Existence and the Problem of *Aḥwāl*: The Quiddity and Ontological Status of Existence in Avicenna and his Islamic Reception

Francesco Omar Zamboni
Postdoctoral researcher, Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy,
University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland
francesco.o.zamboni@jyu.fi

Abstract

The Avicennian distinction between quiddity and existence opens the way to several derivative issues concerning the quiddity of existence (what existence is) and the ontological status of existence (whether and how existence is). This paper presents a fine-grained account of the positions and arguments developed by post-Avicennian authors on these matters, showing how the debates on states (*aḥwāl*) and grounding (*taʿlīl*) feed into the picture. The discussions on the quiddity of existence revolve around the features of its knowability and its connection to a ground (*ʿilla*), or lack thereof. As for the ontological status of existence, the standard idea of a clash between realism (existence is an extramental existent) and conceptualism (existence is a purely mental existent) calls for further refinement. First, realism itself encompasses two distinct positions when it comes to the relation between the second-order existence of existence and existence itself (sameness, additionality). Second, the tradition presents other doctrines not easily classifiable within the realism-conceptualism framework (the existential non-assertability of existence, the non-existence of existence).

Keywords

Avicenna – ontology – *aḥwāl* – quiddity of existence – ontological status of existence

Introduction

The present paper aims to analyze the quiddity and ontological status of existence in Avicennized Islamic philosophy, considering these two topics against the backdrop of the *kalām* doctrine of states (*aḥwāl*) and its rejection by Avicenna and the authors influenced by him. The inquiry will mainly focus on the period between the XI and the XIV century.

The well-known Avicennian distinction between quiddity and existence raises questions concerning the quiddity of existence (i.e., what existence is) and its ontological status (i.e., if and how existence is). Avicenna's unequivocal rejection of states has notable consequences when it

comes to both of those issues. Such consequences emerge in the post-Avicennian debates on existence, opening ways to refute or revise Avicenna's ontology.

Several pieces of modern scholarship discussed the debates on the quiddity-existence distinction in the post-Avicennian tradition. The focus of the present paper is slightly different, concerning the quiddity and ontological status of existence *qua* distinct from quiddity. These issues are corollaries of the quiddity-existence distinction.[1]

The paper consists of three main sections and a conclusion. The first section presents some preliminary clarifications about the conceptual and historical background of the topic, addressing the theory of states (*aḥwāl*) and the related doctrine of grounding (*taʿlīl*). The second section tackles the debates on the quiddity of existence, considering its notion, its knowability, and its relation to grounding. The third section tackles the ontological status of existence, discussing four accounts that appear in the tradition, i.e., the extramental existence of existence (existence is something existent out there in the world), the mental existence of existence (existence is a conceptually constructed notion only existent in the mind), the non-existence of existence (existence shares with non-existents in the fact of not possessing existence), and the existential non-assertability of existence (the disjunction between being existent and being non-existent cannot be applied to existence). The conclusion summarizes the main findings of the paper and make use of them to answer the question of whether or not existence could be considered akin to a state in some respects.

1 Background

1.1 Terminological Clarifications

[1] On the distinction itself, see Fedor Benevich, "The Essence-Existence Distinction: Four Elements of the Post-Avicennian Metaphysical Dispute (11–13th Centuries)," *Oriens* 45 (2017): 203–58; Heidrun Eichner, "Essence and Existence. Thirteenth-Century Perspectives in Arabic-Islamic Philosophy and Theology," in *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Receptions of Avicenna's Metaphysics*, ed. by Dag N. Hasse and Amos Bertolacci (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 123–52; Sajjad Rizvi, "An Islamic Subversion of the Existence-Essence Distinction? Suhrawardi's Visionary Hierarchy of Lights," *Asian Philosophy* 9, no.3 (1999): 219–27; "Roots of an Aporia in Later Islamic Philosophy: the Existence-Essence Distinction in the Philosophies of Avicenna and Suhrawardi," *Studia Iranica* 29, no.1 (2000): 61–108; Robert Wisnovsky, "Essence and Existence in the Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Islamic East (*Mashriq*): A Sketch", in *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Receptions of Avicenna's Metaphysics*, ed. by Dag N. Hasse and Amos Bertolacci (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 27–50.

It is befitting to provide a preliminary explication of some basic terms used in the paper. The terms in question are 'thing' (*shay'*), 'quiddity' (*māhiyya*, *ḥaqīqa*), 'reality' (*thubūt*), 'positivity' (*ījāb*, *ījābiyya*),[2] 'existence' (*wujūd*, *ḥuṣūl*), 'entity' (*dhāt*, *shay'*), 'attribute' (*ṣifa*, *ṣifa ḥaqīqiyya*).[3]

'Thing' designates anything knowable, distinct, endowed with a quiddity specific to it. 'Quiddity' designates that which makes a thing what it is. 'Reality' designates a thing's being extramentally concrete, not merely conceptually constructed. 'Positivity' designates a thing's being semantically affirmative as opposed to negative. 'Existence' designates a thing's actual presence or occurrence. 'Entity' designates anything real, positive, independently knowable, attributable, i.e., capable of being ascribed attributes, and the attribute of existence in particular. 'Attribute' designates anything real, positive, and capable of being ascribed to an entity.

The exact intensional and extensional relation between existence, positivity and reality is impossible to assess in a preliminary account, for the intension and the extension of the three notions are points of contention in the tradition. The reader should conceive the above-mentioned explications of reality, positivity and existence as preliminary, incomplete circumscriptions of their semantic scope, not as discriminating descriptions whose difference would necessitate an intensional difference in the described notions.

An additional necessary caveat concerns attributes. This paper will always use the term in the specific sense that has been outlined above (i.e., what is real, positive, and capable of being ascribed to an entity), entailing that conceptual predicables and negative predicables will not be referred to as 'attributes'. However, it is worth noting that the corresponding Arabic word *ṣifa* is used inconsistently by Islamic authors. Sometimes, it does refer to what I mean by 'attribute'. Other times, its meaning draws closer to that of 'predicable' in the general sense of 'everything that can be predicated of a subject', so that expressions like *ṣifa iʿtibāriyya* ('conceptually construed

---

[2] These two nouns are generally used for referring to the affirmative quality of a proposition. However, I believe that one is justified in employing them to designate the semantic status of a thing. First, the corresponding adjective *ījābī* ('positive') is explicitly used in this way in the tradition, see for example Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. by Ibrahīm Madkūr, Sulaymān Dunyā, Muḥammad Y. Mūsā, Georges Qanawātī, and Saʿīd Zāyid (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-ʿāmma li-shuʿūn al-maṭābiʿ al-amīriyya, 1960), 2:344, 362. Second, other Arabic terms designating positivity (*thubūt*, *wujūd*) may also signify 'reality' and 'existence', thus obfuscating the difference between semantic status (positive or negative) and ontological status (real or unreal, existent or non-existent).

[3] The primary goal in presenting and describing these terms is to help the reader navigate the argumentation developed in the paper from the vantage point of a clearly established terminological framework. The secondary goal is to provide translations for a number of Arabic terms used by Islamic authors in the period under consideration. The secondary goal is subordinate to the primary goal, so the reader should expect a big-picture level of historical accuracy from these translations. Depending on specific contexts or specific authors, the corresponding Arabic words may have been used with more specific or more generic meanings than those established for their counterparts.

attribute') and *ṣifa salbiyya* ('negative attribute') are not unheard of. Despite this, it is telling that several authors designate real, positive *ṣifāt* as *ṣifāt ḥaqīqiyya* ('true attributes', 'actual attributes'), highlighting that they understand the term *ṣifa* as having to do with reality and positivity, at least primarily if not exclusively.

A final and particularly important remark concerns the expressions 'quiddity' and 'ontological status' mentioned with reference to existence. These perform a useful epistemic function in sorting two sets of issues that emerge in our reflection about existence, but we should not draw any ontological conclusion from them. Once we follow Avicenna and the Bahshamites in holding the existence of a thing to be additional to its quiddity, it becomes possible for us to distinguish between questions about what existence is (the quiddity of existence) and questions about if and how existence is (its existential or ontological status). That being said, we should not assume that the epistemic distinction in question entails an ontological distinction between the quiddity of existence and the existence of existence: that is a point of contention in the tradition.

1.2 States and Grounding

Multiple sources agree on ascribing the original formulation of the doctrine of states to the Muʿtazilite master Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī (d.933). The theory was then adopted by the Bahshamites and by some Ashʿarites like Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013) and Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī (d. 1088), albeit with ambiguities and changes of mind.[4]

The present account focuses on four issues, namely [1] the ontological status of states, [2] their quiddity, [3] their non-entitativity, and [4] their different classes in relation to grounding (*taʿlīl*).

---

[4] Al-Bāqillānī's attitude towards states was systematically inconsistent, and al-Juwaynī's changed over time. On al-Bāqillānī's systematic inconsistency see Abū al-Qāsim al-Anṣārī, *al-Ghunya fī al-kalām*, ed. by Muṣṭafā Ḥ. ʿAbd al-Hādī (Cairo: Dār al-salām, 2010), 1:485; al-Juwaynī, *al-Shāmil fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. by ʿAlī S. al-Nashshār, Fayṣal B. ʿAwn, and Suhayr M. Mukhtār (Iskandariyya: Mansha'at al-maʿārif, 1969), 629; cf. Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd al-awā'il wa-talkhīṣ al-dalā'il*, ed. by Aḥmad Ḥaydar (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-kutub al-thaqāfiyya, 1993), 230–233. On al-Juwaynī's change of mind see al-Anṣārī, *Ghunya*, 1:486; al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām fī ʿilm al-kalām*, ed. by Alfred Guillaume (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 2009), 127. For modern studies on the Bahshamite and the Ashʿarite version of the theory of states see Ahmed Alami, *L'ontologie modale. Étude de la théorie des modes d'Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī* (Paris: J.Vrin, 2001); Fedor Benevich, "The classical Ashʿari theory of aḥwāl. Juwaynī and his opponents," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 27, no.2 (2016): 136–75; "The Metaphysics of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d.1153): *Aḥwāl* and Universals," in *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th to the 14th century*, ed. by Abdelkader al-Ghouz (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2018), 327–56; Richard M. Frank, *Beings and their attributes. The teaching of the Basrian school of the Muʿtazila in the classical period* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978); Jan Tiele, "Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī's (d.321/933) Theory of 'States' (*aḥwāl*) and its Adaption by Ashʿarite Theologians," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. by Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 364–83.

Let us consider [1] the ontological status of states. For the Bahshamites, what is real subdivides into three classes, namely the existent, the non-existent, and the state. The Ashʿarite defenders of states disagree on this threefold division, rejecting the reality of the non-existent, but accept that states are real and occupy a distinct ontological collocation vis-à-vis existents.[5] I do not aim to delve into the question of the reality of the non-existent. It suffices to say that both Bahshamites and Ashʿarites accepts that states are real but neither existent nor non-existent. The specific condition of a state that is out there in the world is sometimes called 'origination' (*tajaddud*) or 'occurrence' (*ḥuṣūl*).[6]

As for [2] their quiddity, states can be described as positive attributes of entities. More specifically, they constitute real items that act as referents of certain names capable of occupying the predicate-position in a proposition without undergoing modifications in their structure (e.g., 'living' in "Zayd is living"). Names referring to states are derived (*mushtaqqa*), formed [a] from root-names (*maṣādir*) whose ontological referents are entitative accidents, or [b] from root-names whose referent is the described entity considered according to a certain degree of generality (or specificity), or [c] from root-names devoid of any entitative referent.[7] States are distinct from entitative accidents (*maʿānī, aʿrāḍ*) and entitative attributes (*ṣifāt al-maʿānī*), as entitative accidents and attributes constitute a distinct set of referents corresponding to a different set of names.[8] Additionally, states are referents of positive predicates only: negative and relative predicates do not correspond to states.

---

[5] On the Bahshamite division see Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. by ʿAbdallah Nūrānī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i muʾassasah-i muṭālaʿāt-i islāmī, dānishgāh-i Mīkgīl, shuʿbah-i Tihrān, bā hamkārī-i dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1980), 85–86; Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandi, *al-Ṣaḥāʾif al-ilahiyyā*, ed. by Aḥmad ʿA. al-Sharīf (Kuwait, 1985), 94. On the Ashʿarite division see al-Anṣārī, *Ghunya*, 1:488–489; Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ Maʿālim uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. by Nizār Ḥammādī (ʿAmmān: Dār al-fatḥ li-l-dirāsā wa-l-nashr, 2010), 101–2.

[6] See for example Avicenna, *Shifā, Ilāhiyyāt*, 1:34; *Mubāḥathāt*, ed. by Muḥsin Bidārfar (Qum: Intishārāt Bīdār, 1992), 94.

[7] An example of kind [a] is 'moving' (*mutaḥarrik*), whose root-name 'motion' (*ḥaraka*) designates an entitative accident inhering in the moving entity. Examples of kind [b] are 'being-colour' (*lawniyya*) and 'being-blackness' (*sawādiyya*), derived respectively from 'colour' (*lawn*) and 'blackness' (*sawād*), which designate the same entity in different degrees of generality. An example of kind [c] is 'existent' (*mawjūd*), whose root-name 'existence' (*wujūd*) does not designate any entity.

[8] An example of entitative accident is the referent of "motion' (*ḥaraka*), i.e., what inheres in the moving entity and makes it move. Not all *kalām* authors accept entitative attributes as something distinct from, or more general than, entitative accidents. Those who do (the Ashʿarites) are motivated by the theological concern of maintaining that God can have entitative attributes while denying that He can be the substrate of entitative accidents. In light of this, a good example of an entitative attribute which is not also an entitative accident would be the referent of 'knowledge' (*ʿilm*) in the case of God, i.e., what inheres in God and makes him knowing.

The [3] non-entitativity of states comes down to the general idea that states are only attributes of entities, not entities in themselves. Non-entitativity entails two characteristics, i.e., dependence in knowability and non-attributability (impossibility of being ascribed attributes). The former is possibly contentious among the defenders of states. The Bahshamites are credited with the idea that states are not known in isolation, the actual object of knowledge being the sum of the state and the entity it is ascribed to, or rather "the entity having the state" (*al-dhāt ʿalā l-ḥāl*).[9] It might be argued that al-Bāqillānī and al-Juwaynī disagree with the Bahshamites on this point, contending that states are knowable, even though the exact point of contention is unclear, and the disagreement might be purely verbal.[10] Non-attributability appears to be accepted by both Bahshamites and Ashʿarites.[11]

The [4] classification of states must be discussed together with the doctrine of grounding (*taʿlīl*), precisely because the basic subdivision of states refers to it: states are primarily divided into grounded (*maʿlūla*, *muʿallala*) and non-grounded (*ghayr maʿlūla*, *ghayr muʿallala*).

By 'grounding' (*taʿlīl*), I mean a specific relation connecting an epistemically explanatory and ontologically foundational item – called 'the ground' (*al-ʿilla*) – to an epistemically explained and ontologically derivative item – called 'the grounded' (*al-maʿlul*, *al-muʿallal*) – in such a way that the presence of the former in an entity necessitates the ascription of the latter to the same entity.[12] For

---

[9] Let us consider the state of being living, for example. According to the Bahshamites, it is correct to say, "the entity is living" and "the entity *qua* living is known", whereas it is incorrect to say, "living is known". The same reasoning is applied to features like being object of power, being object of volition, being created, and so on.

[10] The disagreement is mentioned by Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. by Aḥmad M. al-Mahdī (Cairo: Dār al-kutub wa-l-wathā'iq al-qawmiyyah, 2004), 3:410; *Ghāyat al-marām fī ʿilm al-kalām*, ed. by Ḥasan M. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf (Cairo: Lajnat iḥyā' al-turāth al-islāmī, 1971), 30. Ibn al-Tilimsānī mentions the state as a subcategory of 'the known' (*al-maʿlūm*), see Ibn al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ Maʿālim*, 101. However, al-Anṣārī says that for al-Bāqillānī states are known 'consequentially' (*tabaʿan*) to entities, which is equivalent to the Bahshamite doctrine, see al-Anṣārī, *Ghunya*, 1:489. al-Āmidī himself points out that the disagreement might be merely verbal in al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, 3:410–1.

[11] Non-attributability is defended by the proponents of states because it prevents an infinite regress of states, see for example al-Anṣārī, *Ghunya*, 1:489–90; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-al-muta'akhkhirīn mina l-ʿulamā' wa-l-ḥukamā' wa-l-mutakallimīn*, ed. by Ṭaha ʿA. Saʿd (Cairo: Maktabat al-kulliyya al-azhariyya, 1978), 62–63; al-Āmidī, *Ghāya*, 32, 35. Sometimes the discussions mention a different perspective as well, namely the acceptance of the possibility of regresses in the case of states, as opposed to the case of existent entiteis. However, I do not believe that such a position was ever particularly popular among the proponents of states. This is supported by al-Rāzī's remark that non-attributability is the position "the majority relies on" (*alladhī ʿalayhi taʿwīl al-jumhūr*), see al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 62. In sum, non-attributability was the standard majority position, while the acceptance of regress was either a non-standard minority position, or a mere conceptual possibility that was considered in the discussions.

[12] I prefer 'ground' and 'grounded' to translations like '*explanans*' and '*explanandum*' because the English 'grounding' is unspecific enough for capturing the fact that the relation occurring between the *ʿilla* and the *maʿlul* has an epistemic as well as an ontological aspect. This is not as true for the English 'explanation' or the Latin '*explanatio*', which have a mainly epistemic connotation.

example, the presence of the item 'motion' (*ḥaraka*) in an entity necessitates the ascription of the item 'moving' (*mutaḥarrik*) to that entity.

The grounding relation is widely accepted to be strictly univocal on the part of the ground, i.e., such that each type of ground must correspond to one and only one type of grounded. Disagreement exists concerning whether or not the grounding relation is univocal on the part of the grounded, with the Bahshamites defending the possibility for the same item to be grounded in some cases and non-grounded in others (e.g., 'knowing' is grounded in an entitative accident in the case of human person, and non-grounded in the case of God), while the Ashʿarites contend that, if an item is grounded (or non-grounded) in one case, then that same item must be grounded (or non-grounded) in all cases.[13]

All accounts agree that the ground consists in a real entity (an entitative accident or an entitative attribute) inhering in another entity. The ontological status of the grounded is contentious, on the other hand. The deniers of states reject its reality, envisaging the grounded as a purely verbal or conceptual item generally called 'attribution' or 'description' (*ḥukm*, *waṣf*), whereas the defenders of states accept it as something real and additional to both the ground and the entity, i.e., a state.[14]

Let us go back to the classification of states. Grounded states are those whose ascription to an entity is necessitated by an entitative accident (or an entitative attribute) inhering in that entity. A good example is 'moving', which is grounded in the entitative accident 'motion'.[15] By contrast, non-grounded states are those whose ascription to an entity is not necessitated by an accident having a univocal relation to the state in question. Bahshamite sources further divide non-grounded states into three subcategories. The first includes states entailed by the essence of the entity they are ascribed to, on no condition: examples are the so-called 'attributes of the genera' (*ṣifāt al-ajnās*), e.g., 'being color' (*lawniyya*) for whiteness. The second category includes states entailed by the essence of the entity, on a condition: one example is 'space-occupying', which is implied by the essence of corporeal substances on condition that they exist. The third category includes states explained by the action of an external agent on the entity, an example being 'existent'. This is particularly relevant to the present inquiry because it clarifies the status of

[13] Thiele, "Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī's," 369–82.

[14] Al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād ilā qawāṭiʿ al-adilla fī uṣūl al-iʿtiqād*, ed. by ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and Muḥammad Y. Mūsā (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānijī, 1950), 80–94; *Shāmil*, 646–716; al-Anṣārī, *Ghunya*, 1:495–513; al-Āmidī, *Abkār*, 3:419–56.

[15] When we judge that this substance is moving, we ascribe the state 'moving' to the entity 'this substance'. Then, we come to know that such a state is necessitated by the entitative accident 'motion' inhering in that entity.

existence according to the Bahshamites: existence is a non-grounded state explained by the action of an external agent. That does not hold true for the Ashʿarite defenders of states, however. For them, the existence of an entity is not a state additional to that entity, but rather the same as the entitativity of that entity. In this respect, the Ashʿarite defenders of states agree with the majority of the Ashʿarite school.[16]

1.3 The Debate on the Ontological Status of States

The controversies between defenders and deniers of states touch a plethora of issues that cannot be examined in detail here. I will focus on one element that is particularly relevant to the present inquiry, namely the ontological status of states. As we saw, states are held to be neither existent nor non-existent.

Al-Juwaynī is probably the most comprehensive of the early sources at our disposal, when it comes to the controversy over the ontological status of states. Interestingly, he appears to speak from both sides of his mouth on the issue. On the one hand, some sources quote him arguing against the possibility of a third ontological status besides existence and non-existence. On the other hand, al-Juwaynī's own *Shāmil* presents an argument in defense of such possibility.[17] Al-Juwaynī's arguments remain central in the later tradition, despite undergoing significant modifications.

The argument against the ontological condition of states frames such condition as a 'middle' (*wāsiṭa*) between existence and non-existence. Al-Juwaynī's reasoning is straightforward: any reasonable person knows by intuition that there can be no middle between the two. The adversary answers by appealing to the distinction between reality and existence, arguing that reality is more general than existence and so states can be real without being existent. Al-Juwaynī first flags the answer as an 'arbitrary claim' (*taḥakkum*), then rejects it by equating the case of existence and that of reality.

---

[16] The controversy between the proponents and the deniers of states among the Ashʿarites does not concern the distinction between the existence of an entity and its entitativity (i.e., its being an entity): they all hold existence to be the same as entitativity. The controversy concerns whether entitativity (=existence) is univocal or equivocal, i.e., whether all entities share in a single entitativity or whether the entitativity of each entity is essentially different from that of any other, see Ibn al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ Maʿālim*, 105.

[17] Al-Juwaynī, *Shāmil*, 640–641; al-Anṣārī, *Ghunya*, 1:489.

> The attribute you indicate – the object of the discourse – is either real or unreal. Then, what follows for existence follows for reality.[18]

Al-Juwaynī is seemingly trying to force an unacceptable consequence on the adversary. If one accepted the violation of the principle of excluded middle – by claiming that there can be a middle between existence and non-existence – then a middle could be posited between any pair of contradictory terms: the insertion of a middle between reality and unreality would be just as possible as the insertion of a middle between existence and non-existence.

If this interpretation of the passage is indeed correct, al-Juwaynī is depicting the position of the defenders of states as more implausible than it actually is. They do not reject the principle of excluded middle: this clearly emerges in passages from Abū al-Fatḥ al-Shahrastānī's (d. 1153) *Nihāyat al-aqdām* and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's (d. 1274) *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, and can be even conjecturally extrapolated from a remark present in al-Juwaynī's own *Shāmil*.[19] The principle of excluded middle is violated when a middle is inserted between contradictories, i.e., specific opposites which are such that the affirmation of one of the two is as extensive as the negation of the other (and the other way around). The doctrine of states does not imply any of that because it treats existence and non-existence as non-contradictory opposites. The simultaneous affirmation of opposites is absurd for a single subject according to a single respect, but their simultaneous negation is not necessarily absurd: it would be absurd only if it were established that the oppositional couple in question is extensionally universal (i.e., that the negation of existence is extensionally equivalent to non-existence), which is precisely what the defenders of states deny. The theory of states accepts that there can be no middle between proper contradictories, like reality and unreality, while arguing that existence and non-existence are not proper contradictories: they are non-contradictory opposites, their relation being akin to that between possession and privation.[20] In sum, the defenders of states do not reject the excluded middle as a

---

[18] Al-Anṣārī, *Ghunya*, 1:489.20–21.

[19] Al-Juwaynī, *Shāmil*, 640; al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāya*, 132; al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 86.

[20] Let us consider an example. Sight and blindness are opposites and, more specifically, a case of possession and privation. The same entity cannot be both sighted and blind at the same time, according to the same respect. However, sight and blindness are not contradictories: it is possible for the same entity to be neither sighted nor blind, at the same time and according to the same respect. That is because the oppositional couple sight/blindness is not universal, i.e., there are entities none of the terms of the couple applies to (e.g., inanimate objects). The contradictory of sight is the negation of sight, which is more general than blindness: the former holds true of all entities sight is not predicated of – i.e., inanimate objects and blind entities – whereas the latter is only true of those entities that lack sight while being in principle capable of possessing it. Something similar holds for existence and non-existence, according to the

general logical principle, they rather support an unconventional position about the specific semantics of 'existence' (*wujūd*) and 'non-existence' (*ʿadam*), understanding the two in such a way that that the negation of existence (*lā-wujūd*) is more extensive than non-existence: the negation of existence is true of all things existence is not predicated of, thus including states, while non-existence is only true of things that lack existence while being in principle capable of possessing it, thus excluding states.[21]

The Avicennized tradition presents a reformulation of the argument against the middle which appeals to the semantic identification between reality and existence (an element already present in al-Juwaynī, but not explicitly connected to the refutation of the middle). There cannot be a third ontological condition additional to existence and non-existence precisely because existence is intensionally identical to reality, and we know by intuition that reality and unreality are contradictories.[22] Al-Rāzī's formulation of the argument makes use of the term 'realization' (*taḥaqquq*), aiming to unify the semantic spectrums of existence and reality.

> Intuition judges that everything which the intellect indicates either has realization in some way or not. The former is the existent. The latter is the non-existent. On that basis, there is no middle between the two divisions, except by explicating 'existent' and 'non-existent' in some other way. Then, it might be that there is a middle, according to that explanation: the investigation would become verbal.[23]

This formulation recognizes that the position of the adversary may not entail the violation of the excluded middle. However, the argument assumes what the defenders of states would not concede,

---

proponents of states. Non-existence is the non-contradictory opposite (=privation) of existence, just like blindness is the non-contradictory opposite (=privation) of sight. The contradictory of existence is the negation of existence, which is more general than non-existence: the negation of existence is true of all things existence is not predicated of – i.e., unreals (impossibilities), states, and non-existents – while non-existence is only true of things that lack existence while being in principle capable of possessing it.

[21] The reader should consider that linguistic features may have a role in how reasonable this position appears to people speaking different languages. The English word 'non-existence' is verbally negative, suggesting the immediate identification of non-existence with the negation of existence. On the other hand, the Arabic word *ʿadam* is verbally positive and clearly distinguishable from *lā-wujūd* (the negation of existence), thus making it easier to reject that immediate identification (I thank Jari Kaukua for having pointed this out to me).

[22] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 1:34; al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 61.

[23] Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 61.1–3.

namely the intensional identification between existence and reality. The deniers of states generally appeal to intuition when it comes to corroborating that identification.[24]

The case for the possibility of a third ontological status rests on two main arguments. One is based on the early *kalām* tenet that no entitative accident can inhere in another entitative accident: its analysis falls outside the scope of this inquiry. The other main argument specifically mentions the existential status of existence itself. Al-Juwaynī presents it as an answer to an adversary who claims that a third ontological condition besides existence and non-existence is not even conceivable, and so there is no point in arguing over it. Al-Juwaynī's argument is hard to unpack due to its conciseness, but it would seem that it goes as follows. First, existence itself is conceivable. Second, the ascription of an ontological status to existence is also conceivable.[25] Third, it is conceivable that, when one considers which ontological status to ascribe to existence, one negates both the ontological status of being existent and the ontological status of being non-existent (presumably because existence cannot be ascribed itself or its opposite). It follows that the ascription of a third ontological status between being existent and being non-existent is conceivable (presumably because it consists in the composition of conceivable things).[26]

Once again, al-Juwaynī's argument undergoes substantial revision in the Avicennized tradition, being transformed into an argument for the necessity of a third ontological status, not just for its conceivability. Al-Rāzī provides a detailed justification of why it would be impossible for existence to be existent or non-existent. Existence cannot be non-existent because it is impossible for something to be the subject of attribution of its opposite. Existence cannot be existent because then it would be share with existent quiddities in being existent and different from them in its specificity. That which accounts for sharing (being existent) is distinct from what accounts for difference (the specificity), entailing that the existence of existence is additional to the specificity existence, which in turn leads to an infinite regress.

Al-Rāzī and later Avicennized authors mention a variety of answers to the argument, exploring multiple ways of conceiving the ontological status of existence. A thorough analysis of the topic will be carried out in section 3. Now it suffices to notice that, in light of this argument, a clear *fil rouge* exists in the tradition connecting the ontological status of states to that of existence.

2 The Quiddity of Existence

[24] Al-Anṣārī, *Ghunya*, 488; al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāya*, 147–148.

[25] Al-Juwaynī calls this "us affirming an attribution for existence" (*naḥnu nuthbitu waṣfan li-l-wujūdi*).

[26] Al-Juwaynī, *Shāmil*, 641.

2.1 The Conceptualization of Existence

Avicenna holds the notion of existence to be primitive (*awwalī*) and conceived by itself (*mutaṣawwar li-dhātihi*). Even more, existence is among the principles of conceptualization (*mabādiʾ al-taṣawwur*), namely those primary notions which make it possible to conceive other notions. Independent and primary knowability are intrinsically related to the absolute universality of existence.[27]

Primitivity entails the impossibility of 'making-known' (*taʿrīf*) existence, i.e., giving an explanation of existence which employs notions intrinsically better known than existence itself. An example of a fallacious attempt at making existence known is "the essence of the existent is what entails either being active or being acted upon" (*min ḥaqīqati l-mawjūd an yakūna fāʿilan aw munfaʿilan*), which is fallacious because existence is better known than both activity and passivity. Explaining existence is only possible in the restricted sense of explaining the word 'existence'. Indeed, the primitivity of the notion does not entail the infallibility of the corresponding word when it comes to signify that notion. In case the latter failed to adequately signify the former, there would be a benefit in presenting other words that happen to be clearer (i.e., more capable of adequately signify the notion in question) for some contextual reason.[28] Avicenna calls this linguistic act 'drawing-attention' (*tanbīh*) and 'making-present to the mind' (*ikhṭār bi-l-bāl*).[29]

The Avicennian understanding of existence can be clarified in three ways. The first is by mentioning names assumed to be semantically identical to 'existence', namely 'affirmation' (*ithbāt*) and 'realization' (*taḥṣīl*): Avicenna states that these are synonymous with 'existence', thereby implicitly rejecting the distinction between existence and reality (crucial for the defenders of states). The second way to clarify the notion of existence is by highlighting its maximality in extension: existence is predicated of both things in extramental reality and things in the mind,

---

[27] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 1:30.

[28] For example, it may be that case that a certain person has become accustomed to hearing the word 'existence' in the context of French existentialist philosophy so that, for them, 'existence' has come to signify something other than the notion Avicenna has in mind. In this case, one is justified in providing a verbal explication by mentioning some other expression which is contextually clearer than 'existence', like 'reality'.

[29] "If one wants to signify [one of these primitive notions], that is not truly an act of making-known an unknown, but rather an act of drawing-attention [to the notion] and making it present to the mind, by a name or a sign which may be more obscure in itself but becomes clearer in its signification, due to a certain cause or a certain condition. When that sign is used, the attention of the soul is drawn to making-present that notion to the mind in the sense that what is intended is that notion, and nothing else, without the sign truly being what makes [that notion] known", Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 1:29.14–30.1. In the context of this passage, 'drawing-attention' is understood as an act with a positive result, as opposed to a purely negative one: 'drawing-attention' is used in making the mind focus on the notion of existence, not merely in pointing out that the attempts at defining existence are misdirected.

thus being more general than each of the two conditions (its extension is the sum of the extensions of concreteness and mentality). The third way is by distinguishing it from what is assumed to be semantically different from it, namely quiddty or essence (*māhiyya*, *ḥaqīqa*): Avicenna is clear that the specific nature which constitutes a thing is not the same as its existence. Existence is not only different from quiddity, but also additional to it (i.e., it does not constitute a part of quiddity). In sum, the Avicennian account of existence falls in the middle between the Bahshamite and the Ashʿarite doctrine. Avicenna accepts the additionality of existence (in accordance with the Bahshamites, against the Ashʿarites) while rejecting the semantic distinction between existence and reality (in accordance with the Ashʿarites, against the Bahshamites).[30]

The gist of Avicenna's account (existence is primitively known, semantically identical to reality, maximally extensive, additional to quiddity) is accepted by the great majority of post-Avicennian authors. Bahmanyār (d. 1066) conceptually agrees with Avicenna, even though he verbally explicates existence by the expression 'being in concrete reality' (*kawn fī l-aʿyān*).[31] This explication remains popular in the subsequent tradition,[32] despite presenting the problem of how to accommodate mental existence.[33] The post-Avicennian Ashʿarites tend to align with Avicenna, even though some texts continue to defend Ashʿarī's doctrine that existence is identical to quiddity.[34] The same position is defended by the late Muʿtazilite Ibn al-Malāḥimī (d. 1141), whose

[30] This has already been noted by Robert Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Contex*t (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 145–60.

[31] This formulation relates to Bahmanyār's claim that existence is not a ground, see *Infra*, 2.3.

[32] See for example ʿUmar al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī jawāb ʿan thalātha masāʾil*, in *Jāmiʿ al-badāʾiʿ*, ed. by Muḥammad Ḥ. Ismāʿīl (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2004), 137; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāhith al-mashriqiyya fī ʿilm al-ilāhiyyāt wa-l-ṭabīʿiyyāt* (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-māʿarif al-niẓāmiyya, 1924), 1:43–44; *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya mina l-ʿilm al-ilāhī*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥ. al-Saqqā, (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿarabī, 1987), 1:300; Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*, ed. by Muḥammad J. Al-Ḥusaynī al-Jalālī (Qum: Maktab al-iʿlām al-islāmī, 1986) 107; Najm al-Dīn al-Kātibī, *Ḥikmat al-ʿayn*, ed. by Ṣāliḥ Āydīn (Cairo, 2002), 3; al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 73.

[33] If existence as such is explicated as "being in concrete reality', mental existence seems excluded from being existence in a real sense. Some post-Avicennian authors find a solution in the subordination of mental existence to concrete existence, based on the idea that mental existents are also concrete existents, in that they inhere in concrete existents (i.e., the minds). al-Khayyām and Abū al-Barakāt argue that existence is predicated by modulation in the two cases, with concrete existents being prior and 'more deserving' in being existent than mental existents, see al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī jawāb*, 136–37; Abū al-Barakāt, *Kitāb al-muʿtabar fī l-ḥikma* (Hyderabad, 1938–1939), 3:21–22. al-Rāzī goes further, rejecting mental existence altogether, see Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī l-ḥikma wa-l-manṭiq* (MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. or. Oct. 623), fol.79b.

[34] See among others Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Ishāra fī ʿilm al-kalām*, ed. by Hānī M. Ḥāʾiz Muḥammad (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-azhariyya li-l-turāth), 75–77; *Muḥaṣṣal*, 54–55; Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī, *Taḥrīr al-dalāʾil fī taqrīr al-masāʾil*, in Mahdī ʿAẓīmī, "Taḥṣīṣ va taḥqīq risāla-yi *Taḥrīr al-dalāʾil fī taqrīr al-masāʾil* Athar-i Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī," *Falsafa va Kalām-i Islāmī* 47, no.1 (Spring/Summer 2014): 117–18.

authoritative source is Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 1044).[35] A very unusual position is mentioned by Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. c.1165): just like time, existence is known in its 'thatness' (*anniyyatihi*) while being unknown in its 'whatness' (*māhiyyatihi*). That probably relates to the idea that existence is a ground and has notable consequences when it comes to the ontological status of existence. Both elements will be analyzed in detail later.[36]

Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī's (d. 1322) *Maʿārif fī sharḥ al-Ṣaḥāʾif* presents a useful list of four possible explications of existence, i.e., [1] "that by which a thing becomes active or passive", namely the explication dismissed by Avicenna; [2] "that by which a thing is realized, in the extra-mental world or in the mind"; [3] 'thingness" (*al-shayʾiyya*), which alludes to the Ashʿarite doctrine that existence is identical to quiddity; [4] 'being" (*al-kawn*), which might be reminiscent of Bahmanyār's formulation. Al-Samarqandī judges this last explication to be the most fitting, despite being merely verbal, as per Avicenna's warning about the impossibility of making existence known.[37]

2.2 The Knowability of Existence[38]

A relevant point of contention in the Avicennized tradition concerns the knowability of existence, or rather the exact mode of its knowability. All authors who accept the quiddity-existence distinction also accept that existence is knowable, in some way or another. However, they disagree as to how it is knowable.

From the standpoint of a purely logical division, we have that the knowable is known either intuitively or inferentially. The intuitively knowable, in turn, is known either independently from anything else or dependently on something else. So, we end up with three logically possible positions: [1] intuitive, independent knowability; [2] intuitive, dependent knowability; and [3] inferential knowability. Each one of these corresponds to a doctrine historically defended by one or more authors.

---

[35] See Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn fī al-radd ʿalā l falāsifa*, ed. by Hassan Ansari and Wilferd Madelung (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy & Institute of Islamic Studies Free University of Berlin, 2008), 61–62.

[36] See *Infra*, 2.2, 2.3.

[37] Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī. *al-Maʿārif fī sharḥ al-Ṣaḥāʾif*, in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān S. Abū Ṣuʿaylīk, "Kitāb *al-Maʿārif fī sharḥ al-Ṣaḥāʾif* ta'līf Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ashraf al-Ḥusaynī al-Samarqandī al-mutawaffā baʿda 705h – Taḥqīq wa-Dirāsa," PhD dissertation (Jāmiʿat al-ʿulūm al-islāmiyya al-ʿālamiyya, Amman, 2012), 96.

[38] For a schematic recapitulation of the positions described in this section (and the authors who support them), see Appendix A.

Doctrine [1] is defended by Avicenna and Bahmanyār, even though the latter is inconsistent on the issue. As seen in the previous subsection, Avicenna explicitly holds the notion of existence to be not only immediately known, with no need for definition or description (intuitive knowability), but also conceivable by itself and principle of conceptualization of other notions (independent and primary knowability). One passage from Bahmanyār's *Taḥṣīl* agrees that existence is knowable by itself.

This account is at odds with the Bahshamite understanding. For the Bahshamites existence is a state, and states are only knowable on condition of knowing to the entities they are attributed to. The *Mubāḥathāt* provides us with an example of a Bahshamite challenging Avicenna.

> A Muʿtazilite said: "Existence is not a thing (*shayʾ*)." Once [Avicenna] established existence, he said: "You point it out and I do not know what it is".[39]

The passage goes on flagging the Bahshamite's rejoinder as 'foolish talk' (*khirāfāt*): every rational person knows, for example, the meaning of the sky's being existent. This critique betrays a misunderstanding of the point of contention. By saying that existence is not a thing and is not known, the Bahshamite interlocutor means that existence is not an entity, and that it cannot be known in the same way an entity can be known, i.e., independently. The above-mentioned example concerning the sky's being existent is particularly off the mark, precisely because "the sky's being existent" is not conceptually independent from the entity it is attributed to (i.e., the sky). To be fair, the subsequent passage of the *Mubāḥathāt* recognizes the misunderstanding and provides a correct explanation of the Bahshamite doctrine. However, the text does not tackle the challenge of the Bahshamite interlocutor, providing no argument for the independent knowability of existence or against its dependent knowability.

Doctrine [2] (intuitive, dependent knowability) can be ascribed to al-Rāzī and perhaps to Bahmanyār. As I said, Bahmanyār's position on the whole issue is ambiguous, as some of his assertions may entail dependent knowability. Indeed, he formulates a surprising comparison between existence and the category of correlation (*iḍāfa*).

[39] Avicenna, *Mubāḥathāt*, 93.9–10.

> When we say, "this is existent," we [may] mean two things by that. The first is "it has existence," just like when we say "the head is correlative to what has a head": that is metaphorical. In reality, 'existent' is existence, and 'correlative' is the correlation.[40]

Bahmanyār is implicitly suggesting that existence should not be equated to non-relative accidents (e.g., whiteness), whose attribution to their subjects requires an intermediary relation to obtain between them and those subjects (e.g., when we say, "that is white," what we actually mean is "that has a relation of possession to whiteness"). The ascription of existence to its subject requires no such intermediary relation between the two. This is the meaning of Bahmanyār's statement that "the 'existent' is existence" (*al-mawjūdu huwa l-wujūd*), which mirrors another assertion a few lines below, i.e., that "existence, which is being in concrete reality, is 'existent-ness' " (*al-wujūdu lladhī huwa l-kawnu fī l-aʿyāni huwa l-mawjūdiyya*).

The absence of an intermediary relation is a sign of dependence in knowability. The unsoundness of positing an additional intermediary relation between existence and its subject is based on the impossibility of knowing existence independently from its subject. Indeed, according to both Avicenna and Bahmanyār, that is exactly what happens in the case of correlations: the impossibility of conceiving them independently is the reason for the inadequacy of positing additional intermediary relations between them and the things they correlate.[41] If my reasoning holds true, the consequence is that existence is dependent in knowability, which contradicts Avicenna's position. This speculation of mine does have some correspondence with the historical development of the Avicennized tradition, for the issue of dependence in knowability emerges in al-Rāzī's *Mabāḥith*, which tackles it while discussing an objection against the primitivity of existence.

> Existence is an attribute, dependent in intelligibility (*maʿqūliyya*). What is like that is such that its intelligibility follows something else. The intelligibility of existence follows the intelligibility of its subjects, i.e., the quiddities, which are not primitive in conceptualization.

[40] Bahmanyār ibn Marzubān, *al-Taḥṣīl*, ed. by Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1996), 280.17–281.1. See also Ibid., 411–12.

[41] Avicenna, *Shifāʾ, Ilāhiyyāt*, I:152, 157–8; *al-Shifāʾ, al-Maqūlāt*, ed. by Ibrahīm Madkūr, Georges Sh. Qanawātī, Maḥmūd M. al-Khudayrī, and Aḥmad F. al-Ahwānī (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-ʿāmma li- shuʿūn al-maṭābiʿ al-amīriyya, 1959), 145; Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 404–9, 411–2.

> So, existence – whose conceptualization follows their conceptualization – is more likely to be non-primitive in conceptualization.[42]

Crucially, al-Rāzī accepts the premises of the argument while restricting the range of its implications. Two features of the Avicennian picture need to be rejected – i.e., independence and primacy in knowability – even though existence remains intuitively knowable. Despite its knowledge being dependent on the knowledge of quiddities, existence can still be known by intuition as a concomitant of those specific quiddities that are known by intuition.[43]

This account draws near to the Bahshamite position. For the Bahshamites, existence is a state, and states are dependent in knowability. However, the reader should not assume that al-Rāzī draws the idea of dependent knowability directly from Bahshamite sources. Indeed, his *Maṭālib* explicitly ascribes dependent knowability to the *falāsifa* as something they agree on, suggesting a significant spreading of the idea at al-Rāzī's time.[44]

A corollary issue that deserves attention is whether or not dependence in knowability is consistent with the rejection of the equivocity of existence, shared by al-Rāzī as well as by the majority of post-Avicennians. One could argue that the dependent knowability of existence entails its equivocity, because the conceptualization of any instance of existence would need to include or somehow refer to the conceptualization of the specific quiddity that instance is attributed to. Essentially different quiddities would possess essentially different instances of existence, which is nothing but the equivocity of existence itself.[45] I believe that similar worries can be tackled by arguing that, even though dependence in knowability requires the inclusion of a certain quiddity as a part of the conceptualization of the instance of existence ascribed to that quiddity, the instances of existence including essentially different parts can still share in a single univocal genus: the genus 'existence' would be divided into species by essentially different quiddities acting as

---

[42] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:14.21–1:15.3.

[43] Al-Rāzī is somewhat inconsistent on the soundness of dependent knowability as such, however, for one of his *kalām* works explicitly relates that it is impossible for something to be known in relation to something else without being known in itself first, see al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 180.

[44] See al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, I, 300. Cf. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, ed. by Michael E. Marmura (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2000), 197–9.

[45] Let us take two essentially different quiddities, like "humanity" and "blackness". If the conceptualization of the existence of humanity included "humanity", and the conceptualization of the existence of blackness included "blackness", then the existence of humanity would be essentially different from the existence of blackness, because things whose concepts include essentially different parts are essentially different.

differentiae (e.g., 'blackness' would constitute the species 'existence of blackness', while 'humanity' would constitute the species 'existence of humanity').[46]

I did not encounter debates on dependent and independent knowability in post-Rāzian authors. The vast majority of them defend the intuitivity of existence but, as we saw, that is consistent with both dependence and independence.

Doctrine [3] (inferential knowability) is conjecturally ascribable to Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī in light of two assertions by him. The first is that we only know that there is existence, not what existence is. The second is that existence is 'that by which a thing is existent' (i.e., a ground). The conjunction of these entails that we only have an inferential knowledge of existence based on the effect it has on existent things. We know that there is existence because existence is what makes things existent, even though we know nothing of the intrinsic nature of existence. This reconstruction of mine is corroborated by a critique mentioned by al-Rāzī against existence being a ground: were existence a ground, it would only be known inferentially, and that contradicts our immediate knowledge that things exist.[47] Subsection 2.3 will consider Abū al-Barakāt's position on existence and grounding in greater detail.

2.3 Existence and Grounding[48]

As I mentioned, the Bahshamites believe existence to be a non-grounded state: there is no entitative accident which inheres in entities and has a univocal relation of necessitation to the ascription of the state 'existent' to them.

Grounding does not play a major role in the post-Avicennian tradition but needs to be considered in the explication of a strange assertion found in multiple authors, i.e., that existence is not 'that by which a thing exists'. To the best of my knowledge, Bahmanyār is the first who explicitly employs this expression.

---

[46] This might correspond to one of the hypotheses discussed in Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 287. It should be noted that Avicenna and Bahmanyār accept the possibility that a genus may be divided by the quiddities of its subjects of attribution acting as differentiae. This is exactly what happens to the category of the correlative, whose differentiae are the quiddities of the subjects the correlative is ascribed to (e.g., substance, quantity, quality, etc.).

[47] Al-Rāzī dismisses the argument not because he believes grounds to be known intuitively, but because the adversary could concede that the ground called 'existence' is known inferentially while arguing that the attribute it grounds (i.e., 'existent') is known by intuition. In this case, the fact that things exist would be known intuition, see al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:44.

[48] For a recapitulation of the positions described in this section (and the authors who support them), see Appendix A.

> Existence is not that by means of which a thing is in concrete reality: rather, it is a thing's being in concrete reality, or its coming into concrete reality.[49]

By saying that existence is not 'that by means of which a thing is in concrete reality' (*mā yakūnu bihi l-shay'u fī l-ʿayāni*), Bahmanyār means that existence is not a ground: it is not an entitative accident inhering in quiddities and necessitating the ascription of the attribute 'being in concrete reality' (*kawn fī l-ʿayān*) to them. That attribute is not grounded in existence: it is the same as existence. Bahmanyār's position is supported by nearly all post-Avicennian authors who mention the issue, two notable examples being al-Rāzī and al-Ṭūsī.[50] What is more, both Ibn al-Malāḥimī and al-Rāzī explicitly present it as the standard position of the *falāsifa*.[51]

I claim that Abū al-Barakāt defends the opposite position (existence is a ground).[52] First, he explicitly holds existence to be 'that by which a thing is existent', the exact formulation criticized by Bahmanyār. Second, he argues that the 'thatness' (presence) of existence is known while its 'whatness' (intrinsic essence) is unknown, which corresponds to an inferential schema based on grounding, where a grounded attribute is taken as the sign of the presence of a ground unknown in its quiddity: we know that there is existence because we know that there are existent things, and existence is what makes things possess the attribute 'existent', but that does not enable us to grasp the intrinsic essence of existence.

The idea that existence is a ground also appears in 'Umar al-Khayyām's *Risāla fī l-ḍiyā' al-ʿaqlī fī mawḍūʿ al-ʿilm al-kullī*, ascribed to an unspecified opponent who might be Abū al-Barakāt himself as well as a previous author Abū al-Barakāt drew from. The opponent presents an argument for the extramental existence of existence based on the claim that quiddity is made existent by existence.[53]

Al-Rāzī's *Mabāḥith* presents a detailed debate on existence and grounding, arguing for two distinct claims, namely that existence is not a ground, and that existence is not grounded (i.e., does not have a ground).

---

[49] Bahmanyār, *Tahsil*, 281.1–2.

[50] Al-Rāzī, *Mabahith*, 1:43–44; *Maṭālib*, 1:300; al-Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd*, 107.

[51] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfa*, 62; al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 1:299.

[52] Abū al-Barakāt, *Muʿtabar*, 3:63–64.

[53] If existence were not existent, what is made existent by existence would not be existent. So, quiddity would not be existent, see al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī l-ḍiyā'*, 145.

The Rāzian case against existence being a ground is stipulative. The word 'existence' is stipulated to refer to the attribute of being existent – or occurring, or realized, or real (these terms are taken to be synonymous) – not to the supposed ground of that attribute.

Rāzi's case against existence having a ground consists of two main arguments and an ancillary argument.[54] The first main proof – already mentioned, albeit succinctly, by Bahmanyār[55] – is based on the pre-conditionality of existence: the ground of existence would need to inhere in the quiddity existence is ascribed to, and the inherence of the ground in the quiddity would depend on the existence of the latter; consequently, the ground would be both prior to the existence of the quiddity (being its ground) and posterior to it (its inherence in the quiddity being dependent on it).[56] The second main argument spots an infinite regress entailed by grounding: if existence had a ground, that ground itself would exist, and its existence would be in need of another ground, which in turn would be existent, *ad infinitum*.[57]

The ancillary argument is built on the assumption that relations exist in concrete reality (an assumption al-Rāzī is generally not committed to): if the existence of relations had a ground, relations would then fail to exist, which is unacceptable because we assumed that they exist. Relations would fail to exist because grounds are independently knowable, while relations are dependently knowable, and what is independently knowable cannot inhere in what is dependently knowable.

3. The Ontological Status of Existence

3.1 The Positions on the Ontological Status of Existence[58]

An element common to all Avicennized accounts of the ontological status of existence is the implicit or explicit dismissal of the doctrine that existence can be described as being a state, or as

---

[54] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:44–45; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol.79b.

[55] "If a thing were in concrete reality by its being in concrete reality, there would be a regress to infinity, and the thing's being in concrete reality would not be possible. So, existence – which is being in concrete reality – is existent-ness", Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 281.

[56] Najm al-Dīn al-Kātibī notes that this argument is sufficient for refuting the specific claim that existence (i.e., being in concrete reality) has a ground, but not for refuting the general claim that existence is necessarily connected to an entitative accident inhering in the quiddity. Indeed, such an accident might be an effect, a concomitant, or a correlative of existence. In those situations, al-Rāzī's argument would not work because effects, concomitants, and correlatives of something are not prior to it, see Najm al-Dīn al-Kātibī, *al-Munaṣṣaṣ fī sharḥ al-Mulakhkhaṣ* (MS Istanbul, Ragib pasa kitapliği, 714), fol.148a.

[57] Al-Rāzī stresses that neither of these two arguments is applicable to existence as such precisely because existence is nothing but a thing's being in concrete reality: the attribution of 'being in concrete reality' to a quiddity is neither conditioned on the existence of that quiddity nor set to entail an infinite regress.

occupying a intermediary position between the existent and the non-existent. No author supports such doctrine, and many explicitly reject it. The reason is clear: accepting it would give a foothold to the discredited theory of states and suggest the possibility of a middle between contradictories (unlike the proponents of states, the post-Avicennians believe existence and non-existence to be contradictories).

With this in mind, we can lay down the possible positions on the ontological status of existence, by purely logical division. First, we have that existence is either existentially assertable (i.e., it can be the subject of existential propositions, be them affirmative or negative) or not. If it is assertable, then it is either existent or non-existent. If it is existent then, assuming that there is no third type of existence besides the concrete and the mental, we have that existence is either mentally existent or concretely existent. In sum, we can derive four logically conceivable doctrines about the ontological status of existence: [1] existence is concretely existent, [2] existence is mentally existent, [3] existence is non-existent, and [4] existence is existentially non-assertable (i.e., it cannot be the subject of existential propositions). Each one of these is explicitly considered and defended by one or more authors in the tradition.

Position [1] (existence is concretely existent) is ascribable to a variety of authors. Among those, we may count Avicenna or some other author of the Avicennian circle, as explicitly testified by two statements from the *Mubāḥathāt*, i.e., "existence has no condition except being existent", and "the quiddity of existence does not separate from being existent".[59] A more ambiguous assertion that could be interpreted as supportive of this doctrine appears in Avicenna's *Maqūlāt*: "[existence is] something that attaches to quiddity, sometimes in concrete realities and sometimes in the mind".[60] In addition, certain Avicennian doctrines (the causal independence of quiddity, the compositional nature of the contingents) arguably imply the concrete existence of existence, or at least its being additional to quiddity in concrete reality.[61] Bahmanyār also holds existence to be concretely existent, on condition of being conceived as a particular.[62]

---

[58] For a recapitulation of the positions described in this section and the authors who support them, see Appendix B.

[59] Avicenna, *Mubāḥathāt*, 274, 276.

[60] Avicenna, *Shifā'*, *Maqūlāt*, 62. This statement appears to mean that existence is additional to quiddity in concrete reality. One can reasonably argue that, if a thing is additional to another in concrete reality, then that thing is also concretely real in itself.

[61] Avicenna argues that quiddity is causally independent, what is causally dependent being its existence, see Avicenna, *Shifā'*, *Maqūlāt*, 61. This entails the concrete existence of existence because, if existence were not in concrete reality, quiddity alone would be in concrete reality, and so nothing in reality would be causally dependent. The compositional nature of all contingents is asserted in Avicenna, *Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, 1.47. This doctrine is a sign that existence is concretely additional to quiddity because, for Avicenna, some contingents (e.g., the separate intellects) are simple in

When it comes to Bahmanyār and later authors, a further distinction needs to be made concerning the existence of existence. Indeed, once existence is assumed to be existent, it becomes possible to speculate on its (second-order) existence, the latter being either [1a] an attribute additional to the (first-order) existence, or [1b] the same as the (first-order) existence.

The only author explicitly defending position [1a] is Abū al-Barakāt, who accepts the regress it implies – a first-order existence (the existence of a quiddity), a second-order existence (the existence of existence), and so on – despite arguing that the regress eventually stops with an instance of existence which is existent *per se*, not due to an additional existence.[63] Abū al-Barakāt's real commitment to this position is anyone's guess, for at least one other passage of the *Muʿtabar* exists where he explicitly argues for a different doctrine altogether, i.e., non-assertability.[64] Be that as it may, it seems that al-Rāzī takes Abū al-Barakāt's hypothesis of additionality seriously, for he sets out to reject any form of regress in existence, be it finite or infinite.

Position [1b] (the existence of existence is the same as existence itself) was formulated rather early in the post-Avicennian tradition, for it is presented in an alternative version of the first chapter of the metaphysics of Bahmanyār's *Taḥṣīl*.[65] We find the same idea mentioned (and rejected) by al-Khayyām, who however does not ascribe it to any particular author. Subsequently, sameness is defended in works authored by al-Rāzī and several authors influenced by him, like Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī (d. 1265), Najm al-Dīn al-Kātibī al-Qazwīnī (d. 1276), Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī (d. 1286 or 1316), and Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī.[66] However, some of these thinkers are remarkably inconsistent on the ontological status of existence, oscillating between realism and

---

their quiddities: if existence were not concretely additional to quiddity, those things could not be composite out of quiddity and existence either, so that they would be absolutely simple in all respects (a property which is only true of God, for Avicenna).

[62] He contends that existence considered *qua* universal exists only in the mind, like all other universals. This only entails conceptualism about universals *qua* universals, not conceptualism about existence *qua* distinct from quiddity. He then adds that specific, particularized instances of existence exist extramentally as additional to their subjects (i.e., quiddities). Despite being additional, each specific instance of existence cannot subsist or be conceived in isolation from its subject, because its relation to its subject is intrinsic to it, not extrinsic – see Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 282.

[63] Abū al-Barakāt, *Muʿtabar*, 3:63–64.

[64] Abū al-Barakāt, *Muʿtabar*, 3:40.

[65] Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 275–277.

[66] See al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma* (Tehran: Muʾassasat al-Ṣādiq li-l-ṭabāʿa wa-l-nashr, 1994), 3:7; al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq fī taḥrīr al-daqāʾiq* (MS Tehran, Kitābkhāna-yi majlis-i shūrā-yi millī, 9:2752), fol.109; al-Kātibī, *Munaṣṣaṣ*, fol.61b; Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī, *Ṭawāliʿ al-anwār min maṭāliʿ al-anẓār*, ed. by ʿA. Sulaymān (Cairo-Beirut: al-Maktaba al-azhariyya li-l-turāth – Dār al-jīl, 1991), 45–46; al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 94.

anti-realism, as well as between different forms of anti-realism.[67] Al-Rāzī's *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma* provides one of the clearest formulations of account [1b].

> The existent is either existent by an existence other than it or existent by an existence which is itself. The former obtains: it is like when we say […] "the triangle is existent." The latter also obtains, otherwise there would be a regress. The existent that is existent by an existence which is itself is existence.[68]

The meaning of the predicate "existent by an existence which is itself" (*mawjūdun bi-wujūdin huwa nafsuhu*) ascribed to existence is crucially different from that of the predicate "existent due to its essence" (*mawjūdun bi-dhātihi*) ascribed to the Necessary Existent. The difference in formulation is a sign of a difference in the ontological structure underlying the two expressions. The relation between God and His ontological status is not the same as that between existence and its ontological status. According to al-Rāzī, the former amounts to entailment – God's quiddity is the cause of its existence – while the latter amounts to identity – the quiddity of existence is the same as its existence. Additionally, "existent due to its essence" entails the necessity of the subject it is ascribed to, while "existent by an existence which is itself" does not: the quiddity or essence of existence is identical to its ontological status, but this does not entail that the quiddity of existence (or its ontological status, which is the same in this case) is necessarily itself. The necessity of the self-identity of existence would follow only if one accepted that self-identities are necessary, or at least that the self-identities of the simples are.[69]

Position [2] (existence is mentally existent) is a corollary of conceptualism about the quiddity-existence distinction: existence is only conceptually existent because it is only conceptually distinct from quiddity. The doctrine can be traced back at least to al-Khayyām and is consistently supported by Shihab al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191), al-Ṭūsī, and thinkers influenced by

---

[67] Going against the position defended in the vast majority of his books, al-Rāzī rejects the very distinction between quiddity and existence in al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 54–55. Al-Abharī does the same in al-Abharī, *Taḥrīr al-dalā'il*, 117–8. A conceptualist understanding of the distinction is defended in Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī, *Muntahā al-afkār fī ibānat al-asrār* (MS Tehran, Kitābkhāna-yi majlis-i shūrā-yi millī, 9:2752), fols.280–1; Najm al-Dīn al-Kātibī, *Jāmiʿ al-daqā'iq fī kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* (MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de manuscrits, Arabe 2370), fols.131b–132a.

[68] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*, 3:7.17-20.

[69] According to al-Rāzī, for example, even simple quiddities such as existence can be contingent with respect to their self-identity (them being themselves, not just with respect to them acquiring something external to themselves, and so they can be 'made' (*majʿūla*) by their efficient causes, see al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:52–53. The very intrinsic essence of a simple thing can be produced by its efficient cause.

them, like Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī (d. late XIII c.), ʿIzz al-Dawla Ibn Kammūna (d. 1284), Jamāl al-Dīn al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī (d. 1325).[70] Conceptualism is also defended in Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī's (d. c. 1194) *Ḥudūth al-ʿālam* and in some works by post-Rāzian thinkers such as al-Abharī and al-Kātibī.[71]

Position [3] (existence is non-existent) can also be traced back to the early post-Avicennian period, like accounts [1b] and [4], for al-Khayyām refers to it as a polemical target, without ascribing it to any specific author. Non-existentiality is later mentioned by al-Suhrawardī, who rejects it. It is presented as a hypothetical by ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī and explicitly supported by some late Ashʿarites such as al-Taftazānī and al-Qūshjī.[72] The non-existentiality of existence means that existence shares with non-existent quiddities in not possessing existence.

Account [4] (existence is existentially non-assertable) appears for the first time in al-Khayyām's *Risāla fī l-wujūd*. It is defended in one passage from Abū al-Barakāt's *Muʿtabar* and one from al-Abharī's *Kashf al-daqāʾiq*. Another author who might have defended non-assertability is Ibn Sahlān al-Sāwī (d. c.1145).[73] al-Ṭūsī and some post-Ṭūsians like al-Ḥillī and Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1348) mention it approvingly, while Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī (d. 1390) and ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Qūshjī (d. 1474) oppose it.[74] al-Khayyām formulates non-assertability as follows.

---

[70] Al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī l-ḍiyāʾ*, 143–6; *Risāla fī l-wujūd*, in Jamshīdnižad A. Ghulamriḍā, "Sukhani darbara-yi *Risālat fī l-wujud* az Ḥakīm ʿUmar b. Ibrahīm Khayyām," *Farhang* 29–32 (Winter 1999), 105–13; Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, ed. by Henry Corbin (Tehran: Pižūhishgāh-i ʿulūm-i insānī va mutālaʿāt-i farhangī, 1993), 64–67; al-Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd*, 106–116; Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī, *Rasāʾil al-shajara al-ilāhiyya fī ʿulūm al-ḥaqāʾiq*, ed. by Najafqalī Ḥabībī (Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi pižūhishī-yi ḥikmat va falsafa, 2004), 3:28, 32–33; Ibn Kammūna, *al-Kāshif al-jadīd fī al-ḥikma*, ed. by Ḥāmid N. Iṣfahānī (Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi pažūhišī-yi ḥikmat va falsafa-yi Īrān, 2008), 81–82; al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī, *al-Asrār al-khafiya fī al-ʿulūm al-ʿaqliyya* (Qum: Muʾassasa-yi bustān-i kitāb, 2009), 415.

[71] See Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī, *Ḥudūth al-ʿālam*, ed. by Mahdī Muḥaqqiq (Tehran: Anjuman-i āthār va mafākhir-i farhangī, 2005), 74–76; al-Abharī, *Muntahā*, fols.280–1; al-Kātibī, *Jāmiʿ*, fols.131b–132a. On al-Abharī's position see Heidrun Eichner, "Essence and Existence," 123–52.

[72] Al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī l-ḍiyāʾ*, 144–5; al-Suhrawardī, *al-Mashāriʿ wa-l-muṭāḥarāt* (*al-ʿilm al-thālith*), in *Mawsūʿa muṣannafāt al-Suhrawardī*, ed. by Muḥsin ʿAqīl ([?]: Dār Rawāfid, 2018), 302; Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif fī ʿilm al-kalām* (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-kutub, [?]), 57–58; Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, ed. by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿUmayra (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-kutub, 1998), 1:367–8; al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Istanbul[?]: Dār al-ṭibāʿa al-ʿāmira, 1894), 1:235–6; al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd*, fol.20.

[73] This conjecture is based on a report mentioned in al-Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, 161.

[74] Al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī l-wujūd*, 106–7; Abū al-Barakāt, *Muʿtabar*, 3:40; al-Abharī, *Kashf*, 115; al-Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd*, 108; al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād fī sharḥ Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*, ed. by Ḥasan Ḥ. al-Amolī (Qum: Muʾassasat al-nashr al-islāmī, 1986), 35; Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid fī sharḥ Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*, ed. by Khālid al-ʿAdwānī (Kuwait: Dār al-ḍiyāʾ, 2012), 1:225–6; *Maṭāliʿ al-anẓār ʿalā matn ṭawāliʿ al-anwār* (Cairo[?]: Dār al-kutub, 2008), 46; ʿAlā al-Dīn al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid* (MS Cambridge [Massachusetts], Harvard College Library, Widener Library, OL 22800.10.5f.), fol.19.

> Existence is something existence is not attributed to, according to the negation of the application (*iṭlāq*), not the negation of one of two terms, so that it is not said to be existent or non-existent in concrete realities.[75]

Al-Ṭūsī's explication is that "existence does not receive the division" (*al-wujūdu lā taridu ʿalayhi l-qismatu*), namely the existential disjunction between being existent and being non-existent. The exact interaction between this doctrine and conceptualism (also defended by al-Ṭūsī and many post-Ṭūsians) is unclear to me. Indeed, it would seem that conceptualism renders non-assertability redundant, making it a doctrine that solves a non-existent problem. Be that as it may, we should treat non-assertability as distinct from conceptualism, because one can support one while rejecting the other. For example, al-Khayyām presents non-assertability as a possible defence against his case for conceptualism.

3.2 The Additionality of the Existence of Existence

The account asserting the extramental existence of existence encompasses two distinct positions diverging on whether the (second-order) existence of existence is additional to (the first-order) existence or identical to it. The analysis of the debates needs to be structured in light to this basic categorization. This subsection will consider the arguments *pro* and *contra* the additionality of the existence of existence. Subsection 3.3 will analyze the discussions on the sameness of the existence of existence.

The arguments for additionality are usually presented as elements of a case against the concrete existence of existence, which is built upon two extra assumptions, i.e., that additionality entails an infinite regress of instances of existence, and that such an infinite regress is absurd. Regardless of whether or not these extra assumptions are correct, what matters here is that the arguments for additionality can be conceived and discussed in their own right, not just as elements of a wider line of argumentation.

The tradition mentions two primary arguments for additionality, i.e., the argument from doubt and the argument from association and differentiation. The former draws from the standard Avicennian proof for the additionality of existence with respect to quiddity: one may conceive the quiddity of a thing while doubting whether that thing is existent or not, which entails that

[75] Al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī l-wujūd*, 106.11–12.

existence is additional to quiddity.[76] The same reasoning can be applied to existence itself: one may conceive of the quiddity of existence while doubting its existence. If the original Avicennian proof entails the additionality of existence with respect to quiddity, then its application to existence entails the additionality of the existence of existence with respect to existence. Another formulation of the same idea appeals to the non-existence of existence: when a certain quiddity is non-existent, its existence must be non-existent as well; the possibility for existence not to exist entails the additionality of the existence of existence.[77]

The argument from association and differentiation builds on the premise that, were existence existent, it would share with existent quiddities in something, i.e., being existent, while differing from them in something else, i.e., its specific essence. Given that what accounts for differentiation differs from what accounts for sharing, it would follow that existence possesses a specific quiddity and a second-order existence additional to it.[78]

Al-Rāzī presents influential objections against both the argument from doubt and the argument from association and differentiation (al-Khayyām and al-Suhrawardī mention early-stage versions of the objection against the former). The argument from doubt is criticized for assuming that the existential doubt applicable to quiddity is also applicable to existence, which does not hold true. In the case of quiddity, existential doubt materializes because we are uncertain whether or not quiddity possesses existence as an attribute. In the case of existence, existential doubt fails to materialize: we are not legitimately uncertain as to whether existence is existent or non-existent, because something cannot possess itself (or its contradictory) as an attribute. Doubt may concern existence only inasmuch as it is understood as 'attributive' doubt, in the sense that one could conceptualize existence and doubt on whether or not existence is possessed by a certain quiddity as an attribute.[79] I would add that, on closer inspection, the attributive doubt concerning

[76] Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, ed. by Mujtabā al-Zariʿī (Qum: Būstān-i kitāb, 2002), 266.

[77] Al-Suhrawardi, *Ḥikma*, 65; *Kitāb al-muqāwamāt* (*al-ʿilm al-thālith*), in *Mawsūʿa muṣannafāt al-Suhrawardī*, ed. by Muḥsin ʿAqīl ([?]: Dār Rawāfid, 2018), 159; *Kitāb al-talwīḥāt al-lawḥiyya wa-l-ʿarshiyya* (*al-ʿilm al-thālith*), in *Mawsūʿa muṣannafāt al-Suhrawardī*, ed. by Muḥsin ʿAqīl ([?]: Dār Rawāfid, 2018), 47–48; Razi, *Mabāḥith*, 1:25.

[78] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāhith*, 1:20–21

[79] Al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī l-wujūd*, 106–7; al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ*, 302–3; al-Rāzī, *Mabāhith*, 1:25–26. It should be noticed that, in this formulation, the answer to the argument from doubt is compatible with both non-assertability and sameness (al-Rāzī's own doctrine). Some other formulations of the answer are only compatible with one or the other.

existence is nothing but the existential doubt concerning quiddity, considered from a different perspective.[80]

The argument from association and differentiation is rejected because it assumes that both sharing and differing are based on something real and positive, whereas in fact only one of two (sharing) is. Indeed, the existent is such that its essence is either nothing but being existent or being existent in addition to being something else: the former is existence, the latter is the existent quiddity. Existence shares with the existent quiddity in something real and positive (being existent), while differing from it in a pure negation (being nothing but existent). It follows that, in the case of existence, there is no need to suppose a composition out of two real and positive items (the specific nature of existence, the existence of existence) to account for association and differentiation. Consequently, there is no need to assume that the existence of existence is a positive, real attribute additional to the specific nature of existence.[81]

A secondary argument for additionality mentioned by al-Suhrawardī and subsequent authors of the Ishrāqī tradition is the argument from non-existence, which appears to be a follow-up to the discussion of the argument from doubt. When a certain quiddity is non-existent, its existence must be non-existent as well, as it is absurd for a quiddity to be non-existent while its existence is existent. The non-existence of existence entails that we can conceptualize existence while the latter is non-existent, implying that the existence of existence is additional to it.[82]

I did not come across specific answers to this argument. However, I believe that a tentative objection can be extrapolated from what has been mentioned above. The non-existence of a quiddity only entails two things, namely that the quiddity is conceptualized while being non-existent (i.e., while not having existence as an attribute), and that existence is conceptualized while not being attributed to the quiddity. This does not entail that existence is conceptualized while being non-existent (i.e., while not having existence as an attribute). A similar objection might not be satisfactory, though.[83]

---

[80] The doubt on whether or not a certain quiddity exists (existential doubt with reference to quiddity) is the same as the doubt on whether or not existence is ascribed to that quiddity (attributive doubt with reference to existence). The two doubts are actually one and the same thing, considered from two different perspectives.

[81] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāhith*, 1:20–21, 30.

[82] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikma*, 65; *Mashāriʿ*, 305; *Talwīḥāt*, 47–48; Ibn Kammūna, *Kāshif*, 82; Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī, *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, ed. by Aḥmad ʿA. Sāyiḥ (Cairo: Maktabat al-thaqāfa al-dīniyya, 2012), 441; Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shirāzī, *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, ed. by ʿAbdallah Nūrānī and Mahdī Muḥaqqiq (Tehran: Anjuman-i āthār va mafākir-i farhangī, 2005), 181–2.

[83] The argument from non-existence could be defended by noting that the argument does not concern existence as a universal, but rather existence as a particular attributed to a non-existent quiddity. That particular existence cannot be

Let us consider the case against additionality, then. The standard argument against it contends that the latter entails an infinite regress: the first-order existence requires a second-order existence, which in turn requires a third-order existence, and so on.[84] This is generally deemed sufficient to dismiss additionality. However, Abū al-Barakāt bites the bullet, contending that the regress happens while actually being finite: there is a final instance of existence which does not require an additional attribute of existence in order to exist (strangely enough, he identifies that with God).

This is probably the reason why al-Rāzī sets out to reject any form of regress, regardless of it being finite or infinite.[85] Al-Rāzī's argumentation begins by enumerating the three elements constituting the minimal regress chain, i.e., a quiddity, an existence attributed to that quiddity (first-order existence), and another existence attributed to that existence (second-order existence). The reasoning focuses on the relation of attribution (called 'receivedness', *maqbūliyya*) between the first-order existence and its quiddity, presenting the following disjunction: that relation of attribution is either independent from the second-order existence, or dependent on it. Were the attribution independent, the first-order existence could be attributed to the quiddity without there being the second-order existence. In other words, the quiddity could be existent while its existence is non-existent, which is absurd. On the other hand, if the attribution of the first-order existence did depend on the second-order existence, then two absurdities would follow, both based on the same fundamental premise, i.e., that the first-order and the second-order existence are essentially identical to one another. The first absurdity is that the feature 'being attribute of the other existence" would be indifferently true of any of the two instances of existence, i.e., there would be no sufficient reason explaining why the second-order existence is the attribute of the first-order existence, and not the other way around. The second absurdity is that the feature "being the preparing cause for the attribution of existence to the quiddity" would be indifferently true of any

---

conceptualized while not attributed to that quiddity (its particularity prevents that), thus entailing that it is conceptualized while being non-existent, because it is conceptualized while the quiddity itself is non-existent. The content of a further counter-response is speculative at this point. However, I am convinced that such a counter-response would need to contend that, when the quiddity is non-existent, the particular existence attributed to it is a non-thing (it has no essence which can be conceptualized), so that the situation does not arise when one conceptualizes the essence of that particular existence (no essence is there to be conceptualized) while that particular existence is non-existent. Our conception of the particular existence of a non-existent quiddity would be a pure construct produced by combining existence as a universal, the quiddity in question, and the relation of attribution, a construct that would not be enable us to conceptualize the actual essence of that particular existence (which fails to materialize in any way).

[84] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikma*, 65.

[85] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāhith*, 1:25–26.

of the two instances of existence, so that the first-order existence would be the preparing cause for its own attribution to the quiddity.

The soundness of al-Rāzī's whole argument is based on the essential identity of all instances of existence to one another. Abū al-Barakāt could dispute this by appealing to the idea that existence is a ground whose quiddity is unknown in itself: if the quiddity of existence were unknown, one could argue that existence of a certain order could be quidditatively different from existence of another order (e.g., the quiddity of the first-order existence could differ from the quiddity of the second-order existence). Another way of disputing quidditative identity would be appealing to a specific understanding of modulation, even though such an appeal seems *ad hoc* in this particular case.[86]

To the best of my knowledge, no post-Rāzian author supports the additionality of the existence of existence. The arguments for additionality persist only as portions of wider argumentations against realism about existence, whereas realists themselves appeal to al-Rāzī's own position, i.e., sameness.

3.3 The Sameness of the Existence of Existence

In the Rāzian and post-Rāzian works, the positive case for sameness seems to coincide with the exhaustion of all alternatives: once we reject the intermediary status, the non-existence of existence, the mental existence of existence, and the additionality of the existence of existence, we are left with no option but to claim that the existence of the existence is the same as existence itself.

That being said, al-Rāzī's objections against additionality provide, if not a full-fledged argument for sameness, at least some useful clarifications as to his positive reason for supporting it. First, doubt does not apply to existence in the same way as it applies to quiddities, for existence can only be conceived as existent. Second, existence differs from existent quiddities in a negation, for existence is nothing but being existent, while existent quiddities consist in being existent together

[86] On why a specific understanding of the modulation of existence entails the rejection of the quidditative identity between the modulated degrees of existence, see Francesco O. Zamboni, "Is Existence One or Manifold? Avicenna and his Early Interpreters on the Modulation of Existence", *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 31 (2020): 121–50.

with being something else.[87] The two argumentations point to the same idea, namely that the essence of existence is the same as the existence of existence.

This line of reasoning is picked up and expanded upon by al-Samarqandī, who expresses the same point by saying that what is the same as realization (*taḥaqquq*) itself does not need an additional realization in order to be realized. He stresses that existence is independent from any additional existence with respect to its intrinsic existence, while being dependent on something else with respect to its attributive existence for the quiddity. Like other attributes, existence has an intrinsic existence (*wujūd fī nafsihi*) as well as an attributive existence (*wujūd li-ghayrihi*), namely its inherence in or attribution to a determinate quiddity.[88] The distinction between the two builds upon al-Rāzī's remark that doubt applies to the attribution of existence to a quiddity, not to the attribution of existence to itself. Al-Samarqandī is not clear when it comes to determining what exactly is the thing the attributive existence of existence depends on. However, it stands to reason that he is thinking of an external efficient cause (arguably the same cause which makes the quiddity existent). Another, more serious problem of al-Samarqandī's account is that there may be an incompatibility between the intrinsic/attributive distinction and the doctrine of dependent knowability (which is defended by realists such as Bahmanyār and al-Rāzī).[89]

The tradition presents two arguments against sameness, i.e., from the equivocity of the predicate 'existent', and from the impossibility of self-attribution. The argument from equivocity can be traced back at least to al-Khayyām. Its most influential formulation is presented by al-Suhrawardī, who claims that the sameness of the existence of existence would require the predicate 'existent' to have different meanings according to the subject it is predicated of. It would mean 'thing having existence' when predicated of quiddities, and 'existence' when predicated of existence.[90]

The argument from the impossibility of self-attribution sees a clear formulation in the post-Ṭūsian tradition. Existence cannot be existent via an existence which is itself because that

[87] On one occasion, al-Rāzī explicitly formulates the distinction in mereological terms: existence is a part of the existent quiddity and, just like any part, it differs from the whole in that it does not include the other part(s), see Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Risala fi-l-khalq wa-l-ba'th* (MS Istanbul, Köprülü kütüphanesi, 816), fol.49b.

[88] Al-Samarqandī, *Ma'ārif*, 124.

[89] Existence is dependently knowable because no intermediary relation obtains between it and its subject (quiddity). However, the presence of an intermediary between the attribute and the subject seems to be precisely what makes it possible to discriminate between the intrinsic existence of the attribute and its attributive existence for the subject.

[90] Al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī l-wujūd*, 108–10; al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikma*, 64–65; Ibn Ghaylān, *Ḥudūth*, 75.

would entail "the affirmation of a thing for itself" (*thubūt al-shay'i li-nafsihi*), which is absurd because affirmation is a relation, and as such can only occur between two different terms.[91]

I am not aware of answers specifically directed at the first argument. However, I believe that al-Rāzī might have answered by referring to the distinction between 'existent by an additional existence' and 'existent by an existence which is itself': the predicate 'existent' has a single univocal meaning that is common to the two and then subdivides in light of two additional specifications ('by an additional existence', 'by an existence which is itself').

The argument from self-attribution is challenged by al-Qūshjī, who explicitly attacks the premise that something cannot be affirmed for itself, listing a few counterexamples (e.g., 'universal', 'quiddity'). He argues that only extramental relations necessitate the otherness of the *relata*, whereas merely conceptual relations do not. He thereby ascribes purely mental status to the relation of affirmation between existence as the subject of affirmation and existence as the predicate of affirmation.[92]

3.4 The Mental Existence of Existence

The mental existence of existence is a corollary of conceptualism about the quiddity-existence distinction. A comprehensive account of the debates between conceptualists and realists falls outside the scope of the present inquiry. However, a few elements can be said with respect to the mental existence of existence as such.

Similarly to what we saw for the sameness of the existence of existence, the main positive argument in favor of the mental existence of existence is the sum of the negative arguments refuting the other options about its ontological status.

The main argument against the mental existence of existence is based on a specific understanding of the correspondence theory of knowledge. The argument is explicitly applied to the case of existence by al-Abharī, even though the basic intuition at the core of the argument can already be found in al-Suhrawardī and al-Rāzī. The idea is that, like propositional truth, conceptual adequacy depends on one-to-one, exclusive correspondence with extramental reality: a distinct mental form is conceptually adequate only if it has an exclusive relation of correspondence to a distinct extramental item. The argument moves from this assumption, highlighting that, for the conceptualist, quiddity and existence constitute distinct mental forms, whereas a single, simple item exists extramentally. Given that the form of quiddity corresponds to the extramental item, we

[91] Al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd*, fols.19–20.

know that the form of existence would either correspond to the item as well or not. If it did not correspond, one could simply dispense with the form of existence altogether. I take this to mean that the mental form of existence would be conceptually inadequate, i.e., it would not serve any function in our knowledge of extramental things. On the other hand, if existence did correspond to the extramental item, then the criterion of exclusivity in correspondence would not be met, because the mental form of quiddity would correspond to the extramental item as well.[93]

> Two different forms would correspond to a thing which is simple and one in itself. That is absurd.[94]

Al-Abharī's point is seemingly that existence and mental quiddity would be conceptually inadequate because their concurrent correspondence would be at odds with the unity and the simplicity of the extramental thing they correspond to.

The answers to this kind of argument revise the above-mentioned criteria of conceptual adequacy. One line of argumentation mentioned by al-Suhrawardī and others like al-Ṭūsī and al-Kātibī rejects unqualified correspondence as a criterion of conceptual adequacy. Correspondence is a criterion for the adequacy of a concept on condition that the latter exists in the mind as the form of an extramental existent. That is not true of mentally construed things (*iʿtibārāt ʿaqliyya*) such as existence, because these exist in the mind not as forms of extramental existents.[95]

Another kind of answer presented by al-Kātibī and developed by ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī rejects the criterion of exclusivity: it is indeed possible for two conceptually adequate mental forms to correspond to a single, simple extramental item.[96] These debates point to fundamental

---

[92] Al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd*, fols.19–20.

[93] Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī, *Maqāṣid al-marāṣid* (MS Istanbul, Ragib pasa kitapliği, 682), fols.210b–211a. The same basic idea applied to cases other than existence can be found discussed throughout al-Suhrawardī's and al-Rāzī's works, see for example al-Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, 158, 163; al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 1:103; *Risala fi-l-khalq*, fol.17a.

[94] Al-Abharī, *Maqāṣid*, fol.211a, ll.1–2.

[95] Al-Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, 158; Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Hall mushkilāt al-Ishārāt*, in Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt li-Abī ʿAli ibn Sīnā maʿa sharḥ Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī*, ed. by Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-maʿārif, 1957–1960), 3:82; *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 94; al-Kātibī, *Jāmiʿ*, fols.131b–132a.

[96] Al-Kātibī mentions a few examples based on the correspondence relating genus and differentia to the species (e.g., the form of the triangle qua triangle and that of the isosceles qua isosceles correspond to the isosceles triangle, despite the latter being simple in itself). al-Ījī goes further, explaining the reason of the adversary's error, i.e., the equation between imaginative forms (*ṣuwar khiyāliyya*) with intellectual forms (*ṣuwar ʿaqliyya*). Exclusivity holds for an

disagreements that extend beyond the specific question of the ontological status of existence, concerning the degree of transparency of reality to our conceptual operations.

Al-Khayyām's *Risāla fī l-ḍiyā'* is the earliest testimony of an ancillary argument against the conceptual existence of existence, namely the argument from mental regress. The proof contends that the mental additionality of existence with respect to quiddities would entail an infinite regress of existences in the mind, just like the extramental additionality of existence entails an infinite regress of existences in extramental reality. That is because the quiddity of existence would exist mentally, and its mental existence would be mentally additional to that quiddity, thus entailing a second-order existence (and so a regress).[97]

Al-Khayyām objects that existence is conceptually additional to the quiddities of those things that are extramentally existent, not to the quiddities of things conceptually existent (like existence).[98] Starting with al-Suhrawardī, however, the conceptualists appear to settle on a different answer, accepting the mental regress while claiming that, unlike regresses in extramental existents, regresses in mental existents are acceptable, because they only produce potential infinities, not actual infinities (the regress stops when the mind stops thinking about it).[99]

3.5 The Non-Existence of Existence

The positive argument in favor of the non-existence of existence comes down to the exhaustion of other options: the authors who contemplate this doctrine (al-Ījī) or explicitly support it (al-Taftazānī, al-Qūshjī) do so out of dissatisfaction for the alternatives. That being said, al-Qūshjī tries to dismiss the concern that this might be an *ad hoc* solution to the problem of the ontological status of existence, mentioning a few examples where a certain thing is negated with respect to itself: individuation is not individuated, particularity is not particular.[100]

---

imaginative form but not necessarily for an intellectual form, because the latter originates from an operation of abstraction performed by the intellect on extramental items, and that operation is influenced from a variety of factors and conditions affecting the final result of the abstraction (e.g., the cognition of a greater or lesser number of items, different levels of awareness of their similarities and differences). It follows that different mental forms may correspond to a single extramental item.

97 Al-Khayyām, *Risāla fī ḍiyā'*, 145.

98 Ibid., 145.

99 This is what al-Suhrawardī might hint at in *Talwīḥāt*, 49. The idea that infinities generated by the mind's conceptual operations are merely potential and not actual already appears in Avicenna, *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt*, 1:210–1 (I thank Jari Kaukua for having pointed this out to me). A possible problem of this kind of answer is that it relies on a peculiar cognitive limitation of human minds, namely the fact that they think in a processual way and cannot grasp an infinity of objects of thought. Other types of minds (e.g., God's) may not share those regress-stopping limitations.

100 Al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd*, fol.20.

A very popular argument against the non-existence of existence contends that existence cannot be non-existent because being non-existent means being attributed non-existence, and non-existence is the contradictory of existence: something cannot be attributed its contradictory.[101]

An objection first mentioned by al-Ījī contends that it is indeed possible for something to be attributed its contradictory if we understand 'attribution' (*ittiṣāf*) in a precise way. Attribution of identity (*ittiṣāf bi-huwa huwa*) is indeed impossible, meaning that it is impossible for the subject to be identical to its contradictory: e.g., it is impossible for existence to be non-existence and for the existent to be non-existent. On the other hand, attribution of relation (*ittiṣāf bi-l-nisbati*), i.e., predicative attribution, is possible: the assertion "existence is non-existent" is of this kind, because it means "existence possesses non-existence" (or "existence does not possess existence", which is the same because non-existence is not a real attribute and is the contradictory of existence).[102] Predicative attribution between contradictories not only can, but does regularly happen, because substances are attributed specific instances of their contradictories. al-Taftazānī provides an example: an animal is attributed specific instances of 'non-animal', such as blackness, whiteness, or any other accident that inheres in it.

The analogy is questionable between the attribution of the accident to substance and the attribution of non-existence to existence. As noticed by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 1502), 'attribution of the contradictory' has different meanings in the two cases. In the case of existence and non-existence, it means that a thing is ascribed the negation of the possession of itself: existence is non-existent in the sense that it does not possess existence. In the case of substance and accidents, it means that a thing (thing-1) is ascribed the possession of another thing (thing-2), and the negation of thing-1 is true of thing-2.[103] Indeed, the second meaning of 'attribution of the contradictory' fits every case of attribution except identity, not just the attribution of accidents to substance. This is a sign that al-Ījī's answer does not target what the adversary means by 'attribution of the contradictory'.[104]

Even if one conceded the non-existence of existence, one would face new problems. If one supported a realist understanding of the quiddity-existence distinction, believing existence to be something extramentally additional to quiddity, it would follow that something non-existent

---

[101] Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 61; al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 86; al-Ījī, *Mawāqif*, 57.

[102] Al-Taftazānī calls the two 'attribution by way of synonymy' (*ittiṣāf bi-ṭarīq al-muwaṭa'a*) and 'attribution by way of derivation' (*ittiṣāf bi-ṭarīq al-ishtiqāq*), see al-Taftazānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 1:367.

[103] The animal attributed the non-animal in the sense that it possesses blackness (or any other accident), and non-animal is true of blackness.

[104] Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī, *Ḥāshiya 'alā Sharḥ al-Tajrīd*, in al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd*, fol.20.

(existence) would inhere in quiddities. Additionally, there would be something extramentally real but not existent, which entails the difference between reality and existence. If, on the other hand, one supported conceptualism about the quiddity-existence distinction, the doctrine of the (extramental) non-existence of existence would add nothing significant to conceptualism itself.

3.6 The Existential Non-Assertability of Existence

The arguments in favor of existential non-assertability vary depending on how authors conceive al-Ṭūsī's assertion that the existential disjunction does not apply to existence.[105] One interpretation formulated by al-Ḥillī understands it as "the division of a thing into itself and not [itself]" (*inqisām al-shay'i ilā nafsihi wa-ilā ghayrihi*), thereby implicitly identifying the proposition "existence is either existent or non-existent" with "existence is either existence or non-existence". According to al-Ḥillī, the application of the existential disjunction to existence is impossible because the subject of a disjunction must be ampler in extension than any of the two disjuncts, which would require existence (*qua* subject of disjunction) to be extensionally more general than itself (*qua* disjunct). That is absurd because a thing cannot be more general in extension than itself.[106]

As mentioned, al-Ḥillī's argument relies on the questionable identification between "existence is either existent or non-existent" and "existence is either existence or non-existence". That is probably why the later tradition (al-Iṣfahānī, al-Taftazānī, al-Qūshjī) relies on a different interpretation of the application of the existential disjunction to existence as meaning "the division of a thing into what it is attributed to and what its contradictory [is attributed to]" (*inqisām al-shay'i ilā l-mawṣūfi bihi wa bi-munāfīhi*).[107] This is deemed absurd by intuition: existence cannot receive the disjunction into 'existent' (what existence is attributed to) and 'non-existent' (what the contradictory of existence is attributed to), just like blackness cannot receive the disjunction into 'black' (what blackness is attributed to) and 'non-black' (what the contradictory of blackness is attributed to).

One argument *contra* existential non-assertability is formulated by al-Taftazānī, who remarks that this account fails to distinguish itself from the discredited doctrine of the intermediate

[105] Al-Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd*, 108.
[106] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf*, 1:35.
[107] Al-Iṣfahānī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 46–47; *Tasdīd*, 225–226; al-Taftazānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 1:367.

existential status: existence would end up having the same ontological status of states, being neither existent nor non-existent.[108]

Two kinds of answers can be found in the tradition. One is that non-assertability is contextually different from the intermediate status, i.e., the two differ because of the different conceptual contexts they are situated in. The defenders of states distinguish existence from reality and believe the former to be real, while the proponents of non-assertability do not make that distinction, assuming existence and reality to be the same, and therefore believe existence to be neither real nor unreal. al-Taftazānī rebuts that the answer is even more problematic than the doctrine it sets out to defend, because it requires a middle to be situated not only between existence and non-existence, but also between reality and unreality (something the proponents of states do not have the audacity to suggest).

Another kind of answer mentioned by al-Qūshjī argues that the non-assertability of existence and the intermediate status of states are intrinsically different in their logical form. Non-assertability rejects the very possibility of taking existence as the subject of an existential proposition – be it affirmative, negative, or doubly negative – whereas the intermediate status takes existence as the subject of a doubly negative existential proposition (i.e., "existence is neither existent nor non-existent"). The doctrine of the intermediate status ascribes meaningfulness at least to one component proposition of the existential disjunction concerning existence – the disjunction being "existence is either existent, or non-existent, or neither existent nor non-existent" –, while non-assertability denies meaningfulness to all component propositions of this disjunction.[109] The reason why meaningfulness must be denied is that the component propositions of the existential disjunction consist in the affirmation of a thing for itself ("existence is existent"), its negation with respect to itself ("existence is non-existent"), and the conjunction of negation and the negation of negation ("existence is neither existent nor non-existent", which means "existence is not existent and existence is not non-existent"). None of these component propositions is conceivable, since affirmation and negation are relational and require the subject to differ from the predicate. In this case, however, the subject does not differ from the predicate, both being 'existence'.

[108] Al-Taftazānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 1:367.

[109] As al-Qūshjī puts it, those are not "intelligible, definite notions" (*maʿānin muḥaṣṣala maʿqūla*), being rather "nothing but conceptually construed matters devoid of real understandable content" (*mujarrad iʿtibārāt laysa lahā mafhūmātun thābitatun*).

This whole argumentation is deemed non-cogent by al-Qūshjī, who lists three objections against it. First, the subject and the predicate of the existential propositions concerning existence are actually different because the subject is 'existence' and the predicate is 'existent' (i.e., 'possessing existence'), or 'non-existent' ('possessing non-existence', 'not possessing existence'). Second, even if that difference were rejected, "existence is non-existent" would be an affirmative metathetic proposition, which is semantically different from the negative proposition "existence is not existence": the latter is the negation of a thing with respect to itself whereas the former is not (it is the affirmation of 'non-existence' for existence). Third, it is possible for a thing to be affirmed for itself (e.g., universality is universal) or negated with respect to itself (e.g., individuation is not individuated), on condition of assuming that the affirmation and the negation in question are conceptually construed. Affirmation and negation are relational, but relations require the difference of the related terms only when those relations are extramental, not purely mentaly.[110]

The reader should note that, even if we somehow dismissed al-Qūshjī's objections and assumed the soundness of the distinction between the logical form conveying the non-assertability of existence and the logical form conveying the intermediate status of states, we would still be confronted with the question of the ontological consequences of such distinction, i.e., the question of whether or not any meaningful ontological difference exists between the doctrine that existence cannot be ascribed existential predicates and the doctrine that states are neither existent nor non-existent. That is unclear to me. In both cases, there would be a subject which is such that existence and non-existence cannot be attributed to it, a subject whose ontological status is fundamentally perplexing.

4. Conclusion

The results of the present inquiry can be summarized by attempting to answer the following question: does some fundamental connection exist between existence and states (*aḥwāl*)? Or more precisely: do Avicennized authors attribute existence with all or some of the quidditative and existential characteristics that *kalām* authors ascribe to a state?

The quidditative characteristics of the state are non-attributability, dependence in knowability, distinction from grounds. Existence is attributable in the Avicennized tradition, even though its attributability is rarely discussed as such.[111] On the other hand, dependence in knowability is

[110] Al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ Tajrīd*, fol.20.

[111] Avicenna says that 'the existent *qua* existent' possesses specific accidents, like unity and multiplicity, necessity and contingency, see Avicenna, *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt*, 1:13. Such an assertion, however, is not necessarily a proof of the

contentious, with Avicenna implicitly rejecting it, al-Rāzī accepting it, and Bahmanyār being ambiguous on the issue. Distinction from grounds is accepted by the whole tradition, except for Abū al-Barakāt, and the same goes for question of existence being grounded.

The existential characteristic of the state is the double existential negation "neither existent nor non-existent". The Avicennized tradition believes the double negation to entail a middle between contradictories – in light of existence being contradictory to non-existence, which in turn relates to the identification of existence and reality – and makes a systematic effort to avoid it when dealing with the question of ontological status of existence. Such an effort leads to an array of positions, each one problematic in its own right. Existentialism of additionality struggles with the problems of infinite regress and contradicting the essential identity of the instances of existence. Existentialism of sameness entails self-attribution and, consequently, the possibility of relations obtaining between a thing and itself. Conceptualism needs to reject either correspondence as such or exclusivity in particular as criteria of conceptual adequacy. Non-existentialism either implies the reality of the non-existent or fails to distinguish itself from conceptualism. Finally, the doctrine of non-assertability draws very near to the ontological implications of a double existential negation, if not to its exact logical form or its exact collocation in the schema of ontological categories.

In brief, the quiddity and the ontological status of existence represent points of contention in the Avicennized tradition. Certain formulations do ascribe existence characteristics identical or similar to those proper to states (dependence in knowability, distinction from grounds, existential non-assertability). We need to pay particular attention to the issue of the ontological status of existence with respect to that of states, as states are rejected mainly because of their intermediary ontological status. Were existence to be ascribed the same ontological status as states, or something remarkably similar (non-assertability), the fundamental case against states would lose its cogency. The problematic nature of this situation is summarized by al-Taftazānī's laconic assessment of the argument which defends the possibility of an intermediary ontological status by

---

attributability of existence, as the expression 'existent *qua* existent' may be understood as referring either to existence as such or to quiddity taken on condition of being existent (or taken with respect to its being existent). In this second case, existence would not be necessarily attributable, because the proper accidents of the existent *qua* existent would be concomitants of quiddity on condition of existence. A stronger proof of attributability comes from the widely-accepted Avicennian claim that coming-to-be (*ḥudūth*) is an 'attribute' (*ṣifa*) or a 'mode' (*kayfiyya*) of existence, see Avicenna, *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt*, 2:262–3; al-Rāzī *Mabāḥith*, 1:135. al-Samarqandī explicitly distinguishes between the concomitants of existence (individuation, unity and multiplicity, eternity and coming-to-be), those of quiddity (necessity, contingency) and those of existence and quiddity together (being-cause and being-effect), thereby implying that existence as such is attributable, see al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥā'if*, 73–164.

appealing to the non-assertability of existence: "the truth is that this fallacious argument is strong" (*al-ḥaqqu anna hadhihi l-shubhata qawiyyatun*).

In conclusion, the reader should keep in mind that the present account is subject to expansion and revision. Upon closer examination, the structure of positions about the quiddity and ontological status of existence may reveal itself to be more complex than I described thus far, with certain doctrines being further specifiable into more refined sub-doctrines (similarly to how the concrete existence of existence can be specified by additionality and sameness). The ascription of determinate positions to certain authors may also need to be revised, due to the emergence of additional textual evidence. This is particularly true for XIV-century and XV-century authors, whose ontologies still await comprehensive study.

Appendix A – The Positions on the Quiddity of Existence

Knowability		
Intuitive		
	Independent, primary	Avicenna, Bahmanyār (explicit)
	Dependent	Bahmanyār (implicit), al-Rāzī, some pre-Rāzian *falāsifa*
	Unspecified	Most authors
Non-Intuitive		
	Inferential	Abū al-Barakāt (?)
Grounding		
Grounds Another		
	Is Grounded (except one case)	Abū al-Barakāt (?)
Does not Ground Another		
	Is not Grounded	Bahmanyār, al-Rāzī, al-Ṭūsī, post-Ṭūsians

Appendix B – The Positions on the Ontological Status of Existence

Existentially assertable		
	Existent	
	Concretely	
	By another (additionality)	Abū al-Barakāt (?)
	By itself (sameness)	Bahmanyār, al-Rāzī (most works), al-Abharī

		(some works), al-Kātibī (some works), al-Bayḍāwī, al-Samarqandī
	Unspecified	Avicenna, Avicennian circle
Mentally		al-Khayyām, Ibn Ghaylān, al-Suhrawardī, al-Shahrazūrī, al-Abharī (some works), al-Kātibī (some works), al-Ṭūsī, Ibn Kammūna, al-Ḥillī, al-Iṣfahānī
Non-Existent		al-Taftazānī, al-Qushjī
Existentially non-assertable		Abū al-Barakāt (?), al-Sāwī (?), al-Abharī (one work), al-Ṭūsī, al-Ḥillī, al-Iṣfahānī

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to my anonymous reviewer, as well as to my colleagues Yusuf Daşdemir, Agnieszka Erdt, and Jari Kaukua. Their insightful comments helped me improve several sections of the paper. The academy of Finland [Grant Number 340923] provided the funds for the research that led to the writing of this article.

Bibliography

Manuscripts

Abharī, Athīr al-Dīn al-. *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq fī taḥrīr al-daqā'iq*. MS Tehran, Kitābkhāna-yi majlis-i shūrā-yi millī, 9:2752.

Abharī, Athīr al-Dīn al-. *Maqāṣid al-marāṣid*. MS Istanbul, Ragib pasa kitapliği, 682.

Abharī, Athīr al-Dīn al-. *Muntahā al-afkār fī ibānat al-asrār*. MS Tehran, Kitābkhāna-yi majlis-i shūrā-yi millī, 9:2752.

Dawānī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-. *Ḥāshiya ʿalā Sharḥ al-Tajrīd*. In ʿAlā al-Dīn al-Qūshjī. *Sharḥ Tajrīd*. MS Cambridge [Massachusetts], Harvard College Library, Widener Library, OL 22800.10.5f.

Kātibī, Najm al-Dīn al-Qazwinī al-. *Jāmiʿ al-daqā'iq fī kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*. MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de manuscrits, Arabe 2370.

Kātibī, Najm al-Dīn al-Qazwinī al-. *al-Munaṣṣaṣ fī sharḥ al-Mulakhkhaṣ*. MS Istanbul, Ragib pasa kitapliği, 714.

Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-. *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī l-ḥikma wa-l-manṭiq*. MS Berling, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, ms. or. Oct. 623.

Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-. *Risala fī-l-khalq wa-l-baʿth*. MS Istanbul, Köprülü kütüphanesi, 816.

Qūshjī, ʿAlā al-Dīn al-. *Sharḥ Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*. MS Cambridge [Massachusetts], Harvard College Library, Widener Library, OL 22800.10.5f.

Printed sources

Abharī, Athīr al-Dīn al-. *Taḥrīr al-dalāʾil fī taqrīr al-masāʾil*. In Mahdī ʿAẓīmī, "Taḥṣīṣ va taḥqīq risāla-yi *Taḥrīr al-dalāʾil fī taqrīr al-masāʾil* Athar-i Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī." *Falsafa va kalām-i islāmī* 47, no.1 (Spring/Summer 2014): 113–143.

Anṣārī, Abū al-Qāsim al-. *al-Ghunya fī l-kalām*. Ed. by Muṣṭafā Ḥ. ʿAbd al-Hādī. Cairo: Dār al-salām, 2010.

Avicenna. *al-Shifāʾ, al-Maqūlāt*. Ed. by Ibrahīm Madkūr, Georges Sh. Qanawatī, Maḥmūd M. al-Ḫudayrī, and Aḥmad F. al-Ihwānī. Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-ʿāmma li- shuʿūn al-maṭābiʿ al-amīriyya, 1959.

Avicenna. *al-Shifā, al-Ilāhiyyāt*. Ed. by Ibrahīm Madkūr, Sulaymān Dunyā, Muḥammad Y. Mūsā, Georges Qanawātī, and Saʿīd Zāyid. Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-ʿāmma li-shuʿūn al-maṭābiʿ al-amīriyya, 1960.

Avicenna. *al-Mubāḥathāt*. Ed. by Muḥsin Bidārfar. Qum: Intishārāt Bīdār, 1992.

Avicenna. *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*. Ed. by Mujtabā al-Zariʿī. Qum: Būstān-i kitāb, 2002.

Āmidī, Sayf al-Dīn al-. *Ghāyat al-marām fī ʿilm al-kalām*. Ed. by Ḥasan M. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf. Cairo: Lajnat iḥyāʾ al-turāth al-islāmī, 1971.

Āmidī, Sayf al-Dīn al-. *Abkār al-afkār fī uṣūl al-dīn*. Ed. by Aḥmad M. al-Mahdī. Cairo: Dār al-kutub wa-l-wathāʾiq al-qawmiyyah, 2004.

Baghdādī, Abū al-Barakāt al-, *Kitāb al-muʿtabar fī l-ḥikma*. Hyderabad, 1938–1939.

Bahmanyār, ibn Marzubān. *al-Taḥṣīl*. Ed. by Murtaḍā Moṭahharī. Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1996.

Bāqillānī, Abū Bakr al-. *Tamhīd al-awāʾil wa-talkhīṣ al-dalāʾil*. Ed. by Aḥmad Ḥaydar. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-kutub al-thaqāfiyya, 1993.

Bayḍāwī, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-. *Ṭawāliʿ al-anwār min maṭāliʿ al-anẓār*. Ed. by ʿAbbād Sulaymān. Cairo-Beirut: al-Maktaba al-azhariyya li-l-turāth – Dār al-jīl, 1991.

Jurjānī, al-Sharīf al-, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*. Istanbul[?]: Dār al-ṭibāʿa al-ʿāmira, 1894.

Juwaynī, Abū al-Maʿālī al-. *al-Shāmil fī uṣūl al-dīn*. Ed. by ʿAlī S. al-Nashshār, Fayṣal B. ʿAwn, and Suhayr M. Mukhtār. Iskandariyya: Mansha'at al-maʿārif, 1969

Juwaynī, Abū al-Maʿālī al-. *al-Irshād ilā qawāṭiʿ al-adilla fī uṣūl al-iʿtiqād*. Ed. by ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and Muḥammad Y. Mūsā. Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḫānijī, 1950.

Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid al-. *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*. Ed. and transl. by Michael E. Marmura. Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2000.

Ḥillī, al-ʿAllāma al-. *Kashf al-murād fī sharḥ Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*. Ed. by Ḥasan Ḥ. al-Amulī. Qum: Muʾassasat al-nashr al-islāmī, 1986.

Ḥillī, al-ʿAllāma al-. *al-Asrār al-khafiya fī al-ʿulūm al-ʿaqliyya*. Qum: Muʾassasa-yi bustān-i kitāb, 2009.

Khayyām, ʿUmar al-. *Risāla fī l-wujūd*, in Jamshīdnižad A. Ghulamriḍā, "Sukhani darbara-yi *Risālat fi l-wujud* az Ḥakīm ʿUmar b. Ibrahīm Ḫayyām." *Farhang* 29–32 (Winter 1999), 101–135.

Khayyām, ʿUmar al-. *Risāla fī jawāb ʿan thalātha masāʾil*. In *Jāmiʿ al-badāʾiʿ*. Ed. by Muḥammad Ḥ. Ismāʿīl. Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2004, 134–141.

Khayyām, ʿUmar al-. *Risāla fī l-ḍiyāʾ al-ʿaqlī fī mawḍūʿ al-ʿilm al-kullī*. In *Jāmiʿ al-badāʾiʿ*. Ed. by Muḥammad Ḥ. Ismāʿīl. Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2004, 142–146.

Ibn Ghaylān, Afḍal al-Dīn al-Balkhī. *Ḥudūth al-ʿālam*. Ed. by Mahdī Muḥaqqiq. Tehran: Anjuman-i āthār va mafākhir-i farhangī, 2005.

Ibn Kammūna, ʿIzz al-Dawla. *al-Kāshif al-jadīd fī l-ḥikma*. Ed. by Ḥāmid N. Iṣfahānī. Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi pažūhišī-yi ḥikmat va falsafa-yi Īrān, 2008.

Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Rukn al-Dīn. *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn fī al-radd ʿalā l-falāsifa*. Ed. by Hassan Ansari and Wilferd Madelung (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy & Institute of Islamic Studies Free University of Berlin, 2008),

Ibn al-Tilimsānī, Sharaf al-Dīn. *Sharḥ Maʾlim uṣūl al-dīn*. Ed. by Nizār Ḥammādī. ʻAmmān: Dār al-fatḥ li-l-dirāsā wa-l-nashr, 2010.

Ījī, Aḍud al-Dīn al-. *al-Mawāqif fī ʿilm al-kalām*. Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, [?].

Iṣfahānī, Shams al-Dīn al-. *Maṭāliʿ al-anẓār ʿalā matn ṭawāliʿ al-anwār*. Cairo[?]: Dār al-kutub, 2008.

Iṣfahānī, Shams al-Dīn al-. *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid fī sharḥ Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*. Ed. by Ḫālid al-ʿAdwānī. Kuwait: Dār al-ḍiyāʾ, 2012.

Kātibī, Najm al-Dīn al-Qazwinī al-. *Ḥikmat al-ʿayn*. Ed. by Ṣāliḥ Āydīn. Cairo: [?], 2002.

Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-. *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya fī ʿilm al-ilāhiyyāt wa-l-ṭabīʿiyyāt*. Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-māʿarif al-niẓāmiyya, 1924.

Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-. *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya mina l-ʿilm al-ilāhī*. Ed. Aḥmad Ḥ. al-Saqqā. Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿarabī, 1987.

Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-. *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*. Tehran: Muʾassasat al-Ṣādiq li-l-ṭabāʿa wa-l-nashr, 1994.

Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-. *al-Ishāra fī ʿilm al-kalām*. Ed. by Hānī M. Ḥāʾiz Muḥammad. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-azhariyya li-l-turāth, [?].

Samarqandī, Shams al-Dīn al-. *al-Ṣaḥāʾif al-ilahiyyā*. Ed. by Aḥmad ʿA. al-Sharīf. Kuwait, 1985, 94.

Samarqandī, Shams al-Dīn al-. *al-Maʿārif fī sharḥ al-Ṣaḥāʾif*. In ʿAbd al-Raḥmān S. Abū Ṣuʿaylīk, "*Kitāb al-Maʿārif fī sharḥ al-Ṣaḥāʾif* taʾlīf Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ashraf al-Ḥusaynī al-Samarqandī al-mutawaffā baʿda 705h – Taḥqīq wa-Dirāsa," PhD dissertation. Jāmiʿat al-ʿulūm al-islāmiyya al-ʿālamiyya, Amman, 2012.

Suhrawardī, Shihab al-Dīn al-. *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*. Ed. by Henry Corbin. Tehran: Pižūhishgāh-i ʿulūm-i insānī va mutālaʿāt-i farhangī, 1993.

Suhrawardī, Shihab al-Dīn al-. *Kitāb al-Mashāriʿ wa-l-muṭāḥarāt* (*al-ʿilm al-thālith*), in *Mawsūʿa muṣannafāt al-Suhrawardī*. Ed. by Muḥsin ʿAqīl. [?]: Dār Rawāfid, 2018.

Suhrawardī, Shihab al-Dīn al-. *Kitāb al-muqāwamāt* (*al-ʿilm al-thālith*). In *Mawsūʿa muṣannafāt al-Suhrawardī*. Ed. by Muḥsin ʿAqīl. [?]: Dār Rawāfid, 2018.

Suhrawardī, Shihab al-Dīn al-. *Kitāb al-talwīḥāt al-lawḥiyya wa-l-ʿarshiyya* (*al-ʿilm al-thālith*). In *Mawsūʿa muṣannafāt al-Suhrawardī*. Ed. by Muḥsin ʿAqīl. [?]: Dār Rawāfid, 2018.

Shahrastānī, Abū al-Fatḥ al-. *Nihāyat al-aqdām fī ʿilm al-kalām*. Ed. by Alfred Guillaume. Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 2009.

Shahrazūrī, Shams al-Dīn al-. *Rasāʾil al-shajara al-ilāhiyya fī ʿulūm al-ḥaqāʾiq*. Ed. by Najafqalī Ḥabībī. Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi pižūhishī-yi ḥikmat va falsafa, 2004.

Shahrazūrī, Shams al-Dīn al-. *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*. Ed. by ʿA. Sāyiḥ. Cairo: Maktabat al-thaqāfa al-dīniyya, 2012.

Shirāzī, Quṭb al-Dīn al-. *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*. Ed. by ʿAbdallah Nūrānī and Mahdī Muḥaqqiq. Tehran: Anjuman-i āthār va mafākir-i farhangī, 2005.

Taftazānī, Saʿd al-Dīn al-. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*. Ed. by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿUmayra. Beirut: ʿĀlam al-kutub, 1998.

al-Ṭūsī, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-. *Hall mushkilāt al-Ishārāt*. In Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt li-Abī ʿAli ibn Sīnā maʿa sharḥ Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī*. Ed. by Sulaymān Dunyā. Cairo: Dār al-maʿārif, 1957–1960.

Ṭūsī, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-. *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*. Ed. by ʿAbdallah Nūrānī. Tehran: Intishārāt-i muʾassasah-i muṭālaʿāt-i islāmī, dānishgāh-i Mīkgīl, shuʿbah-i Tihrān, bā hamkārī-i dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1980.

Ṭūsī, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-. *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*. Ed. by Muḥammad J. Al-Ḥusaynī al-Jalālī. Qum: Maktab al-iʿlām al-islāmī, 1986.

Secondary Literature

Alami, Ahmed. *L'ontologie modale. Étude de la théorie des modes d'Abū Hāshim al- Jubbā'ī*. Paris: J.Vrin, 2001.

Benevich, Fedor. "The classical Ashʿari theory of aḥwāl. Juwaynī and his opponents." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 27, no.2 (2016): 136–175.

Benevich, Fedor. "The Essence-Existence Distinction: Four Elements of the Post-Avicennian Metaphysical Dispute (11–13th Centuries)." *Oriens* 45 (2017): 203–58.

Benevich, Fedor. "The Metaphysics of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Šahrastānī (d.1153): *Aḥwāl* and Universals." In *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th to the 14th century*. Ed. by Abdelkader al-Ghouz. Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2018, 327–356.

Eichner, Heidrun. "Essence and Existence. Thirteenth-Century Perspectives in Arabic-Islamic Philosophy and Theology." In *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Receptions of Avicenna's Metaphysics*. Ed. by Dag N. Hasse and Amos Bertolacci. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012, 123–52.

Frank, Richard MacDonough. *Beings and their attributes. The teaching of the Basrian school of the Muʿtazila in the classical period*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978.

Rizvi, Sajjad. "An Islamic Subversion of the Existence-Essence Distinction? Suhrawardi's Visionary Hierarchy of Lights." *Asian Philosophy* 9, no.3 (1999): 219–27.

Rizvi, Sajjad. "Roots of an Aporia in Later Islamic Philosophy: the Existence-Essence Distinction in the Philosophies of Avicenna and Suhrawardi." *Studia Iranica* 29, no.1 (2000): 61–108.

Tiele, Jan. "Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī's (d.321/933) Theory of 'States' (*aḥwāl*) and its Adaption by Ashʿarite Theologians." In *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*. Ed. by Sabine Schmidtke. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 364–383.

Wisnovsky, Robert. *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.

Wisnovsky, Robert. "Essence and Existence in the Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Islamic East (*Mašriq*): A Sketch." In *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Receptions of Avicenna's Metaphysics*. Ed. by Dag N. Hasse and Amos Bertolacci. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012, 27–50.

Zamboni, Francesco O. "Is Existence One or Manifold? Avicenna and his Early Interpreters on the Modulation of Existence." *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 31 (2020): 121–150.