

ON THE NECESSARY BEING

Ithbāt-i wājib

Translated for this volume by Mohammed Rustom from Mullā Rajab ‘Alī Tabrizī, *Ithbāt-i wājib* in Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī and Henry Corbin, ed., *Anthologie des philosophes iraniens depuis le XVII^e siècle jusqu’à nos jours* (Tehran, 1972–1975), vol. 1, pp. 220–243.

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, and peace and blessings upon Muḥammad and his entire family. God says, *God does not forgive the ascription of partners to Him, but He forgives other than that* (4:48, 116).

This treatise consists of an introduction, five inquiries, and a conclusion:

Introduction: On the meanings of [the terms] ‘existence’, ‘homonymy’, and ‘synonymy’; mention of the names of those who upheld the position that between the Necessary and the contingent the terms ‘existence’ and ‘existent’ are homonymous.

Inquiry 1: On the Necessary Being.

Inquiry 2: On the oneness of the Necessary Being, that is, negating its being comprised of parts.

Inquiry 3: On the unity of the Necessary Being, that is, a general negation of its having any partners.

Inquiry 4: On the fact that the essence of the Necessary Being cannot be qualified.

Inquiry 5: On the fact that between the Necessary and the contingent the terms ‘existence’ and ‘existent’ are homonymous, not synonymous.

Conclusion: On those traditions which attest to the last two inquiries.

Introduction

The meaning of the terms ‘existence’ [*wujūd*] and ‘existent’ [*mawjūd*] is self-evident [*badīhī*], for ‘existence’ [*hastī*] and ‘existent thing’ [*chīzi ki hast*] do not require definition. Rather, it is impossible to define them, just as the philosophers and theologians have explained at the beginning of their books, having regarded them as the first of primary concepts [*awwal-i awā’īl*].

‘Sharing’ [*ishtirāk*] occurs amongst several things with respect to [the meaning of] a term, or the term is shared [but carries different meanings], as in the sharing of the term ‘*ayn*’ between the [words] ‘sun’, ‘fountain’ and ‘eye.’ The latter type of sharing

is referred to as ‘homonymity’ [*ishtirāk-i lafzī*], whereas the former type is referred to as ‘shared terminology’ [*mushtarāk-i lafzī*]. With respect to the former type, a term is shared by several things but does not [carry different meanings]. Rather, the meaning of the term is shared between them. This type of sharing is [also] referred to as ‘synonymity’ [*ishtirāk-i ma’nawī*], as in the term ‘animal’, which is shared between human beings and horses, with one term applying to both of them. But one must know that the terms ‘existence’ and ‘existent’ are shared between the Necessary and the contingent in a homonymous manner [*bā ishtirāk-i lafzī*], [not in a synonymous manner]. Up to now, the opinion of the majority of people has been that nobody would adhere to this [position], and if there were such a person, his name would not be recorded amongst the famous scholars because of the weakness—according to them—of this position. They have spoken vulgarities, since the foundations of religion and belief are based upon proofs, not by following famous men!¹ For this reason, I am going to mention a group amongst the great ones who have adhered to this position, but whose names have been forgotten [in this regard].

In *Theology*, the First Teacher² says, ‘God originates the existence [*anniyyāt*] of things and their forms simultaneously.’³ That is to say that God originates the existence of things and their forms such that their existence and quiddities⁴ exist simultaneously.⁵ It is therefore known that the existence of things and their

1. By ‘famous men’ Mullā Rajab has in mind Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640) and his followers. For Ṣadrā’s ontology, see Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Ṣadrā on Existence, Intellect and Intuition* (New York, 2010), chapter 2; Sajjad Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics: Modulation of Being* (London, 2009).

2. i.e., Aristotle. The *Theology*—a very important text for Islamic philosophy—is actually a paraphrase of parts of Plotinus’ *Enneads*. For an edition of the text, see ‘Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, ed., *Aflūṭīn ‘ind al-‘arab* (repr. ed. Kuwait, 1977), pp. 67–164. An analysis of its main philosophical ideas, along with a comparative study of its content and the relevant sections of Plotinus’ *Enneads*, can be found in Peter Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the Theology of Aristotle* (London, 2002).

3. This passage does not appear to figure in the *Theology*. I cite here a few similar passages: Badawī, *Aflūṭīn*, 51: ‘The Creator originates the existence of things and their forms...When He acts, He merely gazes upon Himself and His act takes place in one instant’ (cf. Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, pp. 132–133); Badawī, *Aflūṭīn*, 160: ‘[A]ll intellectual forms originate in one instance, without any deliberation or reflection, because their Originator, being one and simple, originates simple things all at once’ (cf. Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 127); Badawī, *Aflūṭīn*, 162: ‘The Creator originates things without deliberation.’

4. It is important to distinguish here between two types of quiddity: there is (1) quiddity in the most specific sense (*al-māhiyya bi-ma’nā’l-akhaṣṣ*) and (2) quiddity in the most general sense (*al-māhiyya bi-ma’nā’l-a‘amm*). The first type of quiddity is simply the answer to the question, ‘what is it?’ The second type of quiddity, which is the kind being discussed here, is a thing’s essence proper, that is, that by virtue of which it is what it is. See Mohammed Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy: Philosophy and Scripture in Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany, NY, 2012), p. 171, n. 34.

5. Apart from one poem, all the texts cited by Mullā Rajab in this treatise are in Arabic, and are almost always followed by his own Persian paraphrases. In all but the present instance, these paragraphs have not been translated since they are more or less direct translations of

quiddities are both caused and created by God. If the meaning of [the term] 'existence' with respect to God in His essence refers to the meaning of [the term] existence that is to be found in contingent things, it would follow that He too is created. Aristotle also says, 'The Pure One is the cause of all things, but is not like the things.'¹ It is therefore necessary that His existence be other than the existence of things. If not, then He would be like them.

In *Aphorisms of the Statesman*, the Second Teacher² explains it in this way: 'His existence is outside the existence of the rest of the existent things, and does not in the least share with them in meaning. If there is sharing, it is in name only, not in the meaning predicated of that name.'³ The Muslim philosopher Aḥmad Majrīṭī⁴ also confirms this, as he says, 'His existence is outside the existence of the rest of the existent things, and does not in the least share with them in meaning. If there is sharing, it is in name only, not in the meaning predicated of that name.'⁵

On the issue of God's transcendence [*tanzīh*], the Sufis have not allowed [for Him] to even be named. This is what they say: '[He is] nameless, traceless, indescribable, and characterless.'⁶ How beautifully has the gnostic Shabistārī⁷ spoken concerning this issue!

His Essence is beyond quantity, quality, and modality.
Exalted is His Essence above what they say!⁸

Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī⁹ confirms this in his *Texts and Commentary on the*

the originals. The few instances in which Mullā Rajab's Persian renderings do offer important interpretations of these Arabic texts have been indicated in the footnotes.

1. Badawī, *Aflūṭīn*, 134. Cf. Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 218 n. 13.
2. i.e., The first Neoplatonic Muslim philosopher, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950).
3. Fārābī, *Fuṣūl al-madānī: Aphorisms of the Statesman*, ed. and trans. D. M. Dunlop (Cambridge, 1961), 44 (English text), 127 (Arabic text).
4. i.e., Abū'l-Qāsim Maslamah al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964), an Andalusian alchemist who may have introduced the writings of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' to Muslim Spain. Mullā Rajab appears to confuse him (as was common from the eighth/fourteenth century onwards) with the famous Spanish astronomer and mathematician Abū'l-Qāsim Maslamah ibn Aḥmad al-Majrīṭī al-Qurṭubī (d. c. 395/1004). Thanks go to Omar Alī-de-Unzaga for clarification on this point.
5. It is unclear whether or not 'Majrīṭī' is citing Fārābī.
6. Cf. William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, NY, 1989), pp. 59–66; Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (2nd ed., Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984), 23–38; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science* (Albany, NY, 1993), chapter 1.
7. Maḥmūd Shabistārī (d. 720/1320), the famous Persian Sufi author of the *Gulshan-i rāz*.
8. *Munazzah dhātash az chand wa chih wa chūn / ta'ālā dhātuḥu 'ammā yaqūlūn*. This verse is to be found in Shabistārī, *Gulshan-i rāz*, ed. Javad Nurbakhsh (Tehran, 1976), line 31, p. 10, although the second hemistich has *sha'nuhu* instead of *dhātuḥu*.
9. Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673/1274) was Ibn 'Arabī's step-son and foremost student. His writings had a lasting influence on later Islamic thought, particularly on Sufism and Islamic philosophy.

Chapter of Praise.¹ The statement from the *Texts* is as follows: ‘Concerning this, we say that He is ‘existence’ for purposes of comprehension, but not in the sense of existence [as such].’² Some of the Sufi shaykhs have stated that the general meaning of existence [*wujūd-i ‘āmm*] is a cause, which concurs with the position of some of the philosophers who believe existence to be instantiated first and quiddity second. The philosophers of India have also confirmed this position, saying, ‘God ‘exists,’ but not in the sense that contingents things ‘exist.’

Inquiry 1

The existent—that is, that which is called ‘existent’—is classified into two categories: it is either dependent upon another or not dependent upon another. We will call the first category ‘contingent being’ [*mumkin al-wujūd bi’l-dhāt*] and the second ‘Necessary Being’ [*wājib al-wujūd bi’l-dhāt*]. The first category—that which is dependent upon another—must be dependent upon that category which is not dependent upon another because it is Necessary Being, for that which is defined as belonging to other than the first category falls into the second category, which is Necessary Being. The existence of the first category is obvious, and does not require proof. The existence of the second category is not obvious, and [therefore] requires proof. The proof of its existence is derived from the existence of the first category, whose [existence] is obvious. We therefore say that whenever a being that is contingent by nature (i.e., dependent upon another) exists, there must be a Necessary Being upon which it is dependent, for although the former exists, it is a being that is contingent by nature. Therefore, the Necessary Being exists.

Inquiry 2

The Necessary Being cannot be composed of parts in any manner. If it were composed of parts, it would be contingent upon these parts in such a way that if these parts did not exist, it would not exist, which is a contradiction. Therefore, the Necessary Being is not composite.

Inquiry 3

The Necessary Being cannot be two or more than two, for if it were two, the meaning of [the term] ‘Necessary Being’ would undoubtedly be shared between them. There is no state in which this [shared] meaning, or the essence of the two, or part of their essence, or accidents of their essence, could exist.

The essence of both cannot exist because there is no state in which something

1. i.e., the Qur’ān’s first chapter, more commonly known as the *Fātiḥah* or ‘Opener’.
2. Cf. Qūnawī, *Risālat al-nuṣūṣ*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Tehran, 1983), p. 79.

can be joined to the Necessary Being such that it could become two or [remain] unjoined. If it were unjoined, then it would not become two. Rather, it would [still] be one. But if something were joined [to it], then they would both be contingent upon that which is shared [between them] and that which has been joined. They would thus not be the Necessary Being.

Part of the essence of both cannot exist, for if part of the essence of both were to exist, they would undoubtedly be compounded, and because of which they would not be the Necessary Being. Both cannot be accidental, for [if this were the case], whenever we would consider their essences without their accidents, they would not be qualified by existence and necessity. With respect to the necessity of existence [*wujūb-i wujūd*], they would be contingent upon accidents, and so neither could be the Necessary Being. On the contrary, they would be the ‘Necessary Being’ on account of accidents.

From another angle, if the necessity of existence were accidental, it would be passive to the necessity of existence or the Necessary Being (which is its cause), or to other than the essence of the Necessary Being. If it were [passive] to the Necessary Being, it follows that both would be passive and active at one and the same time, which is impossible. If it were [passive] to other than the essence of the Necessary Being, it follows that it would not be the Necessary Being. Therefore, it is clear from what we have explained that the Necessary Being cannot be more than one. On account of this demonstration, attention need not be given to Ibn Kammūnah’s sophistic argument [*shubhah*].¹

Inquiry 4

The essence of the Necessary Being [*‘ayn-i dhāt*] cannot be qualified by virtue of two proofs.

A general proof: [This] is the proof by way of negating union [*ittiḥād*], whether it be the union of two essences, two qualities, or an essence with a quality. This proof is well known amongst the philosophers. It is as follows: two things cannot be one because they would both be existent, or one would be existent and the other non-existent, or neither of the two would be existent, and a third thing would have to be introduced.

If there were two existents, they would not be unified. Rather, they would be two, not one. If one were existent and the other non-existent, they would not be unified because the union of that which is existent with that which is non-existent is unintelligible. If neither of the two were existent, they would also not be unified

1. Ibn Kammūnah (d. 683/1284) was a Jewish philosopher well-acquainted with Islamic philosophy. For the sophistic arguments attributed to him and their reception in Islamic thought, see Reza Pourjavady and Sabine Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad: ‘Izz al-Dawlah Ibn Kammūnah (d. 683/1284) and His Writings* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 44–51.

for they would be opposed to each other, and a third thing would have to be introduced. Thus, union is impossible. And whenever union is impossible, the essence of the Necessary Being cannot be qualified.

A specific proof: A quality is a thing which, in its own essence and quiddity, is contingent upon and inheres in that which is qualified. It is not possible for something which is contingent upon something [else] in its own essence and quiddity and in which it inheres to be the essence of that thing. Therefore, the essence of the Necessary Being cannot be qualified.

Inquiry 5

Sharing of [the terms] ‘existence’ and ‘existent’ between the Necessary and the contingent is homonymous, not synonymous, for if the meaning of ‘existence’ and ‘existent’—which are self-evident concepts—were shared between the Necessary and the contingent, that meaning would apply to the essence of the Necessary Being, or part of its essence, or an accident of its essence. Thus, we say that the essence of the Necessary Being cannot, [at the same time,] be that existence which is a self-evident concept, a contingent quality, and [that which] is dependent upon the essence of the contingent.

With respect to the first [possibility], this is because the meaning [of existence] is self-evident, while the essence of the Necessary Being is not self-evident. With respect to the second [possibility], this is because [existence] is a quality, and the essence of the Necessary Being cannot be qualified insofar as it is the essence of the Necessary Being. With respect to the third [possibility], this is because [existence] is contingent, and the essence of the Necessary Being cannot be contingent.

From another angle, [if the meaning of the term ‘existence’ is shared between the Necessary and the contingent,] then existence would require accidents, or not require them since it is self-subsistent, or require nothing. If it would require accidents, then wherever it is to be found, there would be accidents. It would therefore follow that the essence of God is accidental, which is impossible. If it would not require accidents, then it would follow that contingent existence is also self-subsistent in its essence. Therefore, contingent existence would not be contingent existence. If it would require nothing, then it would [nevertheless] call for a cause other than itself [insofar as existence is a quality of that which is contingent].¹ It would follow that the Necessary Being who subsists in His essence is [still] contingent upon another, which is impossible. Existence therefore does not pertain to God’s essence.

And it cannot be that existence is a part of the essence of the Necessary

1. This last point is unclear if translated literally: ‘If it would require neither, then the requirement of accidents and the non-requirement of accidents would [nevertheless] call for a cause other than itself [insofar as ‘existence’ is a quality of that which is contingent].’

Being because, as a corollary to this false position, it would follow that it is also compounded. But existence cannot be an accident of the essence of the Necessary Being because the cause of this existence would either be the essence of the Necessary Being or other than the essence of the Necessary Being. If it is the essence of the Necessary Being, then it would follow that the latter is both the cause of this existence and receptive to this existence, which is impossible. If it is other than the essence of the Necessary Being, then it would follow that the Necessary Being is contingent upon another for existence. It would thus be contingent being, not the Necessary Being.

It has become clear that between the Necessary and the contingent the meaning of [the term] ‘existence’ cannot be shared. Therefore, sharing occurs [between them] with respect to the term ‘existence,’ not with respect to the meaning that is predicated of it. From what we have demonstrated, it is clear that God does not have qualities.

Conclusion

The traditions which attest to the two previous inquiries are numerous, amongst which are the words of the Commander of the Faithful.¹ In *The Path of Eloquence*, he says, ‘The perfection of sincerity is to negate qualities from Him.’² Another saying [of his] which Shaykh Abū Ja‘far al-Kulaynī³ has mentioned in *The Sufficient* is as follows: ‘All things which possess qualities [*mawṣūf*] are created, and the Creator of things does not possess qualities [*ghayr mawṣūf*].’⁴

Moreover, there are the two sermons which Shaykh Ibn Bābawayh⁵ reports from Imam ‘Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā⁶ in *The Book of Divine Unity*, which every Shi‘a must learn and upon which they should set straight their beliefs; rather, they should recite them continuously every day! In the first sermon, he says:

The first act of servitude is to know God, and the root of knowledge of God is His oneness [*tawḥīd*].⁷ The foundation of God’s oneness is to negate qualities from Him by way of intellectually witnessing that all qualities and things which possess qualities are

1. i.e., ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), the first Shi‘i Imam and the fourth Caliph.

2. For this passage in context, see Chittick, *A Shi‘ite Anthology* (Albany, NY, 1981), p. 30. Mullā Rajab understands this sentence to mean that the perfection of both declaring God’s transcendence (*tanẓīh*) and having sincerity towards Him lies in negating qualities from Him.

3. Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb al-Kulaynī (d. 329/940), an important early Shi‘i theologian and traditionist.

4. Cf. the following citation.

5. Muḥammad ibn Bābawayh/(Bābūyah) al-Qummī (d. 381/991), an important early Shi‘i theologian and legal scholar.

6. The eighth Shi‘i Imam (d. 203/817).

7. In this and the following sermon, Mullā Rajab’s paraphrases make it clear that he understands *tawḥīd* to mean knowledge of God’s oneness (*yiki-dānistān*).

created; and by witnessing that all created things have a Creator who is not a quality and does not possess qualities, that all qualities and things which possesses qualities are related, that relations apply to temporally originated things, and that it is impossible for temporally originated things to be eternal, [that is], that which is impossible to be temporally originated.¹

Also from this sermon: ‘Everything that is known in itself is created, and everything that subsists through other than it is caused’;² ‘Whoever describes Him has committed heresy with respect to Him’;³ ‘Whatever is to be found in creation is not to be found in its Creator. And whatever is possible with respect to creation is impossible with respect to its Creator.’⁴

In the second sermon, he says:

The first dimension of religion is to know Him, and the perfection of knowledge is His oneness. The perfection of God’s oneness lies in the negation of qualities from Him by witnessing⁵ that every quality is other than that which possesses qualities, and that that which possess qualities is other than the quality.⁶

In *The Book of Divine Unity*, it is also reported that Imam Riḍā⁷ said, ‘Whoever likens God to His creature assigns partners to Him.’⁷

In *The Book of Divine Unity*, it is related that Abū ‘Abd Allāh⁸ said, ‘Whoever likens God to His creatures assigns partners to Him; God does not resemble anything, and nothing resembles Him. And whatever occurs to the mind, He is other than that.’⁹ In the traditions the following is recorded: ‘Whoever likens God to His creation has committed heresy with respect to Him.’¹⁰

Therefore, the traditions that indicate the affirmation of qualities with respect to

1. Ibn Bābawayh, *Tawhīd* (Najaf, 1966), 17 (with slight differences). Cf. Chittick, *Shi’ite Anthology*, p. 45.

2. Ibn Bābawayh, *Tawhīd*, 17 (with slight differences). Cf. Chittick, *Shi’ite Anthology*, p. 45.

3. Ibn Bābawayh, *Tawhīd*, 17. Cf. Chittick, *Shi’ite Anthology*, 46. In his paraphrase on this saying, Mullā Rajab understands it to mean that the one who describes God ‘has turned away from the truth’ (*bar gashtah-ast az haqq*).

4. Ibn Bābawayh, *Tawhīd*, 18 (with slight differences). Cf. Chittick, *Shi’ite Anthology*, p. 48.

5. Mullā Rajab’s paraphrase of this passage adds *ba-tahqīq* here, thus rendering the sentence as follows: ‘by witnessing, through verification, that every quality is other...’

6. cf. Ibn Bābawayh, *Tawhīd*, 18; Chittick, *Shi’ite Anthology*, p. 48. If this is the passage Mullā Rajab has in mind, it forms a part of the original sermon cited above.

7. cf. Ibn Bābawayh, *Tawhīd*, 39, where these words are attributed to Ja’far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), the sixth Shi’i Imam.

8. i.e., Ja’far al-Ṣādiq.

9. Ibn Bābawayh, *Tawhīd*, 42. The last sentence of this citation is a version of a well-known maxim in Islamic thought, often attributed wrongly to Dhu’l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 248/861), an early Sufi. See Rustom, ‘The Sufi Teachings of Dhu’l-Nun’, *Sacred Web* 24 (2009): 72.

10. cf. Kulaynī, *Uṣūl-i kāfī*, tr. Sayyid Jawād Muṣṭafawī (Tehran, 1965), 1:146–147 (Persian text), 1:147 (Arabic text). Cf. also the saying cited above: ‘Whoever describes Him has committed heresy with respect to Him.’

God—such as knowledge, power, etc.—are to be explained by way of interpretation, as did Imam Muḥammad Bāqir:¹

Is He not called ‘knowing’ and ‘powerful’ only because he bestows knowledge upon the knowledgeable and power upon the powerful? Whatever distinction you make using your imagination in coming up with the most precise of meanings is created and designed for your sake, and [therefore] returns to you. But the Creator is the one who gives life and determines death. It just might be that an insignificant ant imagines God to have two tentacles like it does, and conceives their nonexistence to be a deficiency in the one who does not have them. Such is the case of those who use their reason in their descriptions of God.²

Thus, God’s being ‘knowing’ and ‘powerful’ means that He bestows knowledge upon the knowledgeable and power upon the powerful.

Or, [the traditions that indicate the affirmation of attributes to Him must be understood according to] the second interpretation that the Imams have carried out, saying that He is ‘knowing’, that is, He is not ignorant; and that He is ‘powerful’, that is, He is not incapable. The qualities of perfection are affirmed by negating their opposites, which lie on the side of imperfection. The early philosophers held this position, saying that every quality of perfection that can be attributed to the essence of God—even the necessity of existence [itself]—returns to a negation of the [qualities] which lie on the side of imperfection. Thus, the attribution of ‘existent’ to God carries this sense, since it is not ‘contingent’, neither in the sense that necessity and existence are accidents of the essence of God and are subsistent such that the essence of God [comes to] carry the meaning of ‘existence’ [and] ‘existent’, nor in the sense of ‘necessity’ in the way that it applies to contingent things. *Exalted is your Lord, the Lord of majesty, above what they describe. Peace be upon the Messengers, and praise be to God, Lord of the worlds* (37:180–182).

1. The fifth Shi‘i Imam (d. 114/732).

2. cf. Ṣadrā’s different uses of a version of this tradition in Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-kāfi*, ed. Muḥammad Khwājawī (Tehran, 1987), 1:180–181, 3:133, 4:106 (in particular). See also the translated passage in Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy*, p. 134.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE

al-Aṣl al-aṣīl

Translated for this volume by Mohammed Rustom from Mullā Rajab ‘Alī Tabrizī, *al-Aṣl al-aṣīl*, in Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī and Henry Corbin ed., *Anthologie des philosophes iraniens depuis le XVII^e siècle jusqu’à nos jours* (Tehran, 1972–1975), vol. 1, pp. 244–271.

[1. None Proceeds from the One but the One]

In this treatise we would like first to discuss the well-known axiom amongst the philosophers—namely that none proceeds from the One but the one¹—and to mention some of the corollaries [*furūʿ*] derived from it, which themselves are principles for other corollaries. Secondly, we will demonstrate that most philosophical inquiries are corollaries of this axiom, thereafter mentioning in a very concise and brief manner some of the principles and correct opinions to which Aristotle and the rest of the ancients adhered. We have named the first principle the ‘fundamental principle’ in order to point up the distinction between it and the rest of the principles under discussion. I have written this as a reminder for both myself and those whom God the Exalted desires to benefit thereby. God is the helper, and from Him I seek assistance.

The first principle—which we refer to as the ‘fundamental principle’—is that only the one can proceed from the Pure One [*al-wāḥid al-mahḍ*], who is simple in every respect. That this claim is self-evident in the eyes of the intelligent is based upon a premise, namely that we necessarily know, with respect to a cause’s essence and substance, that it has some type of relationship [*munāsabah*] and specificity [*khuṣūṣiyyah*] in relation to its effect. In a nutshell, in its essence there must necessarily be an aspect which corresponds to the procession [*ṣudūr*] of its effect

1. For this axiom (*lā yaṣḍuru min al-wāḥid illa’l-wāḥid*) in Islamic thought, see Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, tr. Michael Marmura (Provo, UT, 2005), pp. 328–330; Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of the Human Intellect* (New York, 1992), 75ff. This doctrine is inspired by but yet distinct from the Neoplatonic teaching on how multiplicity emerges from the One. See Peter Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the Theology of Aristotle* (London, 2002), pp. 137–138; John Dillon and Lloyd Gerson (ed. and tr.), *Neoplatonic Philosophy: Introductory Readings* (Indianapolis, 2004), pp. 83–86, 264, 266–267. For a rejection of the notion that only one proceeds from the One, see Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, tr. Michael Marmura, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT, 2000), pp. 65ff. For Ibn ‘Arabī’s nuanced understanding of this doctrine, see William Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Cosmology* (Albany, NY, 1998), pp. 18–19, 148–149, 229 (objection); 75, 137, 169 (approval). Cf. Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, *Risālat al-nuṣūṣ*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Tehran, 1983), p. 74.

from it. This relationship is the specifying cause [*al-‘illah al-mukhaṣṣiṣah*] for the procession of its specific effect from it, not any other effect.

If there were not in the cause’s essence and substance a corresponding aspect designated for the procession of this specific effect from it—not any other effect—the procession of this specific effect from it would not be more apt [*awlā*] than the procession of any other effect. This would demand preponderance [*tarjih*] without a preponderator on the side of the cause, which is undoubtedly inconceivable.

This essential correspondence which we have mentioned is equivalent to the disposition [*malakah*] of artisans with respect to their crafts, such as the disposition of the poet in relation to poetry. This disposition is the designated cause for the procession of poetry from the poet, not any other craft. If this is granted, then we can say [the following]: the efficient cause of *A*, in its essence and substance, in some manner corresponds to *A*, [serving] as a designated cause for its procession from it, not for any other effect. If we were to suppose that another effect could proceed from it, namely *B*, for example, then the efficient cause of *A* would necessarily also have an essential correspondence in relation to *B*. This correspondence would then either (1) be the same correspondence as the first correspondence—which is necessarily impossible, because the element corresponding to a thing can never in itself correspond to what is distinct [*mubāyin*] from that thing because the correspondence attributed to one of two distinct things is distinct in relation to the other distinct thing, and that which is distinct from something cannot in itself correspond to that thing; or (2) [this correspondence] would be other than the first correspondence, thus entailing compoundedness [*tarkīb*] in the essence of the aforementioned efficient cause after we had supposed it to be absolutely simple [*basīṭ*], which is absurd.

From another perspective, the procession of *B* from its efficient cause would either be evident through the same essential correspondence which this efficient cause has in relation to *A*, [or it would not be]. [The former] is impossible because the correspondence which must act as the specifying cause for the procession of *A* cannot be a cause for the procession of other than it, namely *B*. If that were the case, *B* would necessarily be *A*, which is absolutely impossible. Take, for example, how it is impossible for the disposition of poetry to be a cause for the procession of [something] other than poetry, such as writing. If that were the case, ‘writing’ would have to be ‘poetry,’ [which is impossible]. We have other clear proofs and various remarks to make in order to prove this point. However, this should suffice those who have the innate disposition for philosophy and do not require further clarification.

This axiom is a great support for philosophy [*falsafah*] and a clear basis for metaphysics [*hikmat*], from which many corollaries derive, each one of them also serving as the basis for other corollaries, and those for others and so on until [this] results in specific questions, to some of which we shall allude, with God’s assistance.

Corollary: Corollaries derive from the fundamental principle (that only the one proceeds from the First One). Demonstration of this principle is clear by virtue of His simplicity in every respect and His being far removed from compounded things, be they mental or extra-mental (exalted is God beyond that!).

Another Corollary: Based on what we have mentioned, it is known that the Necessary Being cannot be described by that general, self-evident type of existence [*al-wujūd al-‘amm al-badīhī*] which is predicated of things because He is the efficient cause of this existence. And it is impossible for the efficient cause of something to be receptive to that thing. With this in mind, what becomes apparent is the falsity of the position of the later philosophers [*al-muta’akhhirūn*], namely that between the Necessary and the contingent ‘existence’ is synonymous [*ishtirāk ma’nawī*].¹

Another Corollary: Now that you have come to know that there is an essential correspondence and a substantial specificity [*khuṣūṣiyyah jawhariyyah*] between cause and effect, what connects the procession of one thing from another is this essential specificity [*al-khuṣūṣiyyah al-dhātiyyah*] and corresponding meaning. This being the case, then, likewise, when the cause is noble, it necessitates that its effect also be noble. If the effect is not noble, then the cause cannot be noble. If the cause is noble and yet we suppose its effect to be lowly, what would be the cause’s essential correspondence [in relation to its effect]? How could there be an essential specificity between the two, given the fact that the essence of the cause is noble, whereas the substance of the effect is lowly? This is because a noble thing is that from which nobility is derived and noble things appear, whereas a lowly thing is that from which lowliness is derived [and lowly things appear]. What is known from this is that whenever the cause is noble, its effect is also noble.

Since the First occupies the utmost rank of nobility (rather, He occupies the ultimate rank of perfection and nobility; better yet, He is pure perfection and nobility itself), the effect which comes from Him is the most noble of effects. This is why ‘The first thing that God created was the intellect,’² as the lawgiver³ said. Then the effects ensued from it—one proceeding from the other—descending in accordance with their nobility until the descent ended with a lowly effect completely devoid of nobility and [which was] below everything else. On account of this demonstration, there arises no need for the principle of ‘the contingency of the most noble’ [*imkān al-ashraf*], which is well known amongst the philosophers, and whose upshot we have mentioned, namely that things are in need of His

1. By the ‘later philosophers’, Mullā Rajab clearly has in mind Mullā Ṣadrā and his followers. For Mullā Rajab’s refutation of the synonymy of the term existence, see his *On the Necessary Being* in the present volume.

2. For this famous tradition, which appears under several different guises in texts of Islamic thought, see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, p. 273; Ghazzālī, *Kitāb Mizān al-‘amal* (Beirut, 1979), p. 89; Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Tehran, lithograph, 1984), 483–484; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-kāfī*, ed. Muḥammad Khwājawī (Tehran, 1987), 3:242.

3. i.e. the Prophet.

essence, [beginning with] the most noble thing, followed by the [next] most noble thing and so on until [the process] ends with the lowest thing.¹ This was also an acceptable principle amongst the ancient philosophers but [its demonstration] is *a posteriori* [*inniyyah*], whereas this demonstration of ours is *a priori* [*limmiyyah*], as you have come to know.

[2. A Refutation of Substantial Motion]

There is corollary which derives from the [previous] corollary, namely with reference to prime matter [*hayūlā*]: since it has been established that bodies are comprised of form [*ṣūrah*] and prime matter, it is evident to us that there are things in bodies which are receptive to other things, and that these things may obtain for bodies after not having been existent in them. This could only be possible through motion in the sense of generation and corruption. It is therefore affirmed, by virtue of the existence of prime matter in bodies, that bodies are receptive to motion in the sense of generation and corruption.

Since this discussion ended with the mention of motion, we must speak about it at greater length as it is an indispensable and useful issue which many have been unable to understand. According to the correct opinion, motion is the quality of change amongst mutable things [*mutaghayyarāt*]. Change takes place in two ways: (1) simultaneously, as occurs in generation and corruption, and (2) gradually, which is motion [proper]. The definition of motion as given by Aristotle is as follows: ‘Motion is the first perfection of that which exists in potentiality *qua* its existing in potentiality.’² This definition, as we understand it, means that a moving body [*mutaharrik*] has two perfections. The first of these³ is that in which its motion terminates—namely that towards which its motion tends—such as a particular location in which the motion of a body terminates. The second of these⁴ is motion itself, which precedes the perfection we first mentioned.⁵ Motion therefore is the first perfection of that which exists in potentiality, namely a moving body. Indeed, the first of the two perfections actualized by a moving body is its motion [towards that which it tends], and then [the second perfection is actualized through its termination in] that towards which it tends.

The usefulness behind the qualification ‘*qua* its existing in potentiality’ lies

1. For the argument of the contingency of the most noble in context, see Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, ed. and tr. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Provo, UT, 1999), pp. 107–112. See also Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany, NY, 1975), p. 156. Cf. Dillon and Gerson, *Neoplatonic Philosophy*, pp. 265–266.

2. Cf. Aristotle, *Physics*, 201a11 in Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ, 1984), 1:343.

3. i.e. The second perfection.

4. i.e. The first perfection.

5. i.e. The second perfection.

in the fact that when a moving body is discussed not in terms of its existing in potentiality but in terms of its existing in actuality, its motion cannot be established. Motion is an accident for something when that thing has potentiality. But when a thing's potentiality ceases—for example the intellect—transitive motion is not possible for it, just as it is impossible for a body which we deem perfect in every respect. On account of this qualification another key point arises, [and] from which the discussion of generation and corruption derives. It is for one to say that motion is the first perfection for that which exists in potentiality insofar as it exists in potentiality in relation to that towards which its motion tends. For this first perfection—which is motion—occurs by way of considering its existence in potentiality, that is, its second perfection which is that towards which the moving object tends. When this second perfection is not present in any sense but there is one perfection, as is the case in generation and corruption, an object's motion cannot be a transitive first perfection.¹

Since our discussion on motion has been prolonged without any effort on our part, it has become necessary to append to it an exposition of the impossibility of substantial motion [*al-ḥarakah al-jawhariyyah*].² This is also an indispensable and beneficial issue. From the time of its appearance a party from amongst the distinguished scholars have upheld its impossibility. Its exposition [is as follows]: if we suppose something to be in a state of substantial motion from a fixed beginning to a specific end, these two points would have to exist between finite motions. The moving object would therefore emerge in the end, since in the beginning of its motion it would not have subsisted as an individual entity [*bi'l-shakhs*] or anything else. If in the end it subsists as an individual entity or something else, just as it was in the beginning, then it will not have been in a state of motion. Rather, it will have been in a state of rest. Yet we have supposed it to be in a state of motion, which would entail absurdity. If in the end it subsists as an individual entity other than what it was in the beginning, its motion would also not be realized because the moving object must subsist in every movement, just as it did in its [initial] state.

From another perspective—[the assent to] which is even more repulsive and absurd than what we have just mentioned—if we suppose something to be in motion in its substance, its substance will have to be other than its substance in order for the moving object to be in a state of substantial motion. This is because

1. A lucid exposition of this discussion can be found in Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics*, tr. Sayyid 'Alī Qūlī Qarā'ī (London, 2003), pp. 99–101. For a detailed treatment of motion in Islamic philosophy, see Avicenna, *The Physics of the Healing*, tr. Jon McGinnis (Provo, UT, 2010), 1:107–156.

2. For this well-known famous Ṣadrīan doctrine, see Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmah al-muta'āliyah fi'l-asfār al-'aqliyyah al-arba'ah*, ed. Riḍā Luṭfi and Ibrāhīm Aminī (Beirut, 1981), 3:79ff. See also Christian Jambet, *The Act of Being: The Philosophy of Revelation in Mullā Ṣadrā*, tr. Jeff Fort (New York, 2006), pp. 97–203; Ibrahim Kalin, 'Between Physics and Metaphysics: Mullā Ṣadrā on Nature and Motion', *Islam and Science* 1/1 (2003): 59–90.

whatever is in a state of motion must be other than the moving object, just as it was in its [initial state]. This would also require that the moving object be both subsistent and non-subsistent as an individual entity. The former requirement would obtain because of the necessity in every instance of motion for the moving object to subsist as an individual entity. The latter requirement would obtain because of the object's being in a state of substantial motion and its therefore never actualizing its essence. This would further entail the position that the moving object be divested of its essence and emerge from it, be in a state of motion in its essence, and terminate in its essence, all the while it being necessary for it not to be divested of its essence because of the necessity of the subsistence of the moving object as an individual entity. The absurdity of this [position] is more manifest than the sun in broad daylight, but it is not possible for its inadequacy to [easily] occur to the mind. Nor is it useful to speak of, let alone have belief in, as is evident. So understand and reflect assiduously, for these subtleties which we have mentioned are noble and rare problems, the likes of which are not to be found in the honoured books [of those who uphold the impossibility of substantial motion].

[3. The Primacy of Essence]

Another Principle: Know that quiddity *qua* itself is nothing but itself.¹ This principle is well known and agreed upon by the philosophers. No one denies it because of the self-evidentiary nature of this concept. This is because each thing *qua* that thing can only be that thing. Many important and useful corollaries branch out from this principle through which ruptures in metaphysics, on account of the impact of the thoughts of the ignorant and the contestations of the people of disputation, are set straight.²

Corollary: If quiddity *qua* itself is nothing but itself, then an extra-mentally existent quiddity is either an extra-mental quiddity only, or it is a quiddity accompanied by extra-mental existence. If it is an extra-mental quiddity only, it cannot be existent because quiddity *qua* itself is nothing but itself, as you know. Yet here we suppose it to be existent, which would entail absurdity. If extra-mentally there is no quiddity only, but rather quiddity accompanied by existence, then extra-mental existence must accompany quiddity but not in the sense that existence is an extra-mental existent, since this would entail circularity in existence itself. Rather, [it must accompany quiddity] in the sense of its existing extra-mentally by virtue of

1. That is, quiddity 'in the most general sense'. For the two types of quiddity, see, in the present volume, Mullā Rajab's *On the Necessary Being*, p. 286, n. 4.

2. The imagery that is implied in this last sentence is almost impossible to faithfully communicate in translation. The idea here is that the useful corollaries which branch out from the principle in question can help repair the body of metaphysics, whose bones have become fractured as a result of the assaults carried out on it by ignorant thinkers and those given to vain disputation in philosophical matters.

your knowledge that it is impossible to ever pin down. For this reason, it is affirmed that an existent extra-mental quiddity is accompanied by extra-mental existence on account of what is in the mind, as is the philosophers' position, one and all.

Another Corollary: If it is affirmed that existence accompanies quiddity extra-mentally, then it is affirmed that existence be concomitant with quiddity extra-mentally in the sense that it is posterior to quiddity because the existence of a thing is a corollary of the thing and necessarily follows it. If existence follows quiddity and is its corollary, the instantiating act [*jaʿl*] of the agent must attach to quiddity firstly and essentially, and then existence can be concomitant with quiddity because it is self-evidently impossible for the agent to first cause the corollary of a thing and its concomitant, and then [to cause] its basis and that with which the thing is concomitant. If not, then that with which the thing is concomitant would itself have to be concomitant and the concomitant would be that with which the thing is concomitant, which is impossible. This would be like causing evenness to come about before the number four, or like first building the upper part of a house and then the lower part. This is plain to see.

Based on what we have said, it is clear that quiddity is instantiated without existence, as one group amongst the distinguished scholars have upheld. The languages in common usage also assume the instantiation of quiddity without existence, for one says, 'So-and-so moves his hand and writes.' That is, 'He instantiates motion and writing,' without saying, 'So-and-so gives existence to motion and writing' or 'So-and-so causes motion to become an existent.' As it is said in Persian, 'I am moving and writing,' without saying, 'I am making motion existent' or 'I am giving existence to motion and writing.' The self-evidentiary nature of such statements is itself witness to the veracity of what is spoken and the falsehood of what is unspoken. Such is the case with the rest of the languages in common usage amongst the masses, as in Turkish, where it is said, 'I did something' [*falān iş eyledim*], that is, 'I brought about a certain effect,' without saying, 'I gave existence' [*vucūd verdim*],¹ that is, 'I gave existence to a certain effect'. The likes of these are not unknown to those who study languages and reflect upon them properly.

[4.] A Discourse Proving the Falsity of Mental Existence

This demonstration [proving the falsity of mental existence] rests on two premises. One of them is self-evident, namely that when there is knowledge by way of the apprehension of a form in the mind—as is the later philosophers' position—it must be a knowable mental form derived from something [external] which belongs to the species of this thing. For example, if we sought to obtain knowledge of a certain

1. Both Turkish phrases have been rendered by Shiraz Sheikh.

species of a substance, its form would necessarily have to be knowable from this species because of the impossibility of knowing a substance from its accident, or of the form ‘man’ from the form ‘horse,’ [for example].

The second premise is based on reflection, resulting in the necessity that for every material form there be a specified matter disposed towards it,¹ and that it is not possible for the form to inhere in other than it. According to the philosophers, this premise is irrefutably demonstrable, but it is not the place to discuss this [claim]. Since you know this, we say that the mental form of fire, for example, must be known—based on what you know self-evidently—from a [corresponding] extra-mental species because of the impossibility, for instance, of knowing what fire is by examining water. Based on what you know through reflection, there must be for this mental form of fire a specified matter disposed towards it so that this form may inhere in it. If this is the case, [one could ask] why the mind is not set aflame when the form of fire is acquired mentally, despite the fact that it is a material form which inheres in the material specified for it, as is the case with the extra-mental form of fire, given that absolutely no change is supposed to take place between them in any way, neither formally and actually, nor materially. It is therefore useless for them to say that the condition for the burning [of the mentally existent form of fire] is extra-mental existence because the concomitants of quiddity cannot be separated from quiddity, neither mentally nor extra-mentally. If it were possible for the concomitants of quiddity to be separated from quiddity mentally, it would be possible to separate evenness from the mentally existent concept of four, which is absurd. This, likewise, is due to the absence of a distinction between mental and extra-mental existence.

The form of fire which they say is a mental form is only ‘mental’ in speech, since it is actually an extra-mental form. But in their opinion there is no difference between the form of fire which resides in the mind and the rest of the things which reside in the mind, despite the fact that they do not say that the latter—such as the colours and their mixtures which reside in the mind, like the redness in blood and the yellowness in bile—are also mentally existent entities. Why would these extra-mentally existent things and the extra-mental forms of fire be mentally ‘existent’ just because they share in both being things which ‘inhere’ [*amrān ḥallān*] in the mind? The claim that there is a distinction between mental and extra-mental existence is clearly nonsensical. It is therefore evident that any talk of mental existence is completely impossible, and that a person with a sound intellect and correct understanding would not affirm it. Allowing for this would be like trying to fit Mount Damavand into a shoe!² As for their saying that the quantity of the mentally-existent form is less than that which possesses form [extra-mentally],

1. That is, to the reception of form. See Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, pp. 57–70.

2. For this majestic mountain, see *EIR*, s.v. ‘Damāvand’.

this does not entail the difficulty just mentioned for such a claim is to be rejected [at the onset].

[5. On How the Soul Knows]

Know that the soul is the greatest name of God: *And He taught Adam the names, all of them* [2:31]. To truly be Adam, to know all the names, is to know the soul and the modality of its knowledge of existents other than itself. Since the impossibility of mental existence has been made clear to you, the way the soul knows extra-mental existents becomes evident, namely that it knows the existent entities through their concrete existence [*a'yān al-mawjūdāt bi-a'yānihā*], not through their forms and states of mental existence because that is impossible, as you know. All things are therefore known by the soul in their essences [*bi-dhawātihā*], some by means of sensory organs [*ālat*] and others without sensory organs.

The things which the soul knows by means of sensory organs are those things which are particular and sensible, such as heat, coldness, lights, colours, sounds, and other objects of sense perception. From these, the soul knows the principles [*al-mabādī*] and separated substances [*al-mufāraqāt*] by way of reflection and acquisition. As for the things which the soul knows without sensory organs, they are the universal natures and the realities of the existent things in themselves. All of these are known to the soul through its knowledge of its own essence and its witnessing the realities of the things in the mirror of its essence. This is because the reality of the soul is a comprehensive entity [*ḥaqīqah jāmi'ah*] which brings together every existent (exalted or lowly, immaterial or material), this not being hidden from one who smells the sweet fragrance of the soul and knows its station amongst the stations of extra-mental existence. It is as if the Commander of the Faithful and Proof of the Gnostics¹ alluded to this [in these lines]:

Do you deem yourself to be an insignificant body,
 while within you is contained the macrocosm?
 You are the *Clear Book* [12:1, *et passim*]
 through whose letters the hidden becomes manifest.²

One should know that the universals and particulars of all things are known to the soul through one faculty, not through numerous faculties, as most of the

1. i.e. 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), the first Shi'ī Imam.

2. These verses are attributed to Imam 'Alī and can be found in *Dīwān Imām 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Muṣṭafawī (Beirut, 2005), p. 72. Cf. Chittick, *Sufism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2000), p. 84; Ṣadrā, *On the Hermeneutics of the Light Verse of the Qur'ān*, tr. Latimah Peerwani (London, 2004), p. 95; Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ*, 3:334; Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, ed. Muḥammad Khwājawī (Qom, 1987–1990), 6:22.

later philosophers uphold. However, the soul’s functions [*af‘āl*] are numerous and diverse by virtue of the numerous sensory organs [it employs] in accordance with the objects of [its] perception [*al-mudrakāt*]. Take, for example, a carpenter. He has one faculty, while its functions are diverse in accordance with the numerous specified organs required for carrying out [his tasks]. The soul, likewise, also has one faculty because of its simplicity and through which all things are known, be they sensible or intelligible. Indeed, it perceives the intelligibles in the same manner that sensory objects and the objects of taste and touch are perceived, but the loci and organs of its perceptions—like the [example of] the carpenter—are diverse, some being known without sensory organs, and some with sensory organs. It therefore hears by means of the nerves located in the auditory canal, and sees by means of the eyes, etc.

The soul perceives the intelligibles and the universal natures through its very essence, which is also the same perceptive faculty used to perceive objects of sense perception. However, in terms of the soul’s perception of particulars, it is as if they are external to it by way of its [employment] of sensory organs, and that upon its perception of the intelligibles they return to its essence which brings together everything by virtue of its simplicity, as we said a moment ago. This point is subtle, rare, and [seemingly] incomprehensible. Knowledge of this depends on knowing the soul as it truly should be known, which is exceedingly difficult. Rather, it is impossible, despite the efforts of the people of our time in acquiring true wisdom!

Just as the soul knows the realities of the extra-mental existents in [their] essence without acquiring [their] forms, so too does it perceive the essences of visible objects [*mubṣarāt*] and their natures without acquiring [their] forms in the eye, or anything else, as most of the later philosophers uphold. This is the heart of what we have established in [our] demonstration of the refutation of extra-mental existence, so pay close attention! If we see Zayd, for example, we see the reality of an existent man externally, but [we see this reality] in the arrangement of its individual accidents which comprise Zayd. In this way [does the soul know] visible objects, so do not be heedless!

Concerning this point, one of the things one must know here is that whenever the soul perceives something by way of the senses, it is not possible for it to know the thing’s universal nature and the reality of its species, because ‘Whatever cannot be sensed cannot be known.’¹ As for the things perceivable by the outward senses, they are perceived by the soul through their concrete existence, specific contingencies, and individual accidents, as you know. However, for every one of them [this occurs] by means of their respective sensory organs. So the objects of vision are perceived through the eyes, and the objects of touch through the skin on account of the nerves spread throughout the body. All of these are perceived by the

1. Lit., ‘Whoever is deficient in sense [perception] is deficient in knowledge.’ Cf. Ṣadrā, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, tr. William Chittick (Provo, UT, 2003), p. 37.

soul through one faculty: the faculty for hearing is not other than the one for sight, nor [is the faculty for] sight other than the one for touch and taste. These faculties are none other than the holy and intellectual rational faculty through which the soul comprehends the realities and universal natures of things. Indeed, these faculties are the rational faculty itself. In terms of nobility, this level of perception is the lowest and meanest of the soul's levels of perception. It obtains for all humans and most animals, so long as they are of sound disposition. As for the things which are perceivable by the internal senses—such as conceptual things—they are perceived in their essences through their concrete existence, except in the case of some things which are perceived in their individualities and quantities when they are the essences of quantities, and in their colours when they are the essences of colours.