficient condition for conceptualism about extra-mentally non-existent objects of knowledge, as well as for representationalism about the necessary conditions for knowing them. That is the unlimited extension of existence: everything which is subject of predication and object of knowledge must possess existence. This principle is supported by the argument from attribution, which deduces the intrinsic existence of the subject from the attributive existence of its property. The fact that a subject possesses a property means that the property exists for that subject (attributive existence). The attributive existence of that property entails its existence in itself (intrinsic existence of the attribute), which in turn entails requires the existence of the subject (intrinsic existence of the subject).

Before delving into al-Rāzī's rejection of conceptualism about non-existent objects, we need to understand what a non-existent object of knowledge is and how it differs from its mental form, according to the representationalist-conceptualist account. A non-existent object of knowledge is anything which can be immediately taken as subject of a true negative existential proposition. For example, assuming the immediate truth of the proposition 'the thousand-headed person is non-existent,' we have that the thousand-headed person is a non-existent object of knowledge. The (extra-mentally) non-existent object of knowledge and its mental form are the same thing because they possess the same quiddity, the same (mental) existence, and the same particularizing accidents (e.g., existing in this particular mind). However, this single thing is accidentally differentiated due to the difference between the conditions of the act of knowledge and the conditions of the content of knowledge.[87]

86 For a more general discussion of the issue of the ontological status of (extra-mentally) non-existent objects of knowledge in post-Avicennian philosophy, see F. Benevich, 'The Reality of the Non-Existent Object of Thought,' 31–61. For a treatment of al-Rāzī's position on mental existence with reference to the discussion of the argument from attribution, readers of Turkish may refer to H. Kormaz, 'Fer'î Kaide Bağlamında Fahreddin Râzî'nin Zihnî Varlık Anlayışı', *Idrak Dini Araştırmalar Dergisi* 2/2 (2022), 284–310.

87 The distinction between the condition of the act of knowledge and the condition of its content is grounded in the fact that mental existence is only a condition for the act of knowledge, not for its content. One might know a certain quiddity without knowing that such quiddity exists in one's mind: The mental existence of the quiddity is necessary for knowing the quiddity, but the knowledge of that mental existence is not necessary (see Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, I, 35.5-16). In other words, the object of knowledge may be the pure quiddity of a mentally existent thing, taken without its mental existence, while the mental form is that quiddity taken with its mental existence.

Al-Rāzī's case against conceptualism about non-existent objects of knowledge (and against representationalism about the necessary conditions for knowing them) works in one of two ways, i.e., either by accepting the unlimited extension of existence and the argument from attribution, while contending that they do not entail conceptualism, or by questioning the principle itself and attacking the argument from attribution which supports it. Al-Rāzī considers four types of non-existent objects: [i] imaginative objects, [ii] impossibilities, [iii] negation, and [iv] non-existence.

The case in defence of conceptualism about [i] imaginative objects is straight-forward. One can imagine objects that do not exist extra-mentally, e.g., a thousand-headed person. These objects of knowledge have specific properties, so they must be existent in some way or another. Given that they do not exist extra-mentally, they must exist in the mind. This reasoning relies on the unlimited extension of existence and the argument from attribution, which al-Rāzī criticizes in other cases.[88]

Al-Rāzī has two objections against the conceptualist's reasoning. The first starts by conceding that imaginative objects have existent quiddities, in some way or another. Al-Rāzī is willing to grant the conceptualist that the argument from attribution does work in the specific case of imaginative objects, presumably because no property of imaginative objects is immediately incompatible with their existence. At this point, however, al-Rāzī argues that the conceptualist falls short of proving that these objects of knowledge are extra-mentally non-existent in an absolute sense. He merely proves that they cannot be both extra-mentally existent and *ḥāḍira*, accessible to sense-perception. However, it may be that such objects are extra-mentally existent and *ghāʾiba*, not accessible to sense-perception. There may be a perceptually inaccessible thousand-headed person, either existing as a substance or as an accident of a substance. Al-Rāzī tries to diffuse the apparent implausibility of this hypothesis by offering analogies with known doctrines. In *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, he says that these things could be Plato's exemplars.[89] *Al-Maṭālib* adds that the *aṣḥāb al-ṭalāsim* [practitioners of talismanic magic] do believe in something similar: for them, everything in the inferior world has a correlate in the superior world.[90]

88 On the unlimited extension of existence and the argument from attribution, see Section 2. On al-Rāzī's critique, see the rest of this section.

89 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 298.10-11.

90 In the example, the thing in the inferior world would be our conceiving of the person with a thousand heads, while its correlate would be the extra-mentally existent but concealed thousand-headed person, see Rāzī, *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 5a.5-9.

The second of al-Rāzī's objections against the case for conceptualism about imaginative objects rejects that these have quiddities in a proper sense. When we believe we conceive of an imaginative object, we are actually conceiving of multiple extra-mentally existent quiddities. For example, the pseudo-conception of 'thousand-headed person' comes down to the conception of 'head of the person' and the conception of 'thousand-fold multiplication.' We do not have a single conception of a mentally existent quiddity, but rather multiple conceptions of extra-mentally existent quiddities. Al-Rāzī further explains that what the mind is actually doing in this case is not conceiving of a single (extra-mentally) non-existent quiddity, but rather judging that a certain extra-mentally existent quiddity is ascribed to another. It is not that the thousand-headed person exists in the mind: what exists in the mind is the judgement 'the head of the person is multiplied a thousand-fold.'[91]

The main problem with this solution is that it implies the unreliability of our intuitions about what constitutes pure conception and what constitutes judgement. One may contend that we intuitively know the difference between conceiving of a thousand-headed person (which is neither true nor false by itself) and judging that there is a person whose head is multiplied a thousand-fold (which could be true or false, and indeed is probably always false).

Another problem is that, even if we accepted that both the quiddity 'head of the person' and the quiddity 'thousand-fold multiplication' are extra-mentally existent, and that what the mind does is judging that the head of the person is multiplied a thousand-fold, there would still be an object of conception which cannot be extra-mentally existent, that being the predicative relation connecting one quiddity to the other (i.e., the relation expressed by the copula 'is' in the false judgement 'the head of the person *is* multiplied a thousand-fold'). In order to (correctly or incorrectly) judge that one thing is predicated of another, one needs a conception of the predicative relation

91 See Rāzī, *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 5a.9-14. This second objection draws inspiration from Avicenna's own assertion that impossible objects of thought can only be ascribed pseudo-quiddities which come down to the imaginative combination of possible quiddities (e.g., the impossible object 'God's contrary' comes down to the imaginative combination of 'God' and the relation 'contrariety'), see Avicenna, *Kitāb al-shifāʾ, al-Manṭiq, al-Burhān*, Eds. I. Madkūr and Aʿ A. al-Affīfī (Cairo: al-Matbaʿa al-amīriyya, 1956), I, 72; *al-Taʿlīqāt*, Ed. ʿA.R. Badawī (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-miṣriyya al-ʿāmma li-l-kitāb, 1973), 147 (I am grateful to Jari Kaukua for having pointed this out to me). Al-Rāzī significantly reformulates the general idea behind Avicenna's take. For al-Rāzī, these imaginative combinations do not amount to pure conceptions of pseudo-quiddities, but rather to false judgements about concrete quiddities. They are cognitive states of different kinds.

holding between the two. This predicative relation cannot be extra-mentally existent, otherwise the thousand-headed person would exist in the external world: both the two quiddities and the predicative relation would exist, and the thousand-headed person is nothing but the sum of these things. So, the predicative relation must be mentally existent, based on the argument from attribution. Al-Rāzī could meet this critique by rejecting the applicability of the argument from attribution to the predicative relation in question. This would not be too problematic for him: as I will show, he does reject the applicability of the argument to [ii] impossibilia, [iii] negation, and [iv] complete non-existence.

Let us consider the case of [ii] impossible objects of knowledge. Again, the conceptualist position is based on the unlimited extension of existence, which is supported by the argument from attribution. However, impossibilities are specifically mentioned by al-Rāzī as one of the counterexamples against the argument from attribution. Impossibilities can be ascribed properties, but they cannot be ascribed existence because existence is incompatible with impossibility. The adversary replies that impossibility is actually compatible with mental existence. Impossibility must be taken to mean 'being impossibly existent in extra-mental reality.' One conceives of a certain mental form and then judges that the quiddity of that mental form cannot exist extra-mentally. The subject of this judgement is the quiddity of the mental form, not the mental form itself, because any mental form is impossibly existent extra-mentally in light of its being a mental form, regardless of the specific nature of its quiddity.[92] In sum, the judgement ascribing impossibility to the impossible should be understood as 'the quiddity of this mental form cannot exist extra-mentally'.

Al-Rāzī rejects this reasoning in two main ways. The first notes that, by considering the impossible as a mental form which cannot exist extra-mentally, the conceptualist substitutes the absolutely impossible with something else. The impossible mentioned as a counterexample is not the extra-mentally impossible: it is the absolutely impossible, i.e., what can exist neither in the mind nor in extra-mental reality. The conceptualist would be forced to say that the absolutely impossible cannot be an object of knowledge, precisely because it can exist neither in the mind nor in extra-mental reality. This leads to a self-contradiction that will be explicated in the discussion of [iv] non-existence.

92 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 297.1-2; Kātibī, *al-Munaṣṣaṣ fī sharḥ al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, MS Istanbul, Köprülü Kütüphanesi, Fazil Ahmed, 888, 139a.4-17.

The second of al-Rāzī's objections is based on correspondence. In *al-Muḥaṣṣal*, he explicitly says that impossibility cannot be *farḍī* [mentally construed] because the *farḍ* [mental construal] ascribing impossibility to a certain subject would either correspond to extra-mental reality or not. If it did, then it should correspond to a truth-maker that is both extra-mental and (necessarily) non-existent. If the mental construal did not correspond, it would simply amount to a false judgement.[93] Some manuscripts of *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* include an obscure statement which apparently points to the same idea: the judgement that the quiddity of the mental form cannot exist extra-mentally is 'a judgement on what has no existence extra-mentally' (*ḥukmun ʿalā mā lā wujūda lahu fī l-khārij*).[94] The most convincing interpretation of this remark traces it back to the objection from correspondence of *al-Muḥaṣṣal*, as well as to another place of *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* itself where al-Rāzī rejects conceptualism about the instances of non-existence by referring to correspondence.

It is worth delving into this objection a bit more. For al-Rāzī, the truth of negative existential propositions about extra-mental reality derives from their correspondence to the extra-mental. 'This quiddity cannot exist extra-mentally' is true because, outside the mind, things are such that this quiddity cannot exist there. The objection from correspondence argues as follows: even if one conceded that the impossible exists in the mind, and that its impossibility is the impossibility of extra-mental existence, the truth of the proposition 'the impossible cannot exist extra-mentally' would still be due to how things are outside the mind. In other words, its truth-maker would be extra-mental. According to al-Rāzī, this forces the conceptualist to recognize a truth-maker which is a subject of properties, non-existent, and extra-mental. It is a subject of properties because it has a specific relation of truth-making to a distinct proposition and not to others (entailing that the truth-maker itself has other properties like distinction, individuation, etc.). The truth-maker is non-existent because it is the truth-maker of a negative existential proposition, not of an affirmative existential proposition. Finally,

93 See Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 34.5-8. A similar idea is mentioned with respect to non-existents in general in Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 302.16-17.

94 The recently published edition and the majority of the manuscripts mention that the conceptualist solution to the counterexamples has a problem (*fīhi baḥth*). Most versions of the text, including the edited version, leave this remark completely indeterminate, see Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, 296.16. Of those which explicate the content of the critique, some include it in the bulk of the text (MS Istanbul, Fazil Ahmed 901, 38a.13), while others mention it as a gloss (MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. or. oct. 623, 78b). The case can be made that the explanation is authoritative based on the fact that Kātibī's commentary on *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* mentions it and explicitly ascribes it to Rāzī, see Kātibī, *Munaṣṣaṣ*, 138b.31-35.

the truth-maker is extra-mental because the proposition is true by virtue of its correspondence to the extra-mental, not by virtue of correspondence to the mental. The result of all this reasoning is that even the conceptualist must accept things which are subjects of properties, non-existent, and extra-mental. This contradicts the argument from attribution, which in turn is the foundation of the case for conceptualism.[95]

The basic idea explicated thus far also applies to the case of [iii] *intifāʾ* or *salb* [negation], by which al-Rāzī arguably means attributive non-existence (i.e., the non-existence of this attribute for this subject). This is another counterexample given by al-Rāzī against the argument from attribution. Negation has properties but cannot be existent precisely because being existent is incompatible with one of its properties, namely opposition to *ījāb* or *thubūt* [affirmation]. What is opposite to a thing cannot possess that thing. The conceptualist avoids the counterexample by arguing that both negation and affirmation exist as mental forms. In the case of negation, the property of being opposite to affirmation must be understood in the sense that negation has the property 'non-correspondence to an extra-mental existent,' while affirmation has the opposite property, i.e., 'correspondence to an extra-mental existent'. This opposition is compatible with both negation and affirmation having mental existence.

Al-Rāzī objects that the judgement ascribing non-correspondence to the mental form is 'a judgement on what has no existence extra-mentally' (*ḥukmun ʿalā mā lā wujūda lahu fī l-khārij*). Again, the point is seemingly that the truth-maker of the proposition 'the mental form of negation does not correspond to an extra-mental existent' would have to be both extra-mental and non-existent (which contradicts the argument from attribution).

95 A further conceptualist answer to al-Rāzī's critique is purely speculative at this point. The conceptualist might claim that the truth-maker of a true negative existential proposition is indeed existent, being the totality of all things that exist *instead of* the non-existent in question. In other terms, such truth-maker would be the truth-maker of that specific conjunction of positive existential propositions whose truth-value is equivalent to the truth-value of the negative existential. For example, let us suppose that 'a thousand-headed person does not exist' is true. The conceptualist might argue that its truth-maker is the truth-maker of the exhaustive conjunction 'single-headed person 1 exists', 'single-headed person 2 exists' and so on up to 'single-headed person N exists'. The truth-maker in question would be the existence of all (single-headed) people in the world. This kind of answer appears problematic, though, because the truth-value of the negative existential is not equivalent to the truth-value of the conjunction of the positive existentials considered as a mere sum. Rather, it is equivalent to the truth-value of the conjunction of the positive existentials considered as an *exhaustive* sum. In other words, when I list the things that exist instead of the non-existent in question (person 1, person 2, person N), I need to add that such list is exhaustive: 'only N people exist'. This proposition is in turn reducible to the conjunction of 'person 1 exists', 'person 2 exists', 'person N exists', and, crucially, 'person N+1 does not exist'. The last constitutive element is, again, a negative existential that must be true by virtue of correspondence to what is both extra-mental and non-existent.

Finally, we come to the discussion of [iv] *ʿadam* [non-existence], by which al-Rāzī presumably means intrinsic non-existence (i.e., the non-existence of this thing). This is the last counterexample against the argument from attribution. For al-Rāzī, the latter would entail that complete non-existence cannot be subject of properties: it if were, it would be existent, which is absurd. The claim that complete non-existence cannot be subject of properties leads to a self-contradiction, however, because it entails that pure non-existence is subject of the property 'impossibility of being subject of properties.' Also, non-existence must be known intuitively, for its notion is included in the intuitive judgement that a thing is either existent or non-existent. The conceptualist solution is to say that pure non-existence exists in the mind, and the impossibility of having properties must be taken to mean 'impossibility of having extra-mental properties,' which is compatible with being mentally existent.[96]

Similarly to the case of the impossible, the objection against the conceptualist is twofold. First, one may argue that the conceptualist is changing the matter in question, i.e., taking extra-mental non-existence in place of complete non-existence (=non-existence both in the mind and in extra-mental reality). The conceptualist would have to concede that complete non-existence cannot be known, leading to a self-contradiction similar to the one already mentioned. Second, even if one granted that non-existence exists as a mental form, that mental form would be a correct piece of knowledge only if it corresponded to the extra-mental.[97] By this, al-Rāzī seemingly means that true judgements about non-existence would be true by virtue of correspondence to the extra-mental, so their truth-maker would have to be both extra-mental and non-existent.

It is significant that, in *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, al-Rāzī's final words on this discussion are that *inṣāf* [impartial judgement] recognizes the argument from attribution to be weak, and the counterexamples against it to be strong.

In conclusion, the reader should note that al-Rāzī case against conceptualism about non-existent objects of knowledge reverberates on the properties of those objects. If the impossible is not mentally existent, for example, then its properties are not mentally existent.[98]

96 See Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, I, 42.10-13.

97 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 303.12-14.

98 For example, al-Rāzī rejects conceptualism about temporal properties that have non-existent subjects (e.g., being past, being future), see Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, V, 98.4-13.

7. Against Conceptualism: Definitional Parts and Secondary Intelligibles

Avicenna and several post-Avicennians support conceptualism about the definitional parts (genera, differentiae) of simple species, such as most accidents and incorporeal substances. The mental difference between these definitional parts is grounded in the distinction between *ibhām* [indeterminacy] and *taḥṣīl* [determination], which in turn appear to be specific properties of mental forms *qua* mental forms.

Remarkably enough, al-Rāzī's discussion of conceptualism about the definitional parts of simple quiddities (e.g., colours) does not consider the distinction between indeterminacy and determination. Be that as it may, al-Rāzī rejects conceptualism about the definitional parts of simple quiddities in his middle and late works.[99] His case against it is similar to the case against conceptualism about non-existent objects of knowledge, in that he makes use of the argument from correspondence. He argues that, even if we granted that the genus and the differentia of an extra-mentally simple quiddity existed in the mind, it would still be the case that the judgement 'this quiddity is constituted of these definitional parts' either corresponds to how things are in external reality or does not. If the judgement did correspond, the quiddity in question ought to be constituted of parts in extra-mental reality. If the judgement did not correspond, the judgement would simply be false.

Al-Rāzī considers a possible answer on behalf of the conceptualist. The answer appeals to the quiddity-existence distinction, presenting a sort of middle ground between realism and conceptualism. The judgement 'this quiddity is composed of these definitional parts' corresponds to extra-mental reality in the sense that the parts are distinct in quiddity, and such distinction holds true both mentally and extra-mentally. The difference between the two cases is that in the mind these quidditatively distinct parts are also distinct in existence (each has its own instance of existence), while in concrete they are not distinct in existence (they only have one instance of existence, despite remaining distinct in quiddity).[100]

Even this middle ground solution is ultimately rejected, as al-Rāzī notes that existence is an attribute which inheres in quiddity as its subject. The answer would entail

99 He defends it in Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, I, 56.18–58.21. He rejects it in *Muḥaṣṣal*, 64.1-3; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 308.13–310.12, 310.10-16; *Sharḥ ʿUyūn*, I, 82.16–83.19.

100 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 309.3-5. M. Kaş, 'Mental Existence Debates,' 64 implies that here al-Rāzī's is presenting his own position. This is implausible because the hypothesis of distinction in quiddity and identity in existence is rejected in other late works (see note above) as well as in the subsequent chapter of *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*.

that, in concrete, a single instance of existence inheres in more than one quiddity (the quiddities of the parts are extra-mentally distinct), which is absurd because a single attribute cannot inhere in more than one subject.[101]

> If a single existence could inhere in two quiddities, why would it be impossible for a single accident to inhere in two subjects-of-inherence, or for a single body to exist in two places?[102]

The final class of things deemed mentally existent by Avicenna and later conceptualists consists in the secondary intelligibles, which they consider to be specific properties of mental forms *qua* mental forms. It is worth breaking down this class into three sub-classes: [i] logical properties in general (Avicenna's secondary intelligibles); [ii] universality and universals; [iii] mentally construed matters (secondary intelligibles according to many post-Avicennian conceptualists, but not to Avicenna).

The exposition of al-Rāzī's position on the ontological status of [i] logical properties requires us to investigate how he understands them. Al-Rāzī's definition of logical properties in *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* does not mention mental forms at all. He says that logical properties are those external properties that attach to quiddities, taken *qua* objects of knowledge, with relation to other quiddities, taken *qua* objects of knowledge. More specifically, logical properties are these properties inasmuch as they are taken with one of their own external properties, which is the capacity of mediating the acquisition of inferential knowledge.[103]

Contrary to his general attitude, al-Rāzī explicitly supports conceptualism about logical properties in two occasions. In the *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*, he affirms that logic investigates 'the accidents of the secondary intelligibles which do not have extra-mental existence' (*al-aʿrāḍ al-ʿāriḍa li-l-maʿqūlāti l-thāniyati llatī lā wujūda la-hā fī l-khārij*), only mental existence.[104] Depending on how we read the relative clause, we have either that the logical properties themselves are merely mental or that their accidents considered in logic are merely mental. In the end, the latter option actually amounts to the same result as the former (logical properties are merely mental): if the accidents of a type of thing exist only in the mind, then that type of thing also exists only in the

101 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 310.11-12.

102 Rāzī, *Risāla fī l-khalq*, 17b.3.

103 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 38.1-10; *Sharḥ ʿUyūn*, I, 47.11–48.6.

104 See Rāzī, *Sharḥ ʿUyūn*, I, 48.10-14.

mind.[105] In *al-Maṭālib*, al-Rāzī is absolutely unambiguous: Logical properties exist only in the mind, not in concrete reality.[106] He even mentions and dismisses an argument against conceptualism about logical properties (importantly, his dismissal of such argument implicitly assumes Avicennian representationalism).[107]

Conceptualism about logical properties is at odds with al-Rāzī's implicit anti-conceptualism about universality (see below), for universality is a logical property. Additionally and more importantly, conceptualism about logical properties is incompatible with anti-representationalism. This is because al-Rāzī says that the subjects of logical properties are the quiddities themselves, albeit on condition of being objects of knowledge: a quiddity (e.g., animality), taken *qua* object of knowledge, can be ascribed a secondary intelligible (e.g. being a genus) with reference to another quiddity (e.g., humanity), taken *qua* object of knowledge.[108] Al-Rāzī's rejection of Avicennian representationalism entails that these quiddities cannot be mentally existent, and the same goes for the property of being an object of knowledge.[109] The assertion that logical properties are mentally existent is incompatible with the assertion that the quiddities of the objects of knowledge cannot be mentally existent, because those quiddities themselves are the subjects of logical properties, and such properties cannot be mentally existent if their subjects are not mentally existent. This inconsistency is hardly explainable. Even if one were to dissolve it by dismissing the above-mentioned passages and claiming that, based on al-Rāzī's other doctrines, logical properties should be non-mental, those would be a very strange type of non-mental matters, because he explicitly says that they arise as a consequence of the quiddities becoming objects of knowledge. Knowl-

105 If al-Rāzī rejected this principle, he would have to concede that the quiddities of logical properties are indeed capable of existing both in the mind and in external reality, having different sets of accidents in the two existential states. In sum, he would have to accept the existential indifference of quiddity.

106 See Rāzī, *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 64a.8–64b.3.

107 The argument against conceptualism contends that the true judgement 'this quiddity has these logical properties' would need to correspond to the extra-mental, and so those logical properties would be extra-mental. If the judgement did not correspond to the extra-mental, then it would be false. Al-Rāzī answers that, in this specific case, the judgement is true even though its truth does not require correspondence to the extra-mental. This is because the judgement in question is not 'this quiddity has these logical properties *in itself*' but rather 'this quiddity has these logical properties *when existing in the mind*,' see Rāzī, *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 63b.19–64a.7. It is evident that this reasoning is correct only based on Avicennian representationalism.

108 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 38.1-10.

109 Being an object of knowledge is a property of the thing which is known. Given that the thing which is known is not mentally existent, the property of being an object of knowledge is not mentally existent either.

edge is a mental state, so logical properties would be non-mental matters that arise as a result of a mental state.

Let us consider al-Rāzī's case against conceptualism about [ii] universality and universals.[110] Al-Rāzī's general categorization of universals draws on Avicenna, who distinguishes between three things called *kullī* [universal]. The first is the *kullī ṭabīʿī* [natural universal], which the quiddity taken on no condition, neither the condition of having the property of universality nor the condition of having the property of particularity. The second is the *kullī manṭiqī* [logical universal], which is universality itself as a property, the property of being shared by many. The third is the *kullī ʿaqlī* [notional universal], which is the quiddity taken on condition of having the property of universality.

Avicenna defends realism about the natural universal and conceptualism about the other two. He identifies notional universals with mental forms (i.e., quiddities taken *qua* mentally existent), which entails that universality itself is mentally existent, being the property of a mentally existent subject. Pressed by the objection that the mental form cannot be universal because it is a particular accident existing in a particular mind, Avicenna reframes universality itself as the property of having the same relation to many extra-mental individuals which share in pure quiddity (this is compatible with the particularity of the mental form). Any extra-mental individual having a certain quiddity has the same effect on the mind as any other individual having that quiddity (the effect being the mental form).

Al-Rāzī agrees with Avicenna on the status of the natural universal, while rejecting his conceptualism about the notional universal and not explicitly expressing any position about the logical universal. The case against Avicenna's position on the notional universal develops in one of two ways. One is rejecting mental forms as such, which has already been discussed at length. The other way is conceding mental forms for the sake of argument, while claiming that they could not have universality as a property.[111] Al-Rāzī presents three proofs for this.

The first is based on a further property that universals can have on condition of having universality, which is essentiality. Some universals are essential with respect to the

110 For a treatment of al-Rāzī's arguments against Avicenna's account of universals within a broader historical context, see I. Üçer, 'Realism Transformed: The Ontology of Universals in Avicennan Philosophy and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Theory of Mental Exemplars,' *Nazariyat* 6/2 (2020), 23-68 (especially 38–44).

111 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 47.14–49.5; *Sharḥ ʿUyūn*, I, 100.25–102.4.

individuals which share them (e.g., 'animality' is essential to this human and this horse). Al-Rāzī notes that the adversary understands essentiality as 'being part of the quiddity of something.' The mental form cannot be a part of the quiddity of the individuals, so it cannot have essentiality. What cannot have the property of essentiality cannot have the property of universality (because universality must be compatible with essentiality).[112]

The second argument contends that, if we accepted Avicenna's rephrasing of universality as 'having the same relation to multiple extra-mental particulars sharing in pure quiddity,' then the mental form would have no stronger claim to universality than any of the extra-mental individuals themselves. Not only is the mental form an individual like any other, but it also needs to be taken without considering its individualizing accidents, in order to be ascribed universality: the mental form has the same relation to many because it is the mental form *of this quiddity*, not because it is a mental form or because it is this thing existing in this mind. For al-Rāzī, any extra-mental individual can be taken without considering its individualizing accidents, thus fulfilling the condition in question and being suited for having universality as a property.

The third and most important argument against the ascription of universality to the mental form goes back to the previously mentioned idea that knowledge requires correspondence to external reality. Al-Rāzī claims that propositions like 'the mental form has the same relation to many individuals' are reducible to 'the mind conceives of a *qadr mushtarak* [shared extent] between those individuals.' This proposition is true if it corresponds to the extra-mental, namely if a shared extent exists extra-mentally. So, if the proposition is true, there must be something extra-mental which is the genuine universal, i.e., the truth-maker of the proposition in question. Al-Rāzī concludes that the mental form would be called 'universal' only metaphorically, consisting in the piece of knowledge which takes the universal as its object. Al-Rāzī's middle and late works frequently accuse the conceptualists of mistaking knowledge for the object of knowledge.

As mentioned before, al-Rāzī's whole reasoning specifically concerns the notional universal. The subject of universality (the notional universal) cannot be merely mental. What about the ontological status of universality itself (the logical universal)? In terms of explicit commitments, al-Rāzī is rather laconic, only noting that universality is a relation, so its ontological status should be discussed along with that of relations.

112 This argument appears indecisive, for the conceptualist may just reformulate the meaning of essentiality as 'being a mental form which corresponds to a part of the quiddity of something.'

However, his doctrines imply the rejection of conceptualism about universality. First, he rejects it about several other kinds of relation, as will be shown later. Second, he explicitly understands universality as a part of the notional universal itself: The notional universal is the composite of the natural universal (the pure quiddity) and the logical universal (the property of universality).[113] If something is non-mental, then its parts are non-mental. Third, al-Rāzī's rejection of representationalism entails that properties ascribed to non-mental objects of knowledge must be non-mental as well: the properties in question could not be ascribed to the mental forms corresponding to those objects, as there are no such things.

Finally, we need to consider al-Rāzī's case against [iii] mentally construed matters. It would be impractical and unnecessary to go through his discussions of each of those things one by one, for he applies the same two arguments to all his discussions, namely the argument from correspondence and the argument from the removal of the mind.[114] In considering these, let us pick *taʾthīr* or *muʾaththiriyya* [causal efficiency] as an example, this being the specific relation that a cause has to its effect (e.g., fire has a specific relation of causal efficiency over the production of heat in something else). However, the reader should consider that what is said about causal efficiency can be extended to any other matter claimed to be mentally construed. Al-Rāzī does so explicitly, applying them against conceptualism about existence, unity, individuation, the modalities, coming-to-be, persistence, inherence, and relations more in general.[115]

The argument from correspondence builds on the assumption that the truth of propositions depends on their correspondence to extra-mental reality. The argument asks whether a proposition such as 'this thing has causal efficiency over that thing' corresponds to how matters are in extra-mental reality or not. If it does, then causal efficiency must exist as an extra-mental property of this thing: as al-Rāzī puts it, this thing must be causally efficient in itself (*fī nafsihi*). If the proposition did not correspond, on the other hand, it would simply be false. The thing in question would not be causally efficient in itself.

The argument from the removal of the mind pictures the hypothetical situation where the mind does not exist and asks what would be of the properties in question. For al-Rāzī, the idea that these properties would just disappear with the disappearance

113 See Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, I, 46.14–47.8.

114 See Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 75.8-14; *Risāla fī l-khalq*, 17b.2-12, 27a.12–28a.2; *Maṭālib*, IV, 260.8.20.

115 See Rāzī, *al-Juzʾ al-awwal mina l-Maṭālib*, 159a.5–164b.10, 172a.15–173a.8.

of the mind and would have been non-existent when the mind was non-existent is 'something every rational person decisively declares to be false' (*mimmā yaqṭaʿu kullu ʿāqilin bi-fasādihi*).[116] This point is precisely what sets properties like causal efficiency apart from logical properties, for al-Rāzī finds no problem with conceding that logical properties disappear when the mind disappears and were non-existent before the mind came to exist. Indeed, he precisely defines logical properties as those properties that attach to quiddities on condition of them becoming known.

As we saw in the discussion on universality and universals, al-Rāzī accuses the conceptualists of confusing knowledge (which exists in the mind) with the object of knowledge (which does not).

> We have mentioned many times that, if the meaning of 'these are mentally construed matters' were that knowledge exists in the mind that the thing is efficient, effected, inherent, and a subject of inherence, this would be granted. However, the investigation does not concern knowledge. It concerns the object of knowledge, and whether its being inherent, a subject of inherence, efficient, or effected is negative or positive in itself. If you meant that these matters have absolutely no existence extra-mentally, and that their existence is merely in the mind, then this would be explicit assertion that the thing in itself is not efficient, and that [the thing is efficient] according to false estimation and false postulation only.[117]

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated al-Rāzī distinctive skepticism towards representationalism and conceptualism in the post-Avicennian tradition. It has also highlighted the systematic nature of his skepticism, grounded on a precise set of principles consistently applied throughout his discussions. The following is a brief recapitulation of these principles.

Al-Rāzī's case against Avicennian representationalism rejects both the conditions for affirming Avicennian mental forms (the distinction of mental existence, the indifference of quiddity) and the very claim that such mental forms are necessary for knowledge. The distinction of mental existence and the indifference of quiddity are rejected in light of the same basic idea: all instances of existence are the same in essence. Mental

116 See Rāzī, *Risāla fī l-khalq*, 17b.11.

117 Rāzī, *Risāla fī l-khalq*, 27.12–28a.2. Cf. *Muḥaṣṣal*, 75.14.

existence is not essentially different from extra-mental existence, implying that the same quiddity cannot exist both in the mind and outside of it (otherwise the same identity that obtains between extra-mental individuals would obtain between an extra-mental individual and its mental counterpart). Furthermore, al-Rāzī dismisses the necessity of mental forms for knowledge, arguing that it would make it impossible to know the extra-mental concomitants of quiddities, which are the objects of our clearest knowledge.

Al-Rāzī extends his criticism to representationalism in a broader sense. He appears to find the transition from Avicennian mental quiddities to images to be inconsistent and *ad hoc*. More importantly, he criticizes a necessary premise of representationalism *simpliciter*—that knowledge requires a non-relative accident inherent in the knower. Al-Rāzī deems this premise insufficiently unjustified (the arguments of the adversaries can only prove that knowledge requires an accident additional to the knower, not determine its relational or non-relational status) as well as demonstrably false (based on al-Rāzī's tenet that knowledge is a pure relation, such relation must attach to the knower directly, without mediation of a non-relative accident).

The case against conceptualism about non-existent objects of knowledge (and against representationalism about the conditions for knowing such objects) goes in two distinct directions. In the case of imaginative objects, the conceptualist fails to prove that these are extra-mentally non-existent quiddities, either because they may be hypothesized to be quiddities with an exotic mode of extra-mental existence or because they may be hypothesized not to be quiddities at all (imagining such objects would actually amount to falsely judging that an extra-mental quiddity belongs to another extra-mental quiddity).

In the case of impossibilities, negation, and non-existence, al-Rāzī takes quite a different path, challenging the unlimited extension of existence and the argument from attribution which corroborates it, precisely on the basis that certain properties of 'impossible,' 'negation', and 'non-existence' are incompatible with existence. For al-Rāzī, the standard representationalist-conceptualist rejoinder (there is a mental form which is ascribed these properties with respect to extra-mental existence, not to mental existence) fails for two reasons. The first is that the conceptualist is implicitly substituting the object in question (the absolutely impossible with the extra-mentally impossible, complete non-existence with extra-mental non-existence). The second reason is that judgements about mental forms would still be true by virtue of correspondence to the extra-mental, and their extra-mental truth-makers would have to be non-existent.

The argument from correspondence is also at the basis of al-Rāzī's case against conceptualism about definitional parts and about certain secondary intelligibles (universality, trans-categorical properties). True judgements involving those parts and properties would need to correspond to the extra-mental. Al-Rāzī corroborates the idea by adding the thought experiment of the removal of the mind.

Logical properties present an intriguing anomaly in an otherwise remarkably consistent picture. Al-Rāzī seemingly accepts conceptualism about them, contending that his argument from correspondence fails in this specific instance (because one does not judge that quiddities have logical properties when existing extra-mentally, but rather that they have them when existing in the mind). However, a similar position is clearly at odds with al-Rāzī's anti-representationalism and anti-conceptualism about universals and universality. To reconcile the inconsistency, one might propose that logical properties constitute a specific type of extra-mental properties that emerge in quiddities when these become known.

In conclusion, the reader should keep in mind that this paper's aim was to present al-Rāzī's case against representationalism and conceptualism, not to describe his case for any positive, alternative position he might have taken. It is plausible to argue that in certain area (e.g., the ontological status of relations), he might not adopt any positive position at all.

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