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METAPHYSICS IN ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

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INTRODUCTION

1

The concept of being in Islamic philosophy is an especially interesting and important topic. It shows the Islamic philosophers to be true inheritors of the Greek philosophic tradition. They not only mastered and assimilated the Greek material on being, but also added to it, developed it, and at moments attained peaks of originality and subtlety that give them a permanent place in the history of metaphysical ideas.

Moreover, the concept of being in Islamic philosophy is interesting in another, and rather unique way. For here one can observe the passing of a concept that developed and was articulated in Greek, an Indo-European language with a characteristic and fairly developed verb "to be," onto Arabic translators and writers whose semitic language is—in a sense to be explained and qualified later—without the verb "to be."

Yet despite the special significance of the topic, there is in print no full and sustained treatment of it in either its linguistic-philosophical or in its purely metaphysical aspects. While there are some general discussions of Islamic philosophy or of the thought-systems of particular Islamic philosophers, there is no concentrated treatment of the central concept of being. And even where that is presented as part of a more general account, there is usually little or no philosophic analysis of the concepts, the arguments, and the problems that are the very stuff of the writings discussed.

As to the linguistic-philosophic aspects of the concept of being, one finds that the Islamic philosophers showed awareness of possible problems in transplanting that concept across languages of different family types. Their remarks have been picked up by more recent writers who have a

more explicit awareness of the influence that the grammar of a language has on the formulation of philosphic concepts in that language. Yet there is still no full and sustained discussion of the linguistic and philosophical problems raised by this movenment of the concept of being from Greek to Arabic.

We have tried in this book to fill the gaps by offering a study of the concept of being in both its linguistic-philosophical and its purely metaphysical dimensions. We hope it will be useful to the scholars and advanced students who are interested in Greek and medieval Islamic and non-Islamic philosophy, and to anyone else interested in the history of metaphysical ideas.

The study is selective. We chose to focus on those philosophers that offer the more representative and interesting material on our topic. And there is a direct connection between this selectivity and the length of the book. We think there is more need in this instance to cover less, but to analyze in detail and depth, rather than to survey the whole field.

Moreover, we believe the book will be more serviceable if by its length it entices those outside the field of Islamic scholarship to investigate some of the basic metaphysical issues discussed by the philosophers in Islam. And to the Islamicist and non-Islamicist alike it offers a relatively brief supplement to the general treatments already in print of the thought-systems of the philosophers we have chosen.

2

In the first part we concentrate on the linguistic-philosophical problems which arose when the Greek concept of being was translated into Arabic and discussed by Arabic-writing philosophers; the second part deals mostly with certain specific philosophic issues in the philosophies of being of four Islamic philosophers: Farabi (d. 950 A.D.), Ibn Sina (d. 1037), Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), and Mulla Sadra (d. 1641).

Farabi was the first to show a keen awareness of some of the linguistic-philosophical issues connected with the Arabic

vocabulary for being, and in terms of particular tenets in the philosophy of being Farabi sowed the seeds of much of what comes to full bloom with Ibn Sina. The latter, with a highly developed philosophical acumen, worked out his philosophy of being with such care and fullness that even in those cases where his ideas come to him immediately from Farabi, one is more tempted to pick Ibn Sina as one's advocate. This is indeed what Ghazali and Ibn Rushd do repeatedly. And when, in the post-classical period, Persian philosophers writing in Arabic and/or Persian continue the discussion of the problems of ontology, it is Ibn Sina they turn to, for the most part.

Ibn Rushd completes the historical unit begun by Farabi and Ibn Sina. On the one hand he counters the reactions in Islam to the first two philosophers, reactions which culminated in Ghazali's famous attack in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. But on the other hand, although he attacks Ghazali (d. 1111) and defends the two philosophers, he often acts as an arbitrator, acknowledging some strong and weak points on either side. On one particular issue, the accidentiality of existence, we find Ibn Rushd engaged in an extended set of criticisms directed against Ibn Sina and his alleged 'essentialism'.

Moreover, Ibn Rushd, in arbitrating the disputes of all of these writers, relies on a more direct and accurate knowledge of the Greek sources, primarily Aristotle. Ibn Rushd, it must be remembered, wrote a famous commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, a work available to him in more than one Arabic translation from the Greek, the best being the translation of Isḥāq Ibn Ḥunayn. This circumstance not only gave Ibn Rushd a trustworthy knowledge of Aristotelian doctrine, it also gave him a first-hand acquaintance with the problems of the Arabic vocabulary for being that Farabi had raised.

Mulla Sadra represents the post-classical Persian philosophic tradition at its best. He deals with problems of ontology at great length, and continues the dispute over essentialism, with his predecessor, al-Suhrawardi (d. 1191). One detects more strands in Sadra than simply the Aristotelian Neo-Platonic ones of the Islamic classical period. It seems as if his

distance from the Greek period made him more steeped in and influenced by the Islamic tradition itself, especially, Ibn Sina, Ibn al-'Arabi, and Suhrawardi.

In our approach to the issues we have opted for a critical analytic focus rather than a historical spread. We have left the latter for those more qualified than we are. In particular we try to do three main things. 1. We explore the resources for expressing "to be" in Arabic (Chapter One[1]) and discuss whether the absence of a single expression for "to be" in Arabic creates difficulties for the formation of an adequate Greek-equivalent vocabulary for being (Chapter Three[2]). The sense in which one can speak of a copula in Arabic is discussed in the second chapter.[3] 2. In the fourth chapter we begin discussion of the philosophies of being of the four philosophers we have chosen. First we concentrate briefly on Farabi and the being-vocabulary problem. Then in the course of presenting certain aspects of Farabi's ontology, we specify different philosophic issues in each of which a philosopher is said "to distinguish" or "to identify" existence and essence. Here we clarify the meanings of "distinguishing" and "identifying" that are connected with each of the philosophic issues. 3. Although we continue the discussion of the being-vocabulary problem in Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, and Sadra, the main material of the last four chapters concerns the relation of existence to essence. Ibn Rushd and some later Aristotelians (Thomists) raise the problem of the accidentiality of existence for Ibn Sina's philosophy; we arbitrate the controversy that Ibn Rushd raises in his criticisms of Ibn Sina (Chs. 4-7). We try to show that the difference between these two philosophers lies not in the way Ibn Rushd saw it. We claim that both philosophers accept the purely conceptual or logical externality of existence to any essence (except God's) qua the essence of something. And both accept the metaphysical involvement of existence in substance, as what exists not in a subject, and in substance, as this specific individual before us now. It is in the theological context of the contingency of beings other than God where we locate the important sense of the externality of existence in Ibn Sina. Here we claim that this is only the notion of the *superfluity* or *non-necessity* of the existence of beings that are possible in themselves. This is quite a different notion from the un-Aristotelian essentialism attributed to Ibn Sina by Ibn Rushd and the Thomist critics.

In our discussion we claim that Ibn Rushd and the other critics have misunderstood Ibn Sina's remarks about the accidentiality of existence. In working out the full details of this claim we may seem to the reader to have taken Ibn Sina's side against Ibn Rushd. But it was not our intention to write a *Tahāfut tahāfut al-tahāfut!* We merely diagnose the misunderstanding and follow the analysis to its logical conclusions.

We have found an article by professor Fazlur Rahman (see Bibliography) especially suggestive for the line we took in our discussion here. We have also benefited from the notes and commentary of Van den Bergh on his translation of Ibn Rushd's *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut.* An article by Charles Kahn on the Greek verb to be (see Bibliography) appeared just before we wrote the three articles that now make up Part One of the present book. We found the article extremely useful and referred to it in more than one place in our discussion. We have kept the references to Kahn's original article even though he later worked his own discussion into the full dimensions of a large and important book.[4]

[1]An earlier version of this chapter appeared as an article in the *Foundations of Language*, Supplementary Series on *The Verb 'Be' and Its Synonyms: Philosophical and Grammatical Studies*, Part IV, edited by John W. M. Verhaar, (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1969). Permission to use the material here has been obtained from the publisher.

[2]This is a revised form of what appeared in *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science*, edited by George Hourani, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975). The publisher has given permission to include that material in the present book.

[3]This chapter was read in an earlier form at the IV International Congress on Logic Methodology and Philosophy of Science held in Bucharest, Rumania, in September 1971. Elsevier/Excerpta Medica/North-Holland, Associated Scientific Publishers (Amsterdam, The Netherlands) published the proceedings of that conference in 1973 (edited by J. Suppes, L. Henkin, A. Joja, and G. Moisil) and have permitted the use of my earlier material here.

[4]Charles Kahn *The Verb 'Be' in Ancient Greek*, Part 6 of *The Verb 'Be' and Its Synonyms*, edited by John W.M. Verhaar, Foundations of Language, Supplementary Series, Volume 16 (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1973).

In the final chapter we discuss Sadra's controversy with Suhrawardi over the question of the primacy of essence or of existence. We try to show the connection between Sadra's rejection of essentialism and the rest of his thought, in particular the thesis of the identity of essence and existence, the priority of existence and its dynamic character. In the course of our discussion we give an interpretation of the sense in which, for Sadra, essence and existence are said to be identified in reality.

3

The manuscript for this book was read by Muhsin Mahdi, George Hourani, Fazlur Rahman, and Parviz Morewedge. I owe them all a debt of gratitude for their useful comments. Professors Mahdi and Morewedge were especially helpful with suggestions for casting the work in a form more appropriate for publication. Moreover, the chapter on Sadra was added on the advice of Muhsin Mahdi, a suggestion repeated by Parviz Morewedge. Since two scholars in agreement can't be wrong, I happily and gratefully took the advice.

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PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE
ARABIC AND "TO BE"

1

With certain languages in mind, say the Indo-European family, one could ask: what is the relation between the concept of being and the verb "to be"? While the question is far from clear, at least it needs no modification in a discussion of those languages. There the linguistic functions of the verb "to be" are basic and varied enough and can be shown to have some connection with one sense or another of that highly unclear notion of being. One can even ask whether, or to what extent, the philosophic concept of being formulated in a given language is or is not (merely) a reflection of the linguistic features of "to be" in that language. For this question presupposes reference to a language in which one verb, "to be," has the uses that are reflected in the concept of being or from which—someone may want to claim—philosophic usage has departed.

In the Arabic vocabulary there is the verb *kāna*, which may correctly be translated as "to be" and which has some of the linguistic functions of "to be" in some other languages. But these functions can be performed without it, both in the sense that they can be performed with substitute words, some of which are not even verbs, and in the sense that no such words need be used at all. Thus in Arabic, *kāna* is not the main device for performing these functions.

It would follow, then, that for Arabic the question of the relation between the philosophic concept of being and the verb *kāna* cannot be the central question that is usually asked. For apart from any asymmetries between "to be" and *kāna*, or perhaps partly because of them, there is no such thing as a single simple equivalent to "being," or, to be chron-

ologically adequate, *to on.* The words *kā'in* and *kaynūnah,* all derivatives of *kāna,* can be translated as "being" and have been used as its philosophical equivalents, but so have other words which do not derive from *kāna.* Regardless for the moment of whether the Arabic terms are precise equivalents or not, the point now is that the question of the relation between *kaynūnah* (or *kā'in*) and *kāna* is not the central question which is asked about the relation between being and "to be."

The question before us, then, has to be reformulated so as to be appropriate for Arabic. It has to be wide enough in scope to stand as the equivalent of the question that is asked for the Indo-European family of languages. Yet it has to be formulated with the features of the Arabic language and the Arabic philosophic vocabulary in mind. We want, therefore, to survey the various ways in which the linguistic functions of "to be" are performed in Arabic, and then see what light these shed on the Arabic philosophic equivalents of "being." Instead of having to work with one verb that has many uses, and one participle or noun with more than one sense, we have for Arabic two sets of vocabulary in which different words separate or combine the multiplicity of uses and senses. We also hope to make precise the frequently repeated thesis that Arabic does not have a copulative verb. This will be attempted briefly here and more fully in the next two chapters.

Before discussing the vocabulary that does the work of "to be," it is necessary to say a word about certain features of Arabic syntax.

Arabic grammarians usually divide the categorical attributive sentence into nominal and verbal.[1] A verbal sentence is composed of the verb *(fi'l)* and its subject *(fā'il).* The nominal sentence is composed of a noun which is the subject *(mubtada')* and a predicate *(khabar).* The two parts of both kinds of sentences may also be called, severally, the *musnad ilayh,* what is "leaned on" (the subject in both nominative and verbal sentences), and the *musnad,* what predicates (the verb in the verbal sentence and the predicate in the

[1]For criticism of this traditional distinction, see al-Makhzūmī, *On Arabic Grammar,* pp. 39ff.

nominal sentence). The relation between the two parts of a sentence is called *isnād.*

In a verbal sentence one needs no special connective to relate the verb and its subject,[2] and this is of course true of other languages besides Arabic. However, it is in the nominal sentence that one comes upon the most notable feature of Arabic syntax. In many languages the juxtaposition of "the man" and "wise" does not form a complete grammatical sentence. What is missing is a connective between the two words that brings them together as subject and predicate. The verb "to be" usually is the connective. But in Arabic the nominal sentence can be formed without such a connective, without a special word denoting the *isnād.* Of course this is not to say that a mere juxtaposition of "the man" and "wise" would do. The attributive relation is supplied by having the two words appear in the nominative case, and thus a complete sentence is formed. One says: *al-rajulu ḥakīmun* (the man wise).

In logic such a proposition is called *thunā'iyyah* (having two parts) as to its composition, and categorical *(ḥamliyyah,* also *khabariyyah,* and *ḥukmiyyah)* as to its modality. The subject which is "judged" is called *mawḍū'* (literally, "placed") because it is supposed to be "placed" to be "judged." The predicate is called *maḥmūl.*

Since it is not necessary to have a (separate word) connective between subject and predicate in either the verbal or the nominal sentence, and since these two kinds constitute the class of categorical propositions where the connective is expected to appear, it would seem justified to maintain that there is a complete absence of the copula in Arabic.[3]

Perhaps what is in mind when this claim is made is the rule in some languages that every categorical sentence must have a verb, finite or copulative. In Arabic there is no such rule. But this is not to say that it is not possible, and in certain cases required, to have a word that upon analysis—the grammarian's labels notwithstanding—can be said to have a copulative function. And we speak not only of the

[2]See Farabi's interesting way of noting this in his *Commentary on De Interpretatione,* p. 41.

[3]Afnan, *Philosophical Terminology in Arabic and Persian,* p.29.

adaptations of Arabic to the handling of Aristotelian logic, but of constructions in the natural language. As we shall see, only one of these words with copulative function, *kāna*, is a verb—and we are again speaking of the natural language. The others we shall examine are *yūjad*,[4] present passive voice from the root *wjd*, which means "to find," the pronoun *huwa* "he" or "it", the assertive article *inna* (usually translated as "indeed"), and the negative "copula," *laysa*, which means "(is) not."[5] One could perhaps produce other copulative words, but these are the ones of philosophical interest, and it so happens that in ordinary and technical linguistic contexts they are also the main ones.

2

Kāna

If there is a verb "to be" in natural Arabic, that is, before philosophers come on the scene, then *kāna* is the one. But while *kāna* has some of the semantical functions of "to be," and some syntactical ones as well, the main syntactical feature of the nominal sentence we have discussed prevents it from attaining the centrality of "to be" in the Indo-European languages.

In the natural language *kāna* approaches the abstractness or generality of "to be" and of the participle "being" in two ways. First, *kāna* has the sense of to be, to occur, to exist. This is what grammarians call the complete *kāna*. But it also has the sense of to be such, and this is the incomplete *kāna*. These two uses correspond to the distinction between the existential and the predicative *is*.[6] To be and to be such are two "ways of being," and insofar as one can speak of the senses of "to be" as ways of being, one is doing more than

[4]Also *mawjūd;* their use as copula appears in logic examples only. That is not their function in the natural language.

[5]Grammarians include *laysa* in the same classification with *kāna*. Strictly, then, it is another verb, but since it is the negative of *kāna*, we did not count it as a separate verb.

[6]See al-Samarrā'ī, *The Verb: Its Tense and Its Forms*, pp. 54ff., for an attempt to see the difference between the two merely as the distinction between the general *kāna* and the specific *kāna*.

saying that "to be" is ambiguous. For this reason I speak of the abstractness rather than the ambiguity of *kāna*. This abstractness is consistent with Aristotle's view of being as analogical. It does not necessarily commit one to the Parmenidian-Platonic tradition of treating being as a noun, the name of a quality common to all members of a class.

Second, *kāna* is the head of a family of "sisters," as the grammarians call them, which express being in more or less specific ways. *Kāna*, the eldest sister, names the function of the group in the most general way. They may all be called the verbs of *kaynūnah*. *Laysa*, the negative of *kāna* ("not," or "is not"), is equally general. The others are less general in that they specify that X continues to be, or is (or happens) in the morning or is (or happens) in the evening.

a. *The complete kāna*

This has an existential sense. It and some of its derivatives are used to say that something exists or happens.

It is called a complete verb because it does not need a predicate. It and its subject form a complete sentence. *Kāna al-amr* means that the matter (the event) took place. This complete sense is perhaps best illustrated by the well-known scriptural imperative form. *Kun fa-yakūn* (Be, and it is) is often found in the Qur'an. Similarly in the Arabic version of the Bible one reads: *li-yakun nūrun fa-kāna nūrun* (Let there be light and there was light).

Some derivatives of *kāna* can also be used in the genetic existential sense when referring to a process. For example, the "generation and corruption" of Greek natural philosophy is rendered as *al-kawn wal-fasād*. This is essentially the meaning of to occur or to come to be but referring to a process rather than an event, and thus has the sense of become. Another genetic process connotation is illustrated by the Arabic biblical use of *takwīn* for genesis. Thus the Book of Genesis is *sifr al-takwīn*, the latter word meaning, strictly, the process of formation, of origination.

Does *kāna* or any of its derivatives have the non-genetic non-dynamic existential sense, that simply of "to exist"? Indeed, one can say—to use a common example from the grammar books—*kāna tājirun, wa-kāna*[7] *lahu* . . . , which

[7]This is an incomplete *kāna*.

means: "There was a merchant, and he had . . . (literally, there was unto him)." But the first *kāna* (like the English "was") has the sense of "there lived a . . .." There is an oddity in either Arabic or English in saying: A merchant existed, and he had . . . .

Is there an absolute existential construction with *kāna* or some of its derivatives, such as, for example: God is (God exists)? This is clearly where the existential function is better performed by *mawjūd.* One can say: *kāna Allah,* but this is not as explicit and unambiguous as *Allāhu mawjūdun.* One is likely—if but for a moment—to wonder whether the *kāna* is incomplete and needs a predicate. Moreover, *mawjūdun* is free of any suggestions of tense. Or one can say: *Allāhu kā'inun,* but this is also ambiguous, for it might mean God is a being, an existent, or is being, is existing. One can also refer to God with such phrases as *al-kawn al-a'lā,* the Supreme Being, or *al-ka'in al-muṭlaq,* the Absolute Being, but neither gives us the absolute sentential construction "God is" we have been looking for.

Some other derivatives reflect the various shades of the existential sense of the complete *kāna.* Thus *kawwana* means "to create, to make, to bring into being." The things that are, the created things, the creatures, are called *al-kā'ināt* (feminine plural). *Al-kawn* means the world, the universe.[8]

The philosophic terms for being that have been derived from *kāna* are mainly two: *kaynūnah* and *kā'in. Kaynūnah* reflects some of the ambiguities of the philosophic notion of being, although the existential sense predominates. Parmenides is reported in the Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* as maintaining that there is no *kaynūnah* except for *al-huwiyyah.*[9] But in the same translation *kaynūnah* is used to refer to what a thing is. *Kaynūnat al-shay'* is given as the equivalent of *to ti ên einai.*[10]

[8]For a discussion of *al-kawn,* see M. Horten, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft,* 65, 539-49. Besides being a word for existence, it also means becoming and motion.

[9]Ibn Rushd, *Commentary on the Metaphysics,* Vol. 1, p. 270, footnote 61 (an alternate reading). *Al-huwiyyah* is one of the words for being. See also *ibid.,* I, 13, footnote c.d. of alternate Usṭāth translation: *kaynūnah* there means "existence."

[10]*Ibid.,* I, 34 (Usṭāth alternate translation: *Metaphysics,* 994, b 17).

To select an example from contemporary philosophical writing in Arabic, we find in a recent history of Arabic philosophy *al-kā'in* chosen for *to on.* Parmenides' thesis that only being is, is rendered as *al-kā'in waḥdahu mawjūd.*[11] This is interesting in two ways. First, Parmenides is interpreted to mean that only being *exists,* which is a narrower thesis than Parmenides intended. Second, there is a differentiation between the *kā'in* and the *mawjūd.* Presumably *kā'in* here is intended to mean *being* in a sense which is different from existence. It could hardly be the case that all that Parmenides or his contemporary Arabic interpreters want to say is: Only the existent exists. The same authors speak of Aristotle's view on the aim of the first science as the study of *al-kā'in bimā huwa kā'in* (being qua being).[12]

b. *The Incomplete kāna*

The incomplete *(nāqis)* use of *kāna* is so called because *kāna* and its subject alone do not form a proposition. A predicate is needed. Whereas *kāna tājirun* was one example of the complete aspect, *kāna al-tājiru amīnan* (the merchant was— or is—honest) gives the incomplete aspect. The logical function of this *kāna* is copulative; it does the work of the *is* of predication.

This usage is part of the natural language. It is one way in which a nominal sentence may be formed. The fact that a nominal sentence may be formulated without it does not mean that when it is used it has no function. And the fact that it is introduced for some other purpose than to supply a copula—since none is required—does not mean that in actual use its function cannot be analyzed as copulative.[13]

What does *kāna* add to the nominal sentence 'SP'? Is

[11]Ḥanna Fākhūrī and Khalīl al-Jurr, *History of Arabic Philosophy,* Vol. 1, p. 52.

[12]*Ibid.,* p. 84. The medieval Arabic writers prefer *al-mawjūd bimā huwa mawjūd.*

[13]It does not seem to us necessary for some, for example al-Samarrā'ī (*op. cit.,* p. 69), to worry that the attempt to classify the function of certain Arabic words as copulative misses the point of the language, and makes it in the image of the Indo-European languages. For a fuller discussion of this issue between grammarian and logician, see our next chapter.

'*kāna* SP' the same as 'SP'? There are at least three things that *kāna* does. First, it can indicate tense,[14] but it is not necessary that it do so.[15] Whether it does, and if so which tense, depends on the context and not on the tense-form *(sīghah)* alone. Second, whether it is used to indicate tense in the nominative sentence or not, it can always make more *explicit* that the attributive relation obtains between subject and object. If one were to say that the nominative form of both subject and object is sufficient indication of the attributive relation, one can say that the addition of *kāna* is, at least, an alternative way of indicating that relation. Third, *kāna* is needed with the *qad* or *la-qad* of emphasis. One cannot say, *'la-qad SP'*, but rather *'la-qad kāna* SP'. *Kāna* has the form of the past tense. When its present-future form, *yakūnu*, is used with *qad*, the result is de-emphatic.

One of the most definite ways in which *kāna* acquires tense, or rather helps to determine it, is when it functions as an auxiliary verb in a verbal sentence. In that role it has no copulative function.[16]

In terms of word arrangement *kāna* can appear either at the beginning or the middle of the sentence. The latter case puts more emphasis on the subject. Also, when it is in the middle position, the sentence has the desired form for logic. Thus one is more likely to find the examples in logic using the copulative *kāna* in the middle position.

In sum, then, *kāna* has the following functions:

(1) As a "complete" verb it is used to express the existence of some thing or fact. This is a semantical function.

(2) As an "incomplete" verb it can be used to indicate a relation between the subject and the predicate of a nominal sentence. This function can be analyzed as copulative, and is similar to the *is* of predication.

[14]Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, in his commentary on al-Qazwīnī al-Kātibī's *The Shamsiyyah Treatise*, calls it a temporal *rābiṭah*. See al-Rāzī, *Precise Formulation of the Rules of Logic*, p. 87.

[15]For examples of the tenseless *kāna*, see De Sacy, *Grammaire arabe*, pp. 196-97. For examples of the "merely redundant" (or *ḥashw*) *kāna*, see Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, Vol. II, p. 101; also al-Makhzūmī, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

[16]See Farabi's comment on this, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

(3) It can be used to introduce tense to a nominative sentence. Its function here can still be copulative and predicative.

(4) It can be used as an auxiliary verb to help to make tense more specific. In this function it is not copulative.

(5) It is needed with *qad* for emphasis or de-emphasis. Here it may still be viewed as copulative.

Inna

This is an assertive particle.[17] It is translated as "verily," "indeed," although the latter words do not usually appear in the translation. It appears at the beginning of a nominal sentence, and although grammarians say that it introduces the subject, one can also say that it sets it up for the predicative relation. This entitles it to have a copulative function. For example, into the nominal sentence, *al-rajulu ḥakīmum* (Man wise) we introduce *inna*, thus: *inna al-rajula* (accusative) *ḥakīmun* (nominative). It has the force of 'It is the case that . . .'.[18]

Arabic syntax does not require this *inna* in the formation of a nominal sentence. It may be used or dropped.[19] When it is used, its semantic function is for emphasis, and its logical function is copulative.

Sometimes it teams up with the pronoun *huwa*, which can have a copulative function in its own right, as we shall see. Together, in the form of *innahu*, they can be said to act as copula, taking the middle location between subject and object. For example, one says, *al-rajulu* (nominative) *innahu ḥakīmun* (nominative). Grammatically this has been restored more clearly into the form of the nominal sentence—and

[17]It is one of "the particles which resemble the verb in having a certain verbal meaning and force." Wright, *op. cit.*, p.80.

[18]However, it is curious that the translation of Aristotle's discussion in *Metaphysics* V, 7, of "to be" in the sense of "to be so" did not bring into use this *inna*. See our discussion of *wjd* below.

[19]That this connective may be either used or dropped is illustrated in an accidental way by the following. In *The Book of Remarks and Admonitions* Ibn Sina is giving an illustration of a predicative categorical statement. According to the editor, one manuscript has *inna*, the other does not, before the sentence: 'Man is (an) animal'. *The Book of Remarks and Admonitions*, ed. by S. Dunyā, Vol. I, p. 269.

this is a complex sentence—with *innahu ḥakīmun* as the sentential predicate. Within the latter, the *hu* is the accusative of *inna*. But although grammatically all of *innahu hakīmun* is the predicate, logically *innahu* may still be singled out as the copula linking the logical subject and logical predicate.

The absolute construction, *inna* X, is uncommon, although one finds philosophers indulging in the privilege of making up such sentences. For example, it can be an answer to one of the classical questions: Is it? (What is it? Which is it? Why is it? are the other questions.) The resulting answer-phrase which has developed is: *inna al-shay'*. As an existential construction it means: that the thing is. However, the phrase could initiate a predicative construction with the promise of a forthcoming predicate: The thing is (indeed) p.

Connected with this existential use of *inna* is the abstract philosophical term *anniyyah* (or *irniyah*),[20] which is supposed to be one of the equivalents of "being." But here again the predominant meaning is existential (that something is, the that-ness), although one can find some use of it as meaning *what* a thing is.[21]

Laysa

This is the negative copula, the equivalent of *not*, or *is not*. All affirmative propositions with *kāna* and *inna* are negated with *laysa*, the *kāna* and *inna* dropping out.[22]

Laysa is considered one of the sisters of *kāna* in that it also expresses, only negatively, being and existence. It is an abstract term in the sense that it straddles not being and not being such and such. Like *kāna* it is *used in discourse* as either one or the other, but when it is *talked about* by logicians and philosophers it acquires the abstract straddling sense. However, unlike *kāna*, it is only an incomplete verb in the natural language. It is the philosophers who gave it the pure existential sense that turns it into a complete verb.

Laysa is actually a composite word, made up of *lā* (no, not) and *aysa*, which means "thing, entity, existent." It is probably an awareness of this etymology that led the philosophers to give the word the complete existential sense.

The abstract noun *laysiyyah* may be formed to mean non-being, but it does not seem to be used.[23] It is *aysiyyah*, derived from *aysa*, which has a more prominent, though still relatively limited role. It was a favorite with al-Kindī.[24] *Aysiyyah* means "existence." *Al-ays* means "what exists"; the plural is *aysāt*.

Huwa (Hiya, fem.)

This is the third person pronoun "he" ("she" or "it"). For the logician it is desirable as a copula because it does not, indeed cannot, have tense.[25]

In grammatical use outside logic it is introduced in certain cases into the nominal sentence and placed between subject and predicate. For example, if both the subject (say, God) and the predicate (the forgiving) are defined (that is, are either proper names or have a definite article), then *huwa* is placed between the two to prevent the predicate from being mistaken for an apposition; thus: God, He the forgiving.

Now, grammarians call the *huwa* in this role a pronoun of separation *(al-faṣl)*, but this does not prevent its logical function from linking and being copulative. The *huwa* can at once prevent apposition and establish an attributive relation. What it separates and what it combines are the

[20]For a summary of and references for the controversy as to whether it should be *anniyyah* or *inniyah*, see Abū Rīdah's introduction to his edition of *Al-Kindī's Philosophical Treatises*, n.2, pp. 97-101. To these references we add, R.M. Frank, "The Origin of the Arabic Philosophical Term *aniyyah*," *Cahiers de Byrsa*, 6 (1956): 181-201.

[21]Abū Rīdah, *loc. cit.* See also Afnan, *op. cit.*, pp. 94ff.

[22]When *huwa* is used where it is grammatically required (see discussion of *huwa* below), then *laysa* is used along with *huwa;* for example, *'al-S laysa huwa P* (or *al-P)'*.

[23]See Afnan, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

[24]*Al-Kindī's Philosophical Treatises*, especially the essay on the First Cause, pp. 182ff. Incidentally, anyone who has been struck by Heidegger's verbal acrobatics, for example with "nothing," has really seen nothing! Read al-Kindī's derivation of nearly every grammatical form out of *aysa*, and even out of *huwa*.

[25]Al-Rāzī, *loc. cit.*, calls this the tenseless copula.

same words. but it separates them under one classification and combines them under another. Actually it prevents one relation between the two by affirming the other.

Huwa is particularly adapted to closer logical connections between subject and predicate than mere predication. This places it in a rather unique position among the group of connectives we are discussing. *Huwa* refers more completely and exclusively to the very thing as an entity. This is not without bearing on the philosophic terminology that derives from it.[26] Thus the *huwa* is used to express the meaning of the *is* of identity, for example, *al-laythu huwa al-asad* (the subject and predicate words are synonyms for lion), or, *al-khamru hiya al-'uqar* (synonyms for wine). The *huwa* could also be used like the *is* of definition or formal equivalence *(al-insānu huwa ḥayawānun nāṭiq*, 'Man is a rational animal'), and like the *is* of formal implication *(al-insānu huwa ḥayawānun,*[27] 'man is an animal'). In some of the above examples where the subject and predicate are not both defined the same sentence may be formed without *huwa (al-insānu ḥayawānun nāṭiq),* however the loss of *huwa* diminishes the force of the connection.

The most deliberate use of *huwa* simply as a copula, and in those cases where it is not required by grammar, is found in logic. There the examples are usually artificial and selected for their formal character with the deliberate attempt to produce the counterpart to the sentential form 'S is P', or 'S is not P'. Logicians call such a categorical proposition with an explicit copula *thulāthiyyah,* (having three parts). The copula is called *al-rābiṭah,* also *al-rābiṭ* (literally, "what ties together").

In *The Shamsiyyah Treatise*[28] al-Qazwīnī says that in certain languages the *rābiṭah,* speaking with reference to *huwa,* may be dropped because the mind senses its meaning. In other words, it is understood. In his commentary on the

[26]See Ibn Rushd, *Commentary on the Metaphysics,* II, 557-59.

[27]Less precisely this may be called a case of predication, but it is different from 'The man is white'. As Ibn Rushd says in explaining how *huwiyyah* derives from *huwa,* the predicate animal is bound essentially to the subject. See *Commentary on the Metaphysics,* II, 557.

[28]See p. 86.

work Qutb al-dīn says: "Languages differ in their use of the *rābiṭah.* The language of the Arabs may use it, or may eliminate it."[29]

Huwa, like the other words we have examined so far, has to try its hand at forming the absolute existential construction, although this is not too common and is to be found in the technical discourse of philosophers rather than in the natural language. Aristotle's passage in *Metaphysics,* IV, 100 3b, 27 contains *ôn anthrôpos,* which is rendered by Isḥāq as *al-insānu huwa.*[30] Then of course there is the first of the four classical questions: *hal*[31] *huwa?* (Is it? in the sense of: Does it exist?). Al-Kindi, like the other Arabic philosophers, uses *huwa* in the purely existential sense, but unlike the others, and in a manner typical of him, he forms a verb, a verbal noun, a participle, and other derivatives out of it.[32]

When it comes to the formation of words for being, *huwa* yields the abstract noun *al-huwiyyah.* It is used as a translation of *to on* and of *to einai.* Farabi considers it the equivalent of *al-anniyyah.*[33] Ibn Rushd warns his reader to distinguish the use of *al-huwiyyah* as the abstract name of the copula *huwa* from its metaphysical use, which refers to the *dhāt* of a thing, to an entity in itself. A plural is formed from it, *al-huwiyyāt,* which refers to the things that are. One could say that *al-huwiyyah* has a primary existential sense, except that in the Isḥāq translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in V, 7, it is used for *all* the senses that Aristotle there distinguishes.

Wjd

The verb root *wjd (wajada)* means to find. The present passive *yūjadu* (past passive: *wujida)* gives the nominal form *mawjūd,* which means is found, or exists. With the

[29]*Ibid.,* p. 87.

[30]*Commentary on the Metaphysics,* I, 310.

[31] A word that introduces a question.

[32]See his *Al-Kindī's Philosophical Treatises,* pp. 161-62, 182.

[33]*The Gems of Wisdom,* in *Alfārābīs Philosophische Abhandlungen* (ed. by Dieterici), p. 67, No. 6. (On the question of the authorship of *The Gems,* see Pines, *Revue des Etudes Islamiques,* 19 [1951]: 121-26.)

addition of the definite article, *al-mawjūd* means what exists, and the plural *al-mawjudāt* refers to all the things that exist. Another derivative, *wujūd*, is the abstract noun meaning existence.

One unexpected function for a derivative from *wjd* is that it acts as a copula and does the work of the *is* of predication. But one finds Ibn Rushd, among others, calling the "term of *wujūd*" a *rabiṭ*, and giving as an example: Zayd *'yūjad mūsiqus'*[34] (Zayd found musical). This he takes to be equivalent to the predicative judgment 'Zayd (is) musical.'

This seemingly odd use of *yūjad* is more frequent in Isḥāq's translation of *De interpretatione*. At one time one comes across what looks like a purely existential assertion: *yūjadu insānun 'adlan*[35] for *esti dikaois anthrôpos*. However, the *esti* is not a "there is," or "there exists," and there is no mistake in translation, for elsewhere in that section the sentence recurs as *kullu insānin yūjadu 'adlan*[36] (Pâs *anthrôpos dikaios estin)*.

One cannot settle the matter by reference to 20a 4, where the translator renders *to esti* as *kalimat al-wujūd*, which one would ordinarily translate as "the term for existence." But what would it mean to have an "existential copula"?

This use of *yūjadu* (or Farabi's *mawjūd)* becomes less odd when one reverses the places of subject and object in the sentence and when one takes the predicative judgment as the assertion that the predicate exists or is to be found in the subject.[37] This is made explicit in the Arabic translation of *De interpretatione*, where one comes across sentences of the form 'P *yūjadu fī* S'.[38]

[34]*Op. cit.*, II, 560. He calls this the composite construction *(al-murakkab); ibidem.* Zayd is a proper name, the logicians' and grammarians' favorite in examples. *Mūsiqus* is transliterated from Greek in the Arabic. Farabi prefers *mawjūd* over *yūjadu* because it lacks tense. See his *Commentary On De Interpretatione*, p. 103. Ibn Sina also uses *mawjūd;* see his *Logic of the Orientals*, p. 58.

[35]*Aristotle's Logic*, p. 77 (*De Interpretatione*, Chapter X, 19b, 28).

[36]*Ibid.*, p. 78 (19b, 34). See also *ibid.*, p. 85 (21a, 25).

[37]This matter of giving a verb of existence the function of a predicate copula is not to be confused with the issue of whether existential and predicative assertions can be converted the one into the other, à la Brentano, Venn, Bayn, Russell, and others. The existence in the latter case is the existence of the subject having the predicate, not simply the existence of a predicate in a subject. For a discussion of the Islamic view that from: 'phi alpha' is true, one can infer: 'alpha exists', see Rescher, *Studies in Arabic Philosophy*, Ch. VI.

Then there is the function one expects of *wjd* derivatives —namely, to express existence, the existence of some subject, as distinct from the existence of a predicate in a subject. Apart from the abstract noun for being and existence in metaphysics, which we will encounter shortly, there are two existential uses of *wjd* derivatives.

(1) The common non-technical meaning of *yūjadu* or *mawjūd* is equivalent to "there is". This is what one would normally use to refer to those "lions in Africa" of the hackneyed example.

It is natural for a verb which means "to find" (in a place) to be used for a sense of "to exist" with a locational connotation.[39] English and French of course have "there is" and "il y a," respectively. Arabic also has *hunāka*, which means both "there" and "there is," and *hā huna*, "here is." In colloquial Arabic one uses the word *fī* (literally, "in") to mean "there is," and *mā fī* for "there is not."

(2) There is a less common use which is what we have been calling the absolute existential construction, for example, *al-insānu mawjūdun*[40] (man is, exists). This is to be distinguished from occurrences of the incomplete sentence *al-insānu yūjadu*[41] which in the context is the predicate use we have discussed.

Another example could be drawn from the Arabic trans-

[38]*Aristotle's Logic: Manṭiq Arisṭū*, pp. 119ff. (translation of *Prior Analytics*, Book I, Chapter 5, 27a ff). *Yakūnu fī* is used in the same way; *ibid.*, pp. 135ff. (*Prior Analytics*, Book I, Chapter 10, 30b ff). One also finds *hiya fī* for copula; *ibid.*, p. 135. The *fī* of the copula is not the technical *fī* of the *Categories* in the distinction between what is said of a subject *(yuqālu 'ala mawḍu')* and what is in a subject *(fī mawḍū'); ibid.*, p. 4 (*Categories* I a, 20). See Ackrill, *Aristotle's Categories and De Interpretatione*, notes pp. 74ff. Incidentally, of the translators into English only Ackrill agrees literally with Isḥāq's translation of this distinction from the Greek.

[39]Charles Kahn calls it the locative sense. See his "The Greek Verb 'To Be' and the Concept of Being", *Foundations of Language*, 2 (1966): 245-65.

[40]Dieterici, *op. cit.*, p. 40. Ibn Rushd calls this *al-muṭlaq* (absolute); *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, II, p. 560.

[41]For example, see *Aristotle's Logic*, p. 76 (*De interpretatione* X, 19b, 15).

lation of the Cartesian *Cogito ergo sum.* 'Uthmān Amīn gives the following translation: *anā ufakkir wa-idhan fa-anā mawjūd.*[42]

Ibn Rushd prefers *al-mawjūd* over *al-huwiyyah* as an equivalent to *to on* and *to einai.*[43] Thus, where Isḥāq uses *al-huwiyyah* in *Metaphysics*, V, 7, in the various senses that Aristotle distinguishes, Ibn Rushd in his commentary on the text as translated by Isḥaq uses *al-mawjūd* in the same way. As a result, one of the senses of *al-mawjūd* is: "to be so, to be the case, to be true." In *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*[44] Ibn Rushd says that the term *mawjūd* has two senses: one means "true" *(sādiq)*, the other is the opposite of non-exsistence *(al-'adam)*. *Mawjūd*, in the second sense, applies to the ten categories, to individuals and to what can be said of them. *Mawjūd* as the true is a function of propositions as logical constructions, and this applies to both the predicative and the absolute existential propositions.[45]

Briefly, then, some *wjd* derivatives may be used for a copula and do the work of the *is* of predication, or they may denote existence, either in the absolute sense or in the sense that carries locational connotation. In either case those derivatives could at the same time mean "to be so," "to be true."

3

The question of whether the Arabic translators and philosophers were unable precisely to express the concept of being as distinct from either essence or existence[46] is a rather complicated one, as we shall see in our third chapter.

[42]Occurs in his book *Descartes*, p. 166.

[43]He believes it is more of a proper Arabic derivation. See *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, II, 558ff. See Chapter 6 below, pp. 87ff, for a fuller discussion of Ibn Rushd's vocabulary preference.

[44]Vol. II, pp. 481ff.

[45]For a fuller discussion of Ibn Rushd on this point, see chapter 6 below, pp. 91ff.

[46]See Afnan, *op. cit.*, p. 29, and A.C. Graham, "Being' in Linguistics and Philosophy," *Foundations of Language*, 1 (1965): 226.

For one thing it seems incautious to speak of *the* Greek or *the* Arabic concept of being. Moreover, we shall have to examine the view that attributes the imprecision of the Arabic equivalents to the nature of the Arabic language, specifically to the lack of copulative features in the Arabic language. Such a "causal" connection needs to be traced out clearly and precisely before we can decide on the merits of the view itself. Finally, we must discuss under what conditions a stipulated meaning is to be judged precise or imprecise. Philosophic writing in any language, whether one is translating or creating, often requires coining new terms and extending the meaning of existing terms, in other words, semantical stipulation. This of course is what the Arabic writers did in trying to handle the concept of being in its various senses. But it does not always seem easy to decide whether the meaning of "being" is being restricted by the proposed equivalents, or whether the meaning of the existing vocabulary is being adequately extended to equal its new stipulated semantical task. This is particularly difficult when, as in the translation of and commentary on Aristotle's Book V, Chapter 7 of the *Metaphysics*, the coined *al-huwiyyah* and the extended *al-mawjūd* are used in *all* the senses that Aristotle proposes for *to einai* and *to on.*

Before we tackle these more fundamental questions, let us say a little more on the subject of the copula as an issue between grammarian and logician.

CHAPTER TWO
LOGIC GRAMMAR AND THE COPULA

1

When a grammarian writes a surface grammar of the Arabic language, he would have no occasion to speak of a copula.[1] To be sure, as we have already seen, the lexicon includes words such as *kāna, inna, huwa,* which, in the natural language, have some of the functions of "to be" in the Indo-European languages. But Arabic syntax has precluded the need for any of them to function as a link between subject and predicate.

Let us recall certain facts from our last chapter. The Arabic grammarian divides predicative sentences into two kinds. One he calls the *verbal sentence;* it is a sentence with a finite verb, usually at the beginning, e.g., 'Runs so and so'.[2] This, like the corresponding sentences in other languages, needs no copulative word. The other, the *nominal sentence,* is one without a verb whether finite or copulative. In such a case the complete sentence consists of subject and predicate, juxtaposed, and each appearing in the nominative case. For example, one would say: 'The man (nomin.) wise (nomin.)'. Since the nominal and the verbal sentences are the only kinds of predicative sentences, and since the predicative sentence is the only abode of copulas, it would seem fair to conclude that the copula has no place in the surface grammar of the Arabic language.

[1]Throughout we use "copula" to mean a *separate word* which functions as a copula in a sentence.

[2]The ancient grammarians distinguished the two kinds merely in terms of whether the sentence begins with a verb or a noun. For objections to this, see Makhzūmī, *On Arabic Grammar,* pp. 39ff; also al-Samarrā'ī, *The Verb: Its Tense and Its Forms,* pp. 201ff.

But we must recall another fact. For it is possible to add certain words to the nominal sentence and still make the same predication.[3] By this I mean that these words reestablish the predicative construction, one in which the same predicate is made to attach[4] to the same subject, although there may be a change in the tense or emphasis.

When the Arabic translators of Greek philosophy and Arabic logicians confronted Aristotle's analysis of the predicative sentence into three parts,[5] they found they needed a word for "copula," and words to function as copulas. "*Al-rābiṭah*" which means "what ties together" was coined for "copula," and the three words *kāna, inna,* and *huwa* were perfect candidates for the copulative office, particularly *huwa* and *kāna;* and of the latter two the pronoun *huwa* has the advantage of being necessarily tenseless.

This logical moonlighting of otherwise respectable grammatical citizens is referred to by Farabi as a technical introduction of the copula into *logic* and the *theoretical sciences.*"[6] This seems to imply that, as far as the Arabic language was concerned, there was merely the introduction of *technical vocabulary.*

Put in these words it would not arouse the grammarian, not even the purist. But Farabi himself, in his views on the relation between logic and grammar, says that grammar gives the rules pertaining to the words (or the language) of a given people, whereas logic gives rules that apply to the languages of all people.[7] Logic recommends (one ms: requires) that the experts of a given language take from logic what is needed.[8] One example that Farabi mentions of such mandatory borrowing is the division of the elements of speech into noun, verb, and particle, and this had already

[3]See our discussion of *kāna, inna, huwa,* pp. 4-13 above.

[4]To borrow Geach's term (*Reference and Generality,* p. 23).

[5]We shall speak of Aristotle's analysis as three-termed in spite of his awareness of the possibility of dropping the copula in natural Greek.

[6]*The Book of the Letters,* ed. by M. Mahdi, p. 112; emphasis supplied.

[7]*The Enumeration of the Sciences,* ed. by 'Uthmān Amīn, p. 76.

[8]*Ibid.,* p. 77.

been incorporated into the writing of the surface grammar.[9]

This seems to give logic a kind of regulative function; it implicitly offers a standard for measuring whether the grammar of a given language has provided for those concepts and rules which stem from the logical exigencies of thought. This is perhaps what Abū Bishr Mattā, Farabi's teacher, meant when he said, in a debate we will come to shortly, that "grammar needs logic, but logic does not need grammar."[10]

For our discussion we shall understand the Arabic logician[11] to be saying that the syntax of the Arabic nominal sentence must be converted to the Aristotelian prototype before it can be adequate from the point of view of the exigencies of thought.

Then turning to those constructions in the natural language in which *kāna* and *huwa* already appear, the logician will give himself the right to speak of the function of those words in the predicative construction as copulative and to remark that Arabic at that point comes close to the logical prototype. As to word arrangement, *huwa,* in the type of cases mentioned in our last chapter, appears in the proper place between subject and predicate. *Kāna* more likely opens the sentence, although it can appear in the middle too.

In this analysis of the copulative function of *kāna* and *huwa* in the natural language the logician has the support of some modern linguists, both Arab and foreign, who have written about Arabic.

[9]What is important here is that Farabi is talking about concepts and terms needed in the writing of grammar and not about propositions or logical truths which might be said to be transcendent.

[10]"The Merits of Logic and Grammar," the debate, translated by Margoliouth, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1905): 116. For a summation of the debate and commentary, see M. Mahdi, "Language and Logic in Classical Islam," in *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture,* ed. by G. E. Von Grunebaum.

[11]Allied with the logicians were the classical Arabic philologists and rhetoricians, who also divided the sentence into the three parts of Aristotle's analysis with the explicit mention of a copula; see Ayyūb *Critical Studies in Arabic Grammar,* p. 127f.

2

Now there has been a long war in Islam between grammarians and logicians, and between "pro-logic" and "anti-logic" grammarians as they were known. Among other things the dispute centers on the legitimacy and appropriateness of introducing into the Arabic language and the writing of its grammar concepts and principles which come from logic and philosophy. The famous wars between the two schools of grammar of Baṣrah and Kūfah were often fought on such an issue. The Kūfah school was more likely to look to the Qur'ān or to the sayings of some Arabic-speaking ancients to elicit or support a grammatical rule, whereas the grammarians of Baṣrah would more likely resort to a logical argument or philosophical principle which often implicitly meant Greek influence. Thus in the development of the grammatical writing of Arabic two tendencies are evident. On the one hand there has been the introduction of elements from Greek logic, particularly Aristotle's, and, on the other, repeated attempts by purists, to this very day, to rid grammatical writings of many of these influences. The great jurist al-Shāfi'ī sums up the latter trend in his saying: "People have not erred or become divided except in their forsaking of the tongue of the Arabs and their tending to the tongue of Aristotle."[12]

However, it is among modern Arab linguists that one finds objections specifically directed against speaking of a copula in Arabic. For example, the Arab linguist and comparative grammarian al-Samarrā'ī, of the University of Baghdad, says that to speak of *huwa* and *kāna* as having a copulative function in the natural language is to miss the point of Arabic and to talk about it in terms that belong to a different language family, and this is highly improper.[13]

In another book, *Arabic Grammar*, al-Samarrā'ī discusses other borrowings, and the impropriety of importing into Arabic concepts and conventions which are foreign to it. There, speaking of logic as the source of many of these

[12]Quoted in al-Suyūṭī, *The Defense of Logic*, ed. by al-Nashshār, p. 15.

[13]*Op. cit.*, p. 69.

borrowings, he says: "Logic is an intruder that has corrupted language";[14] and " . . . the style of logical and philosophical analysis . . . has robbed grammar of its true linguistic character."[15]

This sort of view not only harks back to the long wars between the pro-logic and anti-logic grammarians, but to a particular and famous debate between the logician Abū Bishr Mattā and the grammarian (and theologian) al-Sīrāfī. This is the locus classicus of such discussions in Islam, and its importance lies in providing an explicit theoretical basis for the frequently repeated objection to foreign logical imports into the language. There is perhaps always some religious or provincial protective motivation for those anxious to defend the purity of Arabic. After all, Arabic is the language God chose for revealing His Word (this one without flesh). But this Mattā-Sīrāfī debate at least works with an interesting, though not fully developed, theory about the relation between logic and language. Although the debate was in general terms, with no specific reference to the subject of the copula, the arguments are tailor-made for those like al-Samarrā'ī who think that there is an issue about applying the notion of the copula in Arabic.

The debate took place in Baghdad in the year 932 *A.D.* in the presence and at the urging of Ibn al-Furāt, who was then vizier of the Abbāsid Caliph al-Muqtadir. After a brief exchange on an exaggerated claim attributed to Mattā—that there is no way of knowing what is correct from what is incorrect, right from wrong, without the command of logic as established by its author (Aristotle)—the discussion settles on the relation between logic and grammar.

Mattā states the thesis repeated by many Arabic logicians that logic deals with exigencies of thought that transcend all languages, whereas gramar deals only with the conventions of a particular language. In a cruder version Mattā says that logic deals with thought and meaning, whereas grammar deals with words. To illustrate the universal binding character of logic he cites '4 plus 4 equals 8' as a proposition that would hold in any language.

[14]P. 50.

[15]*Ibid.*, p. 31.

Al-Sīrāfī immediately dismisses this example as misleading in that it grossly oversimplifies the relation between grammar and logic. He also accuses Mattā of being too restrictive in his conception of grammar, for the grammarian, according to Sīrāfī, is also concerned with meaning at least insofar as that meaning can be expressed by a given grammatical structure.

However, the heart of al-Sīrāfī's theory is that logic is the logic of a particular language, and although there are certain obscurities in his statement of this, it is clear, for our purposes, that he is denying that logic deals with categories which transcend any given language. Aristotle's logic is the logic of Greek; it reflects the peculiarities of the Greek language. And ". . . no one language exactly corresponds with another in its nouns, verbs, and particles, in its mode of composition, arrangement, . . . and other things too numerous to mention."[16] Therefore what Aristotle said cannot be made a rule for those whose language is other than Greek.[17]

3

The claim of the provinciality of some given logic or of some particular logical concept is familiar enough, whether what makes for the provinciality is a favorite metaphysical outlook or the peculiarities of one's language; and the two are not unrelated.

Yet the issue before us—namely, whether one can speak of a copula in natural Arabic—does not have to be settled through a discussion of the general thesis about the provinciality or non-provinciality of the logical. Nor does it have to depend on an evaluation of the claim that the copula is indispensable in any "transcendent logic" or universal grammar and that, as a result, a particular grammar can be judged as adequate or inadequate if it succeeds or fails to provide what such a logic requires.

[16]Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, p. 118.
[17]*Ibid.*, p. 113.

The matter, fortunately, is somewhat simpler. Whether one may speak of a copula in Arabic depends in part on whether there are enough of the relevant and crucial similarities between the surface grammar of predication in Arabic and what Aristotle or some other proponent of the copula says about predication. And yet there is no compelling reason to analyze the function of certain Arabic words as copulative. To some extent we will endorse al-Sīrāfī's thesis, but we think that he has exaggerated the uniqueness and isolation of each language and overlooked important existing and potentially developing similarities among languages.

4

Arabic already has a type of grammar which assumes the subject-predicate distinction. This means that in a predicative construction there must be a convention for indicating that a given predicate attaches to a given subject, and showing both the juxtaposed subject and predicate in the nominative case is *already* such a convention. Therefore, the *principle* of the copula is already acknowledged by the surface grammarian, and it matters little whether he is aware of this and has a name for it or not. As a matter of fact the later grammarians do speak of the "attachment" of P to S as *isnād* (literally, leaning on), except that this *isnād* is not done by the use of a separate word. But that the copula must always be a separate word *is* a provincial convention. The Arabic logicians used it because Aristotle did, although they might have argued independently that it is in a way more explicit to indicate each of the elements of the predicative sentence by a separate word.

Now the Arabic grammarian has a strong case when he contends that he can say without a copula anything that can be said with it. However, he cannot claim that he can make an attribution without any copulative convention at all.

The logician will certainly have to grant the dispensability of the copula in natural Arabic. But then he can claim

that the copula is indispensable in a universal grammar, and therefore Arabic will have to be translated into that grammar. Thus if the nominal sentence appears without any of the copula-candidate words, it has to be converted into the Aristotelian prototype and a copulative word supplied. And if the sentence already has words like *kāna, inna,* and *huwa* for whatever grammatical reason, then the function of these words from a logical standpoint can be described as copulative.

If the logician wishes to avoid seeming too high-handed, he can point out that the translation and analysis he proposes for the Arabic attributive sentence is really not a violation of the spirit of the language. On the contrary it is in accordance with an accepted, even if implied, principle of that language. The logician is just resorting to a different convention—a copulative word instead of a juxtaposition in the nominal case—in following the same principle, the principle being that some convention should indicate that the predicate attaches to the subject. One can say that with respect to this theory of predication Arabic and the Indo-European languages from which the above logician is universalizing belong to the same classification. The difference is in the copulative convention used. Thus our logician, having given himself the right to "speak copulatively" about Arabic by his claim of the transcendent indispensability of the copula, can now assuage the fears of the purist by pointing out the *existing* requisite similarities between Arabic on the one hand, and those Indo-European languages and "their" logic on the other. After all, in Greek, the language of Aristotle's logic, the *esti* is dispensable in the natural language.[18]

The fact that the Arabic grammarian had not thought of calling *kana, inna,* and *huwa* copulative is by itself not a sufficient reason for not analyzing their function as such. Surely he does not want to be caught saying that a concept or a theory does not apply in talking about his language unless he thinks of it and applies it. And there is no reason why an Arabic surface grammarian should not at some

[18]See our qualification of this point in the next chapter, pp. 00-00.

point come to hold a three-term theory of predication: after all language is a developing reality. This would be perfectly consistent with the dispensability of the copula which would continue to be a feature of natural Arabic. The Arabic grammarian would then say what the Arabic logicians say: that in Arabic the copulative term may be omitted.

But while all the above can be said to the grammarian—and he might see some force in it—he has a simple answer. For he is really under no constraint to switch to a three term theory of predication. He could be a proponent of the theory which dispenses with the copula altogether. He would therefore want to reduce all those sentences in natural Arabic with *kāna* and *huwa* which might give someone the excuse for a three-term analysis into what he might claim is the *original* and primary form, namely the Arabic sentence without a copula.[19] This would be much the same as the proponent of the copula for Arabic wanting to translate the two-term nominal sentence into the form with a copula. Although the purist grammarian would still have to adhere to the copulative convention of juxtaposing the two terms in the nominal case, there is no special reason for going three-term when the two-term predicative construction does the same work. He can thus still cite Arabic (and other semitic tongues) as an example of a language in which the copula, as a separate word needed to link subject and predicate, can be indeed superfluous.

The most that one might ask our grammarian to concede is this. In those cases where words like *kāna, inna,* and *huwa* are used in a predicative construction, it might be tenable to claim for them a copulative function. And this might be tenable even though according to the grammar those words were not used in the first place for that purpose; after all, there is a difference between what a word was meant to do and what it could be used to do. Moreover, it need not be a high-handed move that misses the point of the language.

[19]Bravmann, in *Studies in Arabic and General Syntax,* p. 73, maintains that the copulative *kāna* is a later development and that a sentence with it is to be understood as making the same predication as a sentence without it. For the opposite view on the original form of the Arabic nominal sentence, see Makhzūmi, *op. cit.,* p. 32.

CHAPTER THREE
ARABIC AND THE CONCEPT OF BEING

The problem of expressing the Greek concept of being in Arabic did not escape classical Islamic writers. But the discussion of this problem as an instance of the general question of the influence of grammar on the formation of philosophical concepts is to be found among some recent writers on Islam, although unfortunately there is hardly anything approaching a sustained treatment from this perspective.

A few quotations from two recent writers will bring into focus those distinctive features of the Arabic language which are said to be problem-causing, and at the same time they will provide our analysis with a point of departure.

In his useful book *Philosophical Terminology in Arabic and Persian,* Soheil Afnan identifies the problem for the Arabic translator of Greek metaphysics in these words: "the translator can easily find himself helpless."[1] This is generalized to all semitic languages, which are said to be "still unable to express the thought adequately."[2] Afnan attributes this to what he calls "the complete absence of the copula."[3]

Another writer, the linguist Angus Graham, in a stimulating article,[4] singles out another, but related, feature of Arabic, the sharp separation of the existential and predicative functions, a feature notably lacking in classical Greek.[5]

[1]*Philosophical Terminology in Arabic and Persian,* p. 29.
[2]*Ibid.,* p. 30. It is not clear what the relevance of time is ("still").
[3]*Ibid.,* p. 29.
[4]Angus Graham, " 'Being' in Linguistics and Philosophy," *Foundations of Language* 1 (1965): 223-31.
[5]*Ibid.,* p. 223.

These two features, the absence of the copula and the existential-predicative separation, are supposed to have stood in the way of expressing the Greek concept of being adequately or accurately. And what is meant by this, in the words of Afnan, is the failure to express "the precise concept of being as distinct from existence."[6] Graham puts it this way: "Because of the structure of the language, they [the Arabic translations of Aristotle] transform him at one stroke into a philosopher who talks sometimes about existence, sometimes about quiddity, *never about being.*"[7]

Since the general topic of the concept of being in Arabic has so many facets and requires different specialities for its full and adequate treatment, my objective in this chapter will have to be a limited one. It is one sort of discussion fitting in with a number of others.

We shall assume that the nature of the difficulty of expressing the Greek concept of being in Arabic can be stated in more stringent or in less stringent terms. Now it is not altogether clear what degree of stringency the two writers quoted would subscribe to, since their comments are rather brief, but their language tends towards the stringent. So we shall go ahead, insofar as we can, and discuss possible claims without worrying whether these claims have sponsors, or who the sponsors are. We shall examine the features of Arabic noted above and clarify the nature of the difficulty in order to determine what bearing those features have on that difficulty and what degree of stringency is justified in the characterization of the difficulty. We shall maintain that the differences between Greek and Arabic do not warrant a stringent diagnosis of the difficulty for Arabic. Perhaps enough clarifications will come about to compensate for the rather negative tenor of this conclusion. And while our discussion of the case of Arabic can be related to the general question of the influence of grammar on the formation of philosophical concepts, we will not deal with this general question here. However, our effort may serve as a case study for the general question, and a rejection of

[6]Afnan, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

[7]Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 226; italics in the original.

the stringent thesis for Arabic would signify a readiness to reject such a thesis on the more general issue.

THE FIRST FEATURE

Absence of Copula

Let us examine the first feature. This may be called "the complete absence of the copula," in which case one would be talking about the natural language, as a "surface" grammarian would describe it. What is in mind here is the fact already stated that Arabic grammatical syntax does not require any word to "link" subject and complement. Of course there are words like *kāna, inna,* and *huwa* which perform to-be-like functions in the natural language. This made them obvious candidates for the office of copula when Arabic logicians, following Aristotle, decided to introduce the copula into their logical writings, Historically, at any rate, it is clear that the logicians introduced a use for certain words which was not theirs in the grammar of the language. We have already discussed in our last chapter the sort of license one can have for speaking of a copulative function even in the natural language. In this chapter we shall stay within the obvious sense which the grammarian has in mind about the absence of the copula in Arabic. What consequence can this have for the problem before us?

Of course the problem before us is not whether one can produce an Arabic sound and let it stand for the Greek sound *to on.* Nor is it the question of how to say *to on* in Arabic, as when one asks: how would you say "interesting" or "establishment" in Arabic? Nor is it the simple morphological question of whether one can form a word from a certain verb root. The problem, as I shall formulate it, is this. Since Greek and Arabic belong to different language families with respect to "to be,"—and this is the difference that concerns us—does Arabic have the necessary linguistic equipment for the formation of a philosophical term (or terms) which shall be like *to on,* in two respects? First, semantically, can the Arabic vocabulary have the meaning

or meanings of *to on* ? Second, and this is a logical-semantical feature, can this vocabulary stand for a higher-level concept, which could range over its constituents in a variety of specific ways, depending on whether it is thought to name a class or a property common to all that in some sense is, or analogically to embrace a family of different concepts.[8] (I suppose even when the term "being" is dismissed as a logical mistake, in that the term suggests a common thread of meaning when none exists, one can half-seriously speak of its futile attempt to range, or of a sematically vacuous or frustrated ranging.)

The question immediately before us is whether the presence of a copula in Greek is a necessary condition for the formation of *to on*, and consequently whether its absence in Arabic counts against the possibility of forming an equivalent term.

If we look at Greek, we find that the copulative function of *einai*, although present, is not highly developed, for it is not syntactically necessary. Certainly it is not as developed as the "to be" of the more modern Indo-European languages. But more importantly, one finds[9] that insofar as the uses of *einai* have bearing on the meanings of *to on* and *to einai*, it is primarily the *semantical*, not syntactical, functions that are to the point. So if we are talking about the presence of the copula as a syntactical device, that is not a relevant condition, let alone a necessary condition.

Where there is a relevant grammatical characteristic of *einai*, it is morphological, not syntactical. For example, Kahn notes the fact that *einai* has no aorist and no perfect, and the fact that all its tenses (present, imperfect, and future) are formed from a single present-durative stem, which represents action as durative, i.e., as a state which lasts or a

[8]The thesis about Arabic could take, then, the following form: that the necessary conditions for expressing *to on* (with the two features) are not present in Arabic, and consequently one cannot express such a concept within the given structure of the language. Our contention is that such a thesis would be false, for the necessary conditions are present in Arabic, as we shall see.

[9]See the excellent article by Charles Kahn, "The Greek Verb 'To Be' and the Concept of Being," *Foundations of Language* 2 (1966):245-66.

process which develops in time. This durative aspect of *einai* is taken as possibly shedding some light on the classical contrast between being and becoming, in which being is the stable unchanging reality.[10] Our interest here is not in the merits of this connection, but in noting that this single instance, where the grammar of *einai* is relevant, concerns morphology, not syntax, and the copula is a syntactical device.

But perhaps what is meant is not the presence or absence of a copula as a syntactical device as such, i.e., as purely syntactical, but the presence in Greek and the absence in Arabic of a privileged verb such as *einai* which besides its copulative function (developed or not) has important semantical functions as well. And here it may be possible to attribute or connect the privilege of performing the semantical functions to the privileged syntactical status.

If one is to maintain this, all that one can maintain is that, if a language has a copulative "to be," the semantical functions are likely to attach themselves to that singular syntactical device. This does not imply that the presence of the copula is a necessary condition for the development of those semantical functions for either Arabic or Greek. So if a language does not have a copulative term, this does not mean that the semantical functions cannot develop and be performed by words, one or more, that in the grammar of that language are not copulas.

Thus in Arabic the functions of indicating that something exists or happens or is located, and of saying that X is such and such and that it is the case that such and such, these and similar to-be-type functions can be performed by a variety of words, not one of which needs to be a copula in order to perform those functions. When Arabic logicians seized upon such words for use as copulas, they selected those which had already been performing to-be-type functions other than that of syntactical linking. They proceeded to invest those words with one more function: to act as link between subject and complement in any proposition logically considered. But, as we have indicated, it was the

[10]Kahn, *op. cit.*, p.254.

assigning of the copulative function that historically followed their semantical functions, and it was the presence of these semantical functions that made them good candidates for the formation of the concept of being in Arabic.

Non-singularity of "To Be"

What has been called the absence of the copula in Arabic needs to be described in terms of a wider situation with respect to to-be-type words and their functions. The striking difference between Arabic, on the one hand, and Greek and the other Indo-European languages, on the other, is that in these languages there are several functions, syntactical and semantical, which are performed by the verb "to be." These functions can of course be performed in these languages without "to be," but this verb is more often and more typically used to perform those functions, so that "to be" may be given a special or singular status in the assignment of credit for their combined performance.

In Arabic there is no single privileged device that combines similar or corresponding functions. Rather, as we noted earlier, the burden of performing these functions is shared by a number of words, differing in grammatical type. Of these only *kāna* is ordinarily given a dictionary meaning of "to be." Let us call this situation the non-singularity of "to be" in Arabic or the absence of a single and privileged to-be-type device.

Each one of the Arabic to-be-type words has yielded a candidate for an equivalent of the Greek *to on* in one or another or all its senses. The question now is what is the relevance of this non-singularity of a to-be-type device in Arabic to the difficulty of expressing the concept of being as distinct from existence?

Let us first be clear about the ways in which being may be distinguished from existence. There are two sorts of ways. The first, call it the vertical, is one in which "being" is in a logical sense a higher-level concept than existence. (This is the logical feature of *to on.*) The concept of being, according to this distinction, ranges over a number of concepts of which existence may be one. This first way would

be in evidence when someone is making comments about the logical status of the concept of being, or of the term "being." The second way in which "being" can be distinguished from existence arises when some philosopher, as a metaphysician, asks the question: What is being? and proceeds to give his theory of being. One is here adopting one sense of "being" as the proper or primary sense (supplying the semantical aspect of *to on*), and it turns out that this is distinct from the meaning of existence. For example, the Greek rationalist tradition from Parmenides on (including Aristotle, of course) emphasized the sense of being, the really real, what truly is, as the proper object of knowledge, what can be truly known. This is the "collusion" between Greek epistemology and Greek ontology, a collusion which indeed defines any rationalist tradition. In the course of a study of Greek thought one could then note that this meaning of being is different from the concept of existence as it developed, say, in the Middle Ages. This contrast between being as what can be truly known and existence is a contrast of two concepts at the same logical level as it were, and may be called the horizontal.

Kahn, in the article to which we have already referred, shows in an interesting and convincing way how this fundamental sense of being in Greek philosophy—as what can be truly known and truly said—reflects the primarily veridical sense of *einai*, "to be" as to be the case, to be truly so. This veridical sense is not developed in Arabic in the uses of any of the to-be-type devices, nor, for that matter, in the English "to be." Now although we have here the case of a linguistic fact helping to shed light on the meaning of a philosophical concept, it is a case that seems to cut across family types and has Greek, on the one hand, pitted against Arabic and English on the other (although this will be qualified shortly). Furthermore this is a sort of linguistic difference that would not justify a stringent form of the thesis about the influence of the linguistic features of Arabic or English on the formation of philosophic concepts in either language (the matter of family-type differences aside for the moment).

One could say that, since the Greek *einai* had such and

such a predominant sense, a correspondingly predominant sense of being was likely to develop. It was less likely to develop in that sense in English or Arabic. But this is not the same as saying that one could not express in those two languages the concept of being as what can be truly known and as distinct from existence.

How one specifies the nature of the relation between "being" and its logical constituents will determine how one conceives the relation between the two ways of distinguishing "being" from existence. If "being" is thought to be analogical, then the second way of distinguishing becomes reabsorbed into the total picture of the first. Existence is here different from its sibling—"being" as what is truly known—but both are ways of being; existence is still subsumed under the parent concept of being (despite the logical generation gap). If, on the other hand, "being" is the name of a class or a common property and is said to be distinct from existence, then existence is "expelled" once and for all from the notion of being. The same could be said if "being" were considered a mistake. There is no higher sense of being which would include existence.

For our discussion at this point we need to take for our model the analogical view of the concept of being. (Or one could take the view that it is a mistake. What we will say applies to both views equally.) For we are confronted with the historical and linguistic fact of an *einai* with many functions, from which developed a *to on* and *to einai* having more than one sense. And the question before us is whether the non-singularity of any to-be-type device in Arabic stands in the way of expressing a concept of being which is distinguishable from existence in the first way we mentioned, namely, as a concept which could range over existence but would not be reduced to it.[11] Is the non-singularity of a to-be-type device in Arabic much to the point? I see the answer in the negative.

The relevant condition fulfilled in Greek, or in any of the other Indo-European languages, is not that there is one and no other "to be" or to-be-type device, but that whatever the

[11]This pertains to the logical feature of *to on*.

device, it should have *different* functions. The logical condition for an analogical sense (or the condition presupposed in dismissing it as a mistake) is having more than one different function, and for the semantical functions this is ambiguity. It is sufficient for this condition to be fulfilled *at least once*. It is not necessary that it be fulfilled *only* once. And the crucial difference between Arabic, on the one hand, and the Indo-European languages (including Greek) on the other is not that the condition is fulfilled in the latter family of languages but not fulfilled in Arabic. Rather, the difference is that in the Indo-European languages one privileged device, the verb "to be," has the big contract. The condition is fulfilled in that special way only once. In Arabic, on the other hand, the business is shared by a number of devices, each of which is, or can be, multi-functioning in the requisite sense, though none is specially anointed. Thus in Arabic there is a variety of to-be-type words and a corresponding variety of words for the concept of being, while in the Indo-European languages there is a central "to be," from which the word for the concept of being derives. Our claim has been that this difference is not to the point, and consequently anyone who wishes to support the thesis, at least in its stringent form, that different grammar-types stand in the way, or prevent the formation, of equivalent philosophical vocabulary will have to bypass the cases of Greek and Arabic and look elsewhere, at least as far as the concept of being is concerned.

THE SECOND FEATURE

Existential Predicative Separation

We must now consider whether there are *specific* and crucial differences in the functions of the Greek and Arabic devices.[12] Our new question no longer pertains to the number of functions, but to specific differences in those functions, and differences which reflect the different family types.

[12]This is relevant to the semantical aspect of *to on*.

We turn to the second feature of Arabic: the sharp separation between the predicative and the existential functions.

It is often said in contrasting Greek and English that the existential-predicative distinction marks the "is" but not the "*esti.*" But what is meant primarily about the Arabic separation is that predication, in other than the cases of the nominal sentence, can be expressed by one set of words *(inna, kāna, huwa)*, while the usual way to indicate existence is with words formed from a different root, *wjd.* So unlike English, in the contrast with Greek, it is not a separation of functions for the same word, but an allotting of the different functions to different words. And this seems to be a more radical kind, that retains the distinction of linguistic family types. This, one might contend, makes the crucial difference, since the Arabic separation yields terms for existence from the existential side, and terms for essence from the predicative side, with perhaps no promising linguistic resource for expressing the abstract "being" which is not reducible to either essence or existence.[13]

Now it is true of other languages that one could perform the existential and predicative functions by resorting to a different vocabulary for each function. However, performing these functions with one term, say, "to be," may be a more general practice in some languages than in others.

In Arabic, as we have maintained, each of the to-be-type words can perform (or has been made to perform) both the predicative and the existential functions. Therefore the sharp separation thesis cannot mean that in Arabic it would be impossible to indicate both functions by the same term. It would be accurate, however, to say that the separation by different vocabulary of those two functions is the more striking feature of Arabic, but then this is due to the non-singularity of any of the to-be-type devices. In other words, as in many other languages the functions of predicating and of indicating existence can be performed in Arabic in either of two ways, either by vocabulary deriving from different roots, or by some multi-functioning to-be-type devices. What distinguishes Arabic is not that only the former takes place, but that the former is not overshadowed by some one dominating to-be-type word which combines the functions. Thus he second grammatical feature of our discussion, the existential-predicative separation, has to be stated in terms of the first feature, the non-singularity of a "to be." Both are parts of the same picture.

[13]See Graham, " 'Being . . .'," pp. 225, 227.

The importance of underscoring such a link between the two features of Arabic is that this has a bearing on how one would state the thesis we are presently examining. For it would now be too stringent to say that such and such Arabic philosophers (e.g., Farabi and Ibn Sina) could not escape making the ontological distinction between essence and existence because of the sharp separation—as we have explained it— of the predicative-existential functions.[14] There are possibilities in the language that could have been resorted to which fulfill the requisite logical condition for forming an abstract term for being.[15]

There remains one question of importance for our entire discussion, one which is especially relevant to the semantical feature of *to on.* How does one decide whether a given Arabic equivalent to *to on* is accurate or not, if all previous considerations aside, it turns out that the meaning of this Arabic term is stipulated without regard to previous usage? The assumption of the view as we stated it, that the term for existence comes from the existential side and the term for essence from the predicative side, seems to be that the meaning of the *to on* equivalent is ruled inaccurate on the

[14]"It is a misplaced compliment to credit al-Farabi . . . and Ibn Sina . . . with the discovery of the ontological difference between essence and existence; it was impossible for an Arab [this must mean Arabic writer, for Farabi was a Turk and Ibn Sina a Persian] to confuse them." Graham, " 'Being'. . .," p. 227.

[15]Of words in the natural langauge, *kāna,* yielding *kaynūnah,* would be our choice. *Kāna* has more nearly the functions of to be in the natural language than any of the other terms we have considered. (Recall our survey in ch. 1.) Its straddling abstract sense would be an advantage for *kaynūnah* as "being." That *kawn* in one use means becoming should not determine what *kaynūnah* means or will mean when used in a technical sense. (See our argument in the next paragraph of the main text.) In the Isḥaq translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics,* which is used by Ibn Rushd for his *Commentary on the Metaphysics, kaynūnah* is used as the equivalent of *einai:* 997a, 35; 998a, 8.

basis of some ancestral linguistic fact such as etymology. But surely no one would say that the Arabic word for the telephone, *al-hātif*, is inaccurate on the grounds that it comes from the verb root *hatafa*, which means to call loudly or shout, and one does not always shout when using the telephone. One would simply say that etymological affinity might be a useful guide in selecting a verb root from which to derive or coin a word, but that such ancestry is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for determining a stipulated meaning.[16]

It would be instructive for us to examine briefly the Arabic translation of Aristotle's discussion of the senses of *to on* and *to einai (Metaphysics*, V, 7) and Ibn Rushd's commentary on it. In the Isḥāq translation of the *Metaphysics;* V, 7, what is said there to have the various senses is *"al-huwiyyah"*, which is derived from the copula *huwa*. In the language of, the separation-of-functions thesis one could say that this derives from the copulative-ess nce side. On the other hand, Ibn Rushd, in his commentary, prefers the term *"al-mawjūd"* for the various senses, and this, it would be said, comes from the existential side. From Isḥāq the translator and Ibn Rushd the philosopher-commentator we have two equivalents for *to on* which reflect the predicative-existential split.

However, it should be noted that regardless of their linguistic ancestry, each term, *"al-huwiyyah"* and *"al-mawjūd,"* is proposed for *all* the senses distinguished by Aristotle (except for Ibn Rushd's once-stated reservation that *"huwiyyah"* does not apply to the sense of "It is true").[17] Here

[16]We followed this principle in our preference for *kāna*, as root for *kaynūnah* (see the previous note). Ibn Rushd, in the *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, where he explains his preference for *al-mawjūd* over *al-huwiyyah* says: "Were it the case that in the tongue of the Arabs the noun *al-mawjūd* referred to whatever is referred to by *"shay'"* (thing), then it would have been more appropriate than *al-huwiyyah* in referring to the ten categories. For this noun [*al-mawjūd*] is [already] part of the language of the Arabs. However, since it does not have this meaning [as synonym for *shay'*], some have preferred *al-huwiyyah*. Therefore, if it [*al-mawjūd*] is used here, it should not be understood in terms of its etymology (*Commentary on the Metaphysics*, II, 558f.)

[17]*Epitome of the Metaphysics*, p. 11.

there is obvious stipulation, and one would in this case be begging the question if one were to judge the new use as inaccurate on the ground that its root or its previous meaning is such and such. If Ibn Rushd tells us that he uses *"al-mawjūd"* to mean . . ., and he then gives the four senses of Aristotle, one could reply: you have distorted Aristotle, because *"al-mawjūd"* means "what exists." He will answer, as in fact he does,[18] that "for the populace"—i.e., the prevalent or common meaning—*"al-mawjūd"* means such and such, and this is its meaning as etymologically derived *("mushtaqq")*, but in philosophy it means . . . (and he would refer to the four senses of Aristotle). These are its meaning in the context of translation *("ism manqūl")*.[19]

That Ibn Rushd said this, and therefore was himself aware of the stipulative situation, fulfills one essential condition of stipulated meaning—namely, that the stipulator shall have intended the word to be used in such and such a sense. For even if Ibn Rushd used *"al-mawjūd"* for Aristotle's four senses, he might still have misunderstood Aristotle and thought that the Greek philosopher was speaking about different sorts of existence. We needed to know that Ibn Rushd himself was aware that he was departing from common usage.

This saves us from having to engineer a way out for the stipulating Arabic translator or philosopher, when the matter depends not on *our* being aware of what it is to stipulate, but on its being historically the case that some Arabic translator or philosopher was himself aware of what he was doing.

[18]*Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

[19]We are not here necessarily endorsing either Isḥāq's or Ibn Rushd's translation of *to on*. Our preference would still be for *kaynūnah*.

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR
FARABI AND THE CONCEPT OF BEING

What Farabi has to say about the concept of being is of special historical interest for at least two reasons. First, Farabi seems to be the first Islamic philosopher to have raised the question of whether Arabic can supply adequate vocabulary for "being," in view of the fact that as a semitic language, in contrast with the Indo-European family, it lacks a single, relatively central, multi-functioning device such as "to be." Second, Farabi works very explicitly and in important areas of his philosophy with what is known as the "essence-existence distinction." And here, too, Farabi is the first Islamic philosopher to have put such a distinction to good advantage, although, as Goichon rightly states, Farabi does not write as if he had discovered the distinction,[1] and its roots in Aristotle are well known.[2] The effort to determine who invented this gunpowder may be worth expending, but that is not our business here, although we shall make some clarifying remarks later on that may be relevant to that task.

One of the aspects of Farabi's use of the essence-existence distinction—and this may count as a separate and third reason for the historical interest in Farabi's concept of

[1]Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sīnā*, p. 131. Goichon relies on *The Gems of Wisdom* to establish that Farabi made the distinction. Her point holds even if *The Gems* is not by Farabi, as we shall see. For a discussion of the authorship of this work, see Pines in *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 19 (1951): 121-26.

[2]*Posterior Analytics*, Book II, Chapter 3, 90b,10; Book II, Chapter 7, 92b, 3-18; Book II, Chapter 8, 93a, 6ff.

being—is his advocacy of the view that existence is not a predicate. Again, regardless of who invented this notion, Farabi deserves special recognition for its use.

In this chapter we propose to do two main things: (1) present Farabi's discussion of the question of the Arabic vocabulary for "being," and (2) discuss and clarify some main points regarding the "essence-existence distinction." Throughout, our concern will be with those aspects of Farabi's thought that touch on the concept of being, the most general questions about being, and its modes. We will not, except tangentially, deal with his actual metaphysical theories, least of all his emanationism. The emanationist metaphysics, with its elaborate metaphysical bureaucracy, tells of the relation between one Being and other beings in terms of the metaphor of *fayḍ* (overflowing) rather than, say, the agent-instrumental metaphor of creation, but it makes use of otherwise given ontological categories. It is a specific theory about how certain beings are related, not a theory about what "being" is or what its modes are.

1

Farabi and the Vocabulary for "To Be"

The background to the vocabulary problem, as Farabi sees it, is as follows. Arabic, as given to the philosopher (and translator), has no term that occupies a place corresponding to the Greek *estin* or the Persian *hasti*.[3] But the philosopher in both metaphysics and logic needs such a term and needs its derivative forms.[4] Farabi then discusses some of the Arabic vocabulary that Arabic philosophers and translators of Greek adapted for the purpose at hand. In his commentary on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione (Kitāb al 'ibārah)*, he discusses *kāna* (to be) and derivatives of *wjd* (to find), most important of which are the noun *al-mawjūd* and the verbal noun *al-wujūd*. In *The Book of the Letters* it is *huwa* and the *wjd* derivatives which are highlighted, and

[3]Farabi, *The Book of the Letters*, p. 112.
[4]*Ibidem.*

there is mention but no discussion of *kāna*. Of all these devices he much prefers the *wjd* derivatives. This is evident in his use of these in the actual statement of his metaphysical views. It is also evident in the philosophic vocabulary sections of his books from the brevity of his remarks on *kāna* and *huwa*[5] relative to the space devoted to the *wjd* derivatives. Then also *huwa* is discussed in the section entitled *al-mawjūd*, and *kāna* is explicitly referred to by the classification label *kalimah wujūdiyyah* (a term for being; and the word for being here is a *wjd* derivative).

What strikes Farabi about *al-mawjūd* is that the form in which it is used to do the work of *estin* and *hasti* is already derivative *(mushtaqq)*. The same is true of the verbal noun *al-wujūd*. These derivative terms were put to new technical uses not called for in the natural language. It is here that Farabi calls attention to two difficulties both stemming from the use of derivative terms.[6]

The first difficulty is that a derivative form such as *al-mawjūd* suggests reference to some unspecified subject which is characterized by what the verbal noun *al-wujūd* denotes. In other words, *al-mawjūd* is something that has *wujūd*, and this has suggested to some that existence *(wujūd)* is like an accidental attribute in a subject, the *mawjūd*.[7]

The other difficulty is that *al-mawjūd* might be taken to mean "what is found" because of the meaning of the root verb *wjd*. This relative-to-man sense might prevent the term from having its absolute (not relative-to-man) sense of being and existence.[8]

[5]The paragraph on *inna/anna* with which *The Book of the Letters* opens does not treat these as *kalimāt wujūd*, although Farabi does connect their use with the vocabulary on being when he says that philosophers refer to the "full being" *(al-wujūd al-kāmil)* of a thing as its *inniyyah*, or its essence. (The editor reads the word as *inniyyah*, beginning with an "i.")

[6]See Ibn Rushd's reference to this, *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, pp. 371f.

[7]*The Book of the Letters*, p. 113. This view, accepted by the Mu'tazilah and by Ibn Sina, was rejected by Farabi.

[8]*Ibidem.* It is not clear why the difficulties are limited by Farabi to derivative words. The decision to use any word in a new way could

What Farabi wants to point out in mentioning these two difficulties can be stated without reference to the specific details of each. His point for both is that with derivative words such as *al-mawjūd* some unwanted implications by the specific form of the derivative word (first difficulty), or some carryover of meaning from ancestral root (second difficulty) might interfere with the intention to put that word to a new technical use. However, Farabi's final point on this issue is that such interference should not be permitted to count, and that one should proceed to use the vocabulary in the technical sense, shutting off ancestral semantical connections.[9] This is a necessary condition for the adequacy of the philosophic vocabulary in what is obviously a stipulative situation.

In summary, then, Farabi's thesis about the problem of the formation of the Arabic philosophical vocabulary for "being" is this: that Arabic was not "naturally" equipped in a manner corresponding to Greek (or Persian) for the development of terms for "being," and that what terms were in fact developed must be understood in their special sense, free of meanings associated with their root or their grammatical form.

Despite the existential (to find) sense of the root of *al-mawjūd*, Farabi decides that the term is the one that can adequately do all the jobs needed. It can have the widest extension and refer to "anything to which reference can be made,"[10] or it can refer collectively to all things, without specifying one thing to the exclusion of another. It can refer to whatever exists (outside the mind), whether potential or actual;[11] it can refer to what can be said to be so, what is

bring about "difficulties" not unlike the ones he points out. Derivative words will be haunted by the meaning of the root form, and any use of a word, derivative or not, will be shadowed by the meaning of the previous use. From this perspective one supposes that the case of metaphor would be one in which the haunting of the past—in this instance, literal—meaning is both necessary and desirable.

[9]*The Book of the Letters*, p. 114.

[10]*The Book of the Letters*, p. 115; "refers to all under it, but none refer to it," *ibidem;* "to all things," *ibid.*, 113; "a noun used analogically *(b-ishtirāk)* for all things," *ibid.*, pp. 115-16.

[11]*Ibid.*, 119.

true;[12] and it can be used to perform the function of a copula.[13]

The generality of reference of *al-mawjūd* is first introduced by asserting that it can be said of all the categories and applies to anything to which reference can be made whether that exists in a subject or not.[14] The phrase "anything to which reference can be made" is taken to mean "whatever has an essence," be that essence in the mind or outside the mind.[15] This excludes the nothing or non-being, *al-ghayr mawjūd*, which in this most general sense, as the opposite of *al-mawjūd*, by definition signifies the lack of any essense.[16] The generality of reference is also indicated by calling *al-mawjūd* the most general class, although he does not consider it a class in the strict sense.[17]

However, there is a more restricted sense of *al-mawjūd* and its opposite *al-ghayr mawjūd*. This is the sense Farabi usually has in mind when *al-mawjūd* is not qualified either explicitly or by context. *Al-mawjūd* in this sense refers to what has an essence "outside the self," what exists in reality, *al-mawjūd fī l-a'yān*, as opposed to what exists in the mind, *al-mawjūd fī l-adhhān*.[18] This restricted use of *al-mawjūd* can apply to concrete individuals as well as to abstract forms (as, say, in Platonic realism, a position, however, which Farabi does not accept).[19] It is the sense that

[12]*Ibid.*, 116.

[13]*Ibid.*, 125; *Commentary on De Interpretatione*, p. 47. No mention is made of the function of the "is" of identity, for which *al-mawjūd* would be ill-suited. *Huwa* is often used in the natural language for that purpose and would be a more appropriate candidate for this function in logic (see Chapter One, p. 12 above).

[14]*The Book of the Letters*, p. 115.

[15]*Ibid.*, p. 116.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 121. *The ghayr mawjud* either designates what is nothing at all or refers to what is in the mind but not also outside the mind; *ibidem.*

[17]*Commentary on De Interpretatione*, p. 125.

[18]This way of subdividing by qualifying the kind (or "locus") of the *mawjūd* makes the term *"mawjūd"* ontologically versatile. One can encompass other realms of being using the same term for all of them with the appropriate qualification for each: what exists in reality, in fiction, in mythology, in potency, in actuality (see note 21 below), etc.

[19]See *Commentaries*, p. 19; see our discussion in this chapter, pp.

the non-philosopher is more likely to think of. This would account for the hesitation of "the populace" to refer to what exists *potentially* as a *mawjūd*. They would rather call the potential the *ghayr mawjūd*, reserving the term *"mawjūd"* for the actual.[20]

In the most general sense, the one referring to any essence whatever, *al-mawjūd* is synonymous with *shay'*, thing, but it is to be preferred to the latter, since *shay'* cannot perform the other jobs that *al-mawjūd* does. Of course, *shay'* is more general than the restricted *al-mawjūd*, the one referring to what exists outside the mind. Even the impossible is a *shay'*, but cannot be a *mawjūd* in the restricted sense.[21]

One can now talk about the sense of *al-mawjūd* as "the true." For when reference is to what does exist, then "to be" and "to be true" are synonymous. But when reference is to be made to what exists only in the mind as if it existed outside, then this is the meaning of the false.[22] Strictly speaking, as Farabi himself notes, the true is equivalent to the *mawjūd* and the false to the *ghayr mawjūd*, but only as a function of man's thinking (as to whether there is or is not an essence outside the self). In other words, it is a matter of congruence. That an island exists is not true, but when I think of or imagine an island, then the possibility of the true or false arises.[23] Moreover, the *ghayr mawjūd*, as what

57f. See also Goichon *Distinction de l'essence et de l'existence*, pp. 84-85, and n.5, p. 85.

[20]*The Book of the Letters*, p. 121. Farabi notes that in Arabic when one wants to refer to specific cases of X being in this condition or that, one uses the form of the actual for both actual and potential, e.g., 'Zayd (is) *mayyit*', which could mean that Zayd is mortal or that he is dead. Philosophers have adopted this dual use and distinguish the two states by adding the appropriate qualification *bil-quwwah* (potentially) and *bi l-fi'l* (actually) . One can also use the negatives: 'X is, but not actually', or 'X is not, in actuality'; *ibidem*.

[21]*Ibid.*, p. 128. It should be noted that Farabi and Ibn Sina after him would not call the nothing a something, contra Aristotle, the Stoics, and Ibn Rushd. See Rescher, *Studies in Arabic Philosophy*, p. 74.

[22]*Ibid.*, p. 116.

[23]*Ibid.*, p. 117f. One is more likely nowadays to say that truth or falsity, in this sense, is a property of propositions.

has no essence whatsoever, either in or outside the self, is neither true nor false. It is equivalent to "not a thing" *(laysa bi-shay')*.

There is one further use of *al-mawjūd*, and that is syntactical, as the copula in a proposition.[24] Thus one can say 'S *mawjūd* (or *yūjad)* P' or 'P *mawjūd* (or *yūjad)* in S'. However, in his *Commentary On De Interpretatione*, Farabi is quick to warn against bringing into this function the meaning that something exists outside the self which the word has in one of its other roles. The copulative function is purely syntactical and there should be no semantical seepage.[25] In 'Zayd is *(mawjūd,* or *yūjad)* just' the function of the *wjd* derivatives qua copula is not to claim that outside the self Zayd and his being just are conjoined, but merely to link a logical subject and a logical predicate, both of which are entertained "within the self." The proposition as a whole can be either true or false.[26] From the copulative use alone neither the existence of Zayd nor his actual moral character can be inferred. Of course one may still have a theory about the existential import of propositions qua propositions, but that would constitute an independent reason for making the move towards existence. What Farabi now is saying is that if *al-mawjūd* is "on duty" as a copula, don't expect it to mix in semantical business from one of its other roles. Don't make an existential inference because *al-mawjūd* happens, in addition, to be used to signify existence.[27] That is not its function when it is used as a copula.[28]

[24]*Ibid.*, p. 125.

[25]*Commentary on De Interpretatione*, p. 44, line 24. See our further discussion of this in Section III 5 below.

[26]*Ibid.*, p. 125ff.

[27]It would seem that Farabi would support the view concerning the lack of some one meaning common to all the uses of to be.

[28]On the existential-copulative ambiguity of *al-mawjūd*, see, especially, *The Book of the Letters*, pp. 126f. These two functions are explicitly separated in that rare and odd proposition 'Zayd *yūjad mawjūd*' ('Zayd is existent,' or "Zayd exists"). *Commentary on De Interpretatione*, pp. 45, 46; see also Dieterici, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

2

Essence and Existence

What is called the essence-existence distinction has played an important role in the history of philosophy since the ancient Greek period, and particularly in medieval Muslim, Christian, and Jewish philosophy. Whatever the definitive results of the historical search for the origins of this distinction, it would be very surprising if in the early history of its use Farabi and Ibn Sina are not accorded the lion's share. Of these two philosophers, Ibn Sina makes a more basic and extensive use of the distinction. As a result Farabi's contribution could easily be overshadowed, but it must not be overlooked.[29] There should be no doubt from the rest of this chapter that Farabi used "the distinction" explicitly, and with some sense of its importance.

Whether one is engaged in the search for the origins of "the distinction"—and we are not—or one is discussing it in Farabi's thought only, which we will attempt in this chapter, certain points should be kept clearly in mind.

One should first of all take note of the ambiguity of the word "distinction." For the expression "the essence-existence distinction" reigns over more than one meaning and haunts a number of philosophic issues that have bearing on the precise meanings of "to distinguish essence and existence." In other words, the expression covers a multitude of sins, and one cannot, as is sometimes done, use it innocently as if it stood for some single and simple intellectual transaction.

Our clarification will be in two stages. First we shall discuss the ambiguity of the term "distinction" in a rather broad way. Then we shall take up the main philosophic issues which are essence/existence-using to extract more precise meanings.

When a philosopher says that essence and existence are

[29]" . . . though Aristotle, Farabi or others may actually have made some vague remarks from which we could infer that they might have approved of such a distinction, this does not hold true for Ibn Sina." Parviz Morewedge, *The Metaphysica of Avicenna*, p. 179.

to be "distinguished," one minimal (and obvious) thing he has in mind is that the terms—or their delegate questions: 'What is X?' and 'Is there an X?'—have different senses. Thus "to distinguish" would mean "to declare a difference in meaning or designation." This is the sense we used when we introduced the discussion of this section. But for a metaphysician, of course, a minimal purpose in doing this is to point to a difference between two (related) aspects of being. This is part of the philosophic import in differentiating the designation of the two terms "essence" and "existence" and is what gives them different denotations.

Yet a metaphysician wants to do more. For in his *theory of being* he wants to tell us how the two aspects are related. Perhaps all would agree that the questions 'What is X?' and 'Is there an X?' have different meanings, and thus all agree that in this sense of "to distinguish" essence and existence are to be distinguished. Thus it is fair to assume that a distinction in this minimal sense would always be implied by theorists of being no matter how they, as theorists, conceive the relation between the two aspects. Even those who claim that in God essence and existence are "identified" could not even make their point unless the distinction in designation were implied. For surely that "identifier" is not saying that "essence" and "existence" are *synonyms*. Note, further, that one describes what that theorist does by the term "identified." One does not say he *confused* essence and existence.

In presenting Aristotle's views, one writer says: "Aristotle definitely does not uphold a distinction between essence and existence in what already exists."[30] One immediately realizes that the word "distinction" is used in a different sense from the one we have already discussed. It is perhaps the sense most pertinent in the literature. We shall call this second sense the making of a *theoretical* distinction, or a distinction in a theory. For here we are not talking about a semantical or logical distinction that may be used in a theory, rather it already is a theory. To oppose this theoretical distinction is to propose another theory of being, whereas

[30]Morewedge, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

to oppose the "distinction" in our first sense is just to be confused.

Roughly, at first, this second sense of "distinction" appears a little clearer in the relational adjective "distinct," which could mean "separate from." The meaning could also be suggested by the expression "the one *without* the other." For anyone to oppose the distinction he has to claim that in such and such cases essence and existence cannot be separated, the one cannot be "without" the other, or that the two are "identical." Thus to uphold or to oppose the *distinction* between essence and existence is to state a theory about how the two aspects of being are related. It should be clear so far that one can distinguish essence and existence in the first way—as everyone who knows the language must—and yet in his theory of being claim that the two aspects of being are or are not "separate," or, are or are not "identical."

What makes this second use of "distinction" far from easy to clarify at one stroke is that its precise meaning, or meanings, we should say, depend on each of the philosophic issues in which the essence-existence distinction (in the first sense) occurs. We shall now proceed to discuss some of these issues not only in order to clarify more precisely this second sort of "distinction," but also to examine Farabi's views on those issues. This will round out our analysis of Farabi's concept of being.

3

1. *God. Essence and Existence.*

One chance for the use of the distinction comes in some of Farabi's subdivisions of types of actual existence. This may be introduced first in terms that do not call on that distinction.

One way of subdividing what *al-mawjūd* in the restricted sense refers to is in terms of (a) what is now actual and (b) what is always actual.[31] If the "always" is taken literally

[31]*The Book of the Letters*, p. 121.

and strictly, then only God is in this class, whereas if the "now" is understood to mean at some time but not at another, then this applies to all things other than God.

This split is more fundamentally described by Farabi as the split between necessary *(lāzim)* and possible being *(mumkin)*.[32] This is also described as the difference between what is necessary through itself and what is necessary through another, for the possible is caused, and what is caused is necessary through another.[33]

Perhaps the historically most important way in which Farabi describes this dichotomy makes use of the distinction between essence and existence. The Necessary Being *(wājib al-wujūd)* is one "whose ipseity *(anniyyah)* is existence."[34] In the case of possible being existence is not an essential property. As a matter of fact, existence is not a property at all in the case of possible being.

This commits Farabi to the view that in the case of God existence (strictly speaking, necessary existence) is a property, a real predicate, and it is an exception he is prepared to make.

> Existence is one of the necessitating conditions of essences not one of their constitutives. But the decision in the case of the First, who has no essence except His existence, affirms that existence can have a reality as a property—and the property in this case is existence—although existence is not (ordinarily) so.[35]

Ordinarily, then, that is, in the case of things other than God, existence is not a property. Existence may appear as a logical predicate, but it cannot be a real predicate.[36] Here is

[32]Among other places, see *The Choice Questions*, p. 57; also *Commentaries*, p. 5, and *Explanation of the Treatise of Zeno*, p. 3.

[33]*The Choice Questions*, p. 57.

[34]*Commentaries*, p. 6, *Hearty Pleas*, p. 3. In the *Commentary on De Interpretatione*, p. 2061, line 24, *anniyyah* is used synonymously with *māhiyyah*. However, see p. 13 above, and note 20, Ch. 1, on *anniyyah*.

[35]*Commentaries*, p. 6.

[36]*Answers to Questions Put to Him* (No. 16), p. 90. See also Rescher's translation and discussion in *Studies in the History of Arabic Logic*, p. 39ff.

the relevant passage as we translate it from the Dieterici text:

> He was asked about the proposition 'Man exists' as to whether it has a predicate or not. He replied: this is a question on which the ancients and the moderns disagreed. Some said it has no predicate, some said it does. To my mind both are correct, each in a way. For this proposition, and its like, if it is considered by a natural scientist who investigates matters (of fact), then it has no predicate, for the existence of a thing is nothing but the thing itself, while a predicate has to be affirmed or denied of a thing. In this way it is not a proposition with a predicate. However, if a logician investigates it, then he finds it composed of two terms which are its parts and that it (the proposition) is liable to truth and falsehood. In this respect it has a predicate, and both assertions are correct, but each in a certain respect.[37]

To deny that existence is a property is to deny that existence can appear in the description of anything, and if the description is of the nature or essence of something, then this is to deny, as Farabi does, that existence can be "part of" the essence of anything. Here essence and existence are kept logically distinct. In the case of God an exception is made, and necessary or uncaused[38] existence is precisely what makes God the being He is and different from all else.

About this it is often said that in God essence and existence are "identified," or in Him the two "coincide."[39] They are no longer "distinct." This is not to say, of course, that 'Is X?' and 'What is X?' have lost their distinct meaning, for it is precisely because we have kept their meanings distinct that there is any point at all in saying that essence and existence are identical in God. As we pointed out earlier, we say that these two aspects have been identified (in God), not confused. Thus the expression "to identify essence and existence" can be misleading. What one does when one "identifies" essence and existence in God is to claim in one's theory of being that the reference to God's mode of existence as necessary or uncaused shall count as a proper answer to the question about His unique nature. It is to make God's existence defining of His nature, a logically necessary condition. This move is not allowed in an inquiry about the nature of anything else.

[37] *Answers to Questions Put to Him, loc. cit.* Our translation differs very slightly from that of Rescher.

[38] For the rendering of necessary existence as uncaused existence, see *A Treatise on Establishing Distinctions*, p. 2.

[39] See the article *"manṭiḳ"* by Van den Bergh, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. III, p. 259.

In the context of this first philosophical issue of whether existence ever "enters into" the nature of a thing, to distinguish essence and existence, or to separate one from the other, is to keep them logically distinct, in the sense that the existence of X is forbidden from being used in answering the question about the nature of X. To *identify* the two, in the context of this issue, is to make the existence of X constitutive of its nature. We shall see in our chapter on Ibn Rushd and Mulla Sadra that the "identification" of essence and existence in contingent things means something else.

2. *Essences and Existents.*

One speaks of the relation between essence and existence in the controversy over whether essences "exist" independently of individual things.

This sort of issue concerns the relation between an essence *qua universal*, e.g., redness, and particular things, not the relation between the essence of some particular thing and the existence of that thing. The latter contrast is what concerned us in the case of God. Furthermore, and strictly speaking, it is the relation between an essence or essences and existents. It is only by abstraction that one can speak of a relation between essence and existence.

The issue here, as it concerns the more precise meanings of "distinction," is whether essences or universals have an ontological mode of existence that is *independent of* ("by themselves") or *separate from* individual existents, and independent of the human mind. Thus, to uphold a "distinction" on this issue is to maintain the *ontological separateness* of essences from things. To opposite it is to deny that essences can exist independently of individual things (unless it be in the mind, and this is the subject of the issue after the next).

Moreover, in the previous issue the essence of something was the primary point of reference, and it was the exist-

ence of that thing that was being considered for inclusion or exclusion in its essence. And it was this feature of what is to be admitted into the nature of a thing that led us to speak of the logical character of the meaning of "distinction" under this philosophic issue. On the other hand, in the second issue the point of consideration is reversed. For the existent is now posited as the point of reference, and it is the possibility of essences apart from the individual existents which is being discussed. And the question of whether two sorts of beings are separable in their mode of existence gives the ontological character to the meaning of "distinction" under this second issue.

Now Farabi has less to say than Ibn Sina on the nominalist-realist-conceptualist controversy, although, as with most other issues, the seeds which germinate in Ibn Sina are contained in Farabi.

We agree with Madkour[40] that it would be difficult to fit any of the Muslim philosophers neatly into any of the traditional positions in Western philosophy on the issue of universals. According to Farabi, ideas or forms have a threefold mode of existence: (1) Apart from things, but "in God,"[41] (2) in things,[42] and (3) abstracted, in the (human) mind.[43] This seems to combine elements of realism and conceptualism while avoiding nominalism. We shall postpone the fuller discussion of essences as universals until our chapter on Ibn Sina.

3. *Identification in Things.*

In some theories of being, essence and existence are said to be "identical" in (contingent) things. Their identity in things is said to contrast with their difference in the mind. This in effect acknowledges that there continues to be a difference in meaning or definition even when there is identity in the ontological realm.

[40]*L'Organon d'Aristote dans le monde arabe*, pp. 142-43.

[41]In Dieterici, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29, and p. 47.

[42]*Ibid.*, pp. 87, 89; see also *Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City*, p. 47.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 42ff.

Furthermore, under the previous issue the essence is the universal, and the question was whether universal essences could in any way exist separately or independently of individual things. But for the identity theory before us now, the essence in question is the essence of a particular individual thing, the essence as instantiated in this or that particular thing. The identification thesis is that in any given individual thing *its* essence and *its* existence are one and the same ontological fact about that thing. This theory of being is a kind of ontological monism which rejects the view that a thing is composed of two elements, essence and existence, the one added to the other. Ibn Sina is said to have held this compositional view.[44] Ibn Rushd fought against it. So did Mulla Sadra.

One thing that could be meant by the identity of essence and existence in things is this. The aspect of a thing, a horse, which we refer to as the existence of this horse, and the aspect which is the instantiation of horseness (here-now) are one and the same aspect of the horse. Or, in other words, the two statements: 'There is a horse (here-now)' and 'Horseness is instantiated (in this horse)' report one and the same ontological fact. In Ibn Rushd, as we shall see, this identification appears usually in terms of a thesis about the relation of existence to "a thing." Existence is not an element added to a thing, rather "it is that thing." In Sadra it is stated more explicitly as the identity between the essence of a thing and the existence of that thing.

Earlier we explained the identity of essence and existence in God as the view that God's necessary existence is (the "is" of identity) His essence. The context in which one asserts this identity relation is one which inquires into the nature of God. However, in the case of contingent things we cannot speak of the existence of a horse as the essence of a horse. Therefore, if the existence and essence of a

[44]We shall see in Chapter Six whether this is true, and, if so, in what sense. One would have said that Farabi maintained the same view of things as composed of essence and existence, except that the most explicit source is *The Gems of Wisdom* in Dieterici, *op. cit.*, p. 66f, and doubt has been expressed about Farabi's authorship of this work (See Note 1 above).

horse are to be related in any positive way, let alone identified, the context cannot be the concern with the nature of a horse. Existence stands no chance of even coming to our attention except to be pushed aside. Rather, the question of whether essence and existence are identical in contingent things comes into the discussion when the issue is whether essence and existence are to be construed in the manner of ingredients out of which things are composed.

In any case the sense of "identical" here is one where the two descriptions, one in the vocabulary of essence ("Horseness is instantiated") and one in the vocabulary of existence ('There is a horse') refer to one and the same ontological fact. The dual description does not imply an ontological duality, rather there is one and the same state of affairs denoted by each.

4. *Essence, Conception, and Existence.*

One form of the relation between essence and existence is raised by the following question. Can one conceive or entertain in thought the essence of something without regard to the issue of that thing's existence? Here one attends exclusively to *what* a thing is, bracketing for the moment the question of whether it exists. That thing may happen to be an existing thing or it may be fictitious. A more restricted variant of this would be whether one can entertain in thought the essence of what one knows or believes does not in fact exist.[45] In either case it is hard to see how any philosopher would not give an affirmative answer. Those who would suggest that when we think of something, then it must exist, at least in the mind, are talking about something else. The original questions of this section concerned objective existence.

Farabi would think it possible to entertain in thought some essence which is not instantiated,[46] and both he and

[45]Both variants are different from the problem in classical empiricism of whether one can conceive or imagine something if the elements out of which that conception is constructed have not at the same time been derived from sense experience.

[46]See *Commentaries*, pp. 17, 19; also *The Gems of Wisdom* in Dieterici, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

Ibn Sina would claim this to be possible because existence is, according to them, not a constitutive element of the nature of anything. But here there is a confusion. For even if existence were to be part of the essence which we have in our mind, it still would not follow that the idea of that essence-cum-existent has a counterpart in reality. The *idea* of God as a-being-whose-essence-is-existence is no exception.[47]

To say that essence and existence are distinct under the present issue is not to talk about how the two aspects of being are related by themselves, as it were, without the intervention of our thinking. Rather, it is simply to claim that we can entertain in thought the nature of something either without regard to the question of its existence, or when it does not exist.[48] And one can claim that this thought "acrobatic" is possible regardless of how else one conceives the relation between essence and existence. For whether according to one's world-picture essences subsist by themselves or are only in things, whether existence is or is not part of the nature of a thing, I can still sit under a tree and entertain in thought whatever I fancy. I can even compose in my mind the idea of a being whose essence is necessary existence, or whose essence is possible existence, or whose essence is neither; and there may or may not be existents answering to these ideas or essences in my mind.

It should be noted that the current issue has a one-way character to it, for we usually do not ask whether we can conceive of an existent that has no essence. If we do, then we have a different question on our hands. And the latter

[47]See "Existence, Predication and the Ontological Argument" by Jerome Shaffer, *Mind*, New Series 71, 283 (1962). Of course it is a different matter whether Farabi or Ibn Sina would accept this (see Chapter Five below, pp. 84-85).

[48]This is the sense Morewedge has in mind when, summarizing Ibn Sina, he says that "essence is different from existence, for we can analyze essences wthout referring to any existents." Earlier he says: "In this sense, existence and essence are not identical," *op. cit.*, p. 185. The "difference" and lack of "identity" here between essence and existence refer to the possibility of thinking about the one, essence, without referring to the other, existence, nor implying anything about whether existence obtains or not.

question, whatever it means, would be still different from the question of whether there can *be* (versus whether we can conceive of) pure existents—some kind of counterpart to pure essences. Two cases come to mind which sound like claims that there are existents which have no essence. First, God is said to be pure existence without essence *(māhiyyah)*. But the lack of essence here is a technical point. 'God has no essence' means that He has no genus-cum-differentia, which is what other beings have.[49] All would rush to tell us, however, that God is the necessary being; that is *what* He is. As Farabi would say: "God has no essence except that He is the Necessary Being." The other case is the claim by people like Sartre that man has no essence; first he exists and then gives himself an essence. But the denial of essence here also means something special. Man has no essence or blueprint set for him before-hand (by God). Thus it looks as if one can safely retain the ancient view that to be is to be something.

5. *Knowledge and Existence.*

In the *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle asks whether it is possible to know what a thing is without knowing that it is. Although one cannot say that this question especially preoccupies Farabi, we shall briefly discuss it here in its Aristotelian setting, but only in order to note yet another issue in which essence and existencg are related within a theory and another manner in which the relation may be seen.

In asking this question Aristotle is so far assuming at least a distinction in meaning between what a thing is and whether it is. But then in the affirmative answer to his query he explains: ". . . for no one knows the nature of what does not exist."[50] Here in his theory about the nature of

[49]*Hearty Pleas*, p. 3. When Ghazali criticizes the philosophers' claim that God has no essence and says "Existence without quiddity or essence cannot be conceived . . . for to deny quiddity is to deny the real essence . . . nothing remains but the word 'existence'," Ibn Rushd, in reply, explains the Philosophers' claim: "But the philosophers do not assume an existent absolutely without a quiddity: they only assume that it has not a quiddity like the quiddities of the other existents." Ibn Rushd *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, van den Bergh translation, Vol. I., pp. 239-40.

[50]*Posterior Analytics*, Book II, Chapter 7, 92b, 3-7.

knowledge he is making an assumption about the logical relation between our knowledge of the essence of a thing and its existence: that our knowledge of the former entails the latter. The knowledge of which he speaks, "genuine knowledge," as he calls it, is a knowledge of the "essential nature" of things. Of course, "one can know the meaning of the phrase or name 'goat-stag' but not what the essential nature of a goat-stag is."[51] There are goats and there are stags, but there are no goat-stags.

It would be imprecise to say that Aristotle's claim here is *in itself* a claim about the relation between essence and existence. For as we have just seen, it is directly a claim about the relation between *our knowledge* of the essence of X and the existence of X. If one speaks of "inseparability" here, it is the sort characteristic of logical entailment. It is our knowledge of X of the special sort (scientific knowledge) which entails the existence of X.

This inseparability of our knowledge of essence from existence in the end presupposes an Aristotelian doctrine which bears more directly on the relation between essence and existence: the ontological inseparability of those two aspects of being. This serves as the implied premise in the passage from the knowledge of essences to the existence of what answers to them.

6. *Predication and Existence.*

In taking up the question of the existential import of certain propositions we shall select only the case of singular propositions. For our point is not to explore the subject as a whole, but to give ourselves another issue for the clarification of the relation between essence and existence. For this reason we include this topic here and not in our chapter on Ibn Sina, in spite of the fact that the latter philosopher has material of interest on the subject. Besides, this will release our next chapter for other, more central, issues in Ibn Sina's thought. In the present chapter it will be obvious that Farabi essentially reiterates the Aristotelian position. But since our interest here is to explain the meanings of "distinction" in talking about the relation

[51]*Ibidem.*

between essences and existence, as well as to analyze Farabi's thought on that relation, the coincidence with Aristotle will be assumed, but not belabored.

a. At the purely subjective level a proposition is considered by Farabi simply as the connecting of two ideas, or "essences" as he calls them, entertained by the mind of the "proposer": the idea of some subject and the idea of some predicate. At this level the *wjd* derivative which functions as copula is purely syntactical and must be stripped of any existential function. In *'Zayd yūjadu 'ādilan'*, at this level of consideration, the actual existence of Zayd and his actually being just are neither affirmed nor implied.[52]

In effect, the point so far amounts to having the subject and its properties entertained in thought without regard to the question of the truth of the proposition formed, or the implied existence of what is referred to by the subject-term. This makes it subject matter for our previous issue, the third, on the possibility of conceiving essence independently of the question of existence, except that now the point is recast in the language of subjective ideas in the mind and the logical terms of a proposition and its units. Farabi could have chosen examples of assertions about chimeras, except that his point has more force since the Zayd example he uses is the very one that, given another level of consideration, would be imbued with existential import.

Due to the ambiguity in the function of *wjd* derivatives as between the purely copulative, syntactical, on the one hand, and the predicative, existential, on the other, Farabi maintains that some people have been led to believe that statements like 'Zayd is *(yūjad)* just' necessarily imply that Zayd exists outside one's thought. Similarly the contradictory 'Zayd is not just' is taken to deny that the real Zayd is just. Since the affirmative was taken to require the existence of Zayd to be true, it was then thought that the affirmative would be false if Zayd had long since died.[53]

[52]*The Book of the Letters*, pp. 125-27, where the point is made of this level before introducing truth-value and the question of existence into the dicussion. The *Commentary on De Interpretaione*, pp. 160ff, on the other hand, introduces truth-value from the start.

[53]*The Book of the Letters*, pp. 126f.

In view of the fact that in other places in his writing Farabi concurs with what he has just declared an unjustified inference by some, the explanation would seem to be that Farabi in this section of *The Book of the Letters* is considering the proposition, first on a purely mental level. Thus his point should be understood not as denying that the predicative construction can ever have existential import, but merely that the copulative-syntactical function, *as such*, of *wjd* derivatives does not serve nor imply an existential function. This should be clear from the fact that in this section of *The Book of the Letters* he is discussing only the copulative function of *wjd* derivatives, having just finished discussing, each in turn, the other functions. However, it must be said that although he had talked about *"mawjūd"* as a term, meaning existence, he does not in *The Book of the Letters* discuss the use of *wjd* derivatives when they occur in a predicative construction which has existential import. For this we have to turn to the *Commentary On De Interpretatione.*

b. In this book, Farabi immediately brings in the truth-value and existential import of both affirmative and negative predication. This he must do, for after all the usual point of joining subjects and predicates is not just to delight in mental collages, but to describe the world.

Now in a straightforward predicative construction such as 'Homer is a poet' it is possible to assign truth-value to that proposition even when it is the case that Homer does not now exist. Similarly one can *deny* a predicate of some subject, as in 'Zayd is not a wall'—and this would be true—when it is the case that Zayd is before us alive and kicking. Thus affirmative (singular) predication *can* be true when the subject does not now exist, just as negative predicative judgments can be true when the subject does exist. Of course it would be false simply to assert the existence of Homer when he does not now exist, or to deny Zayd's existence absolutely *(ghayr mawjūd 'ala l-iṭlāq)* when he does.[54]

Farabi explains in the *Commentary On De Interpretatione*, that in a predicative construction the "is," or *wjd*

[54]*Commentary on De Interpretatione*, p. 161.

derivative, "bears on the subject accidentally"; the attribution is "for the sake of what is other than the self of the subject."[55] It does not affirm the reality of his individual essence, but merely tells *how* he is. It does not affirm the being of Homer, but his being a poet.[56] Homer's being a poet can be true regardless of whether Homer exists now or has long since been dead. Thus from 'Homer is a poet' one cannot infer 'Homer is'.

c. Suppose the *wjd* derivative were existential and in a sense did "bear on the very self" of the subject, but not in the way an essential predicate does, for example as in 'Man is rational', then one possibility would be 'Zayd *yūjad mawjūd*'. More likely the less awkward 'Zayd *yūjad*' would be used, and the *yūjad* being a verb would make a copula unnecessary. Here, Farabi would say, the *yūjad* is itself a predicate and is not functioning "for the sake of another" as in 'Zayd is *(yūjad)* just.'[57] However, whether it is 'Zayd *yūjad mawjūd*' or simply 'Zayd *yūjad*', we no longer have the case of singular affirmative predication with existential import. We have straightforward existential statements.

d. More complicated than 'Homer is a poet' (in "b." above) is the case of the two pairs of statements which Aristotle considers in the *Categories*:[58] 'Socrates is well' and 'Socrates is ill' on the one hand, and 'Socrates is ill' and 'Socrates is not ill' on the other. The latter are more truly contradictory. If one in this pair is true, the other would have to be false, and this would be the case whether Socrates exists or not. However, the statements of the first pair could both be false if Socrates did not exist. Farabi repeats these points in his *Commentary On De Interpretatione*,[59] using the same examples. Farabi also considers the two negative statements 'Socrates is not just' and 'Socrates is not unjust'. Both would be true after his death.[60]

[55]*Ibid.*, p. 44.

[56]Aristotle *De Interpretatione*, Chapter 11, 21a, lines 25 ff; Farabi *Commentary on De Interpretatione*, 160f.

[57]*Commentary on De Interpretatione*, pp. 44-45.

[58]13b, 26-32.

[59]. P. 203.

[60]*Ibid.*, p. 214

Farabi maintains, then, that affirmative singular propositions which are not "de-existentialized" by some consideration (as in "a." and "b." above) cannot be true if the subject does not in fact exist. Of course they may be false if the subject does exist. On the other hand, negative singular propositions may be true if the subject does not exist.

In Farabi's discussion of negative predication he distinguishes, following Aristotle, between statements like 'S is not P' and 'S is non-P'.[61] One difference may be seen in the following. What is non-rational is still animal; what is not rational may not be. Moreover, 'S is non-P' is affirmative,[62] but is not contradicted by 'S is not P.' This is unlike the relation between the pair 'S is a just person' and its contradictory 'S is not a just person'. In the case of the second pair, if one is true, the other has to be false. But for the first pair this is not so. Suppose "this wood" were the subject. Then we have: 'This wood is a just person', which is false. But so is 'This wood is a non-just person'. But they could not both be false if they were contradictories.[63]

By way of confirming further the affirmative character of 'S is non-P', Farabi maintains that the *denial* of that statement 'S is not non-P' is *true* if the subject does *not* exist,[64] and thus behaves like 'Socrates is not just'. For if Socrates does not exist, he cannot even be just.

e. We come now to the question of the precise nature of the relation between essence and existence and the meaning of "distinction" as it relates to the issue of the existential import of predication. Very briefly, if one maintains, as Farabi does, that certain propositions in the predicative construction have existential import, then the meaning is as follows: the existential statement is logically entailed by the statement in the predicative construction.

[61]The form "non-P" is called *al-ism al-ghayr muḥaṣṣal* (the indefinite), (Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, Chapter 2, 16a, 30-32, Farabi, *Commentary on De Interpretatione*, 32, 37). In this term of negation in Arabic is either *"ghayr"* or *"lā"*; for "S is not P," it is usually *"laysa."* See Goichon *Livre des directives et remarques* n. 6, p. 126.

[62]*Commentary on De Interpretatione*, p. 123.

[63]*Ibid.*, p. 124.

[64]*Commentary on De Interpretatione*, p. 125.

The next step is to connect predication with essence so that we can state the relation as obtaining between essence and existence. As we have seen (in "a." above) a proposition is, at the least, the linking in the mind of "two essences," *(māhiyyatān)*, as Farabi calls the subject and predicate at this level. The subject as an individual would have an individual essence, or *dhāt* as entertained in the mind. The predicate would name an essence, or a universal, as implied in "just," "healthy," and so forth. In those cases where 'S is P' entails 'S is' one can speak—tenuously, I must admit—of a relation between essence and existence. But it is a relation brought on by the relation of logical entailment between two propositions. If one wishes to speak of a relation between essence and existence here, it is only via the relation which obtains between the two propositions. The logical entailment or logical inseparability could be said to bring on, indirectly, a sort of inseparability between some essence and its existence, if one accepts the relation explained between essence and the predicative proposition on the one hand, and existence and the inferred existential proposition, on the other.

It must be noted of course that in the examples of propositions with existential import it is the existence of the subject which is inferred. The existence of the essence denoted by the predicate would be smuggled in with the existence of the subject-counterpart if the predicative proposition is known to be true.

7. To sum up. From our analytic survey we have come upon the following meanings for "to maintain (or deny) the distinction between essence and existence."

1. To assign different designations to "essence" and "existence," or to the questions 'What is X?' and 'Is X?' To deny the distinction would be to declare the two terms synonymous, but this is to be confused about the language. We can think of no one who has rejected the distinction, in this sense, between essence and existence. There is no mercy here. One observes the distinction, or one is mixed up.

2. In one's philosophical theory one may claim that essence and existence are or are not separable. The separation or non-separation can be as to a) whether existence is part of the essence of anything; b) whether essences subsist apart from individual existents; c) whether one can conceive of an essence apart from the question of its instantiation; d) whether knowledge of the essence of X requires the existence of X; and e) whether affirmative and negative propositions have existential import. These varieties of separation or non-separation yielded two specific types of connection: the ontological separateness or non-separateness in the mode of being of essence and existence (primarily 2, but presupposed in 4) and the logical relatedness of implicates (1, 4 and 5). For issue 3 there is an implied separation between the realm of conception by the mind, and the realm of objective existence. This turned out to be neutral with respect to the issue of ontological separateness.

3. Finally, in the case where the distinction and with it the compositional picture of contingent things are rejected in the name of the identity of essence and existence, we still have a semantical differentiation between essence and existence, but a one and sameness in ontological reference.

CHAPTER FIVE
IBN SINA

1

In Ibn Sina one does not quite find Farabi's sense of the vocabulary-for-being problem. One simply finds remarks on the differences between Arabic, on the one hand, and Greek and Persian, on the other, on the subject of the copula. Perhaps Ibn Sina felt that his predecessor has aleady discussed the related issues and adopted a sensible policy about them, for in his Arabic writings Ibn Sina seems to share Farabi's preference for the *wjd* derivatives: *yūjad, al-wujūd,* and *al-mawjūd* in both logic and metaphysics.[1] However, Ibn Sina sometimes uses vocabulary not especially patronized by Farabi for some of the sub-concepts of being, such as *al-'ays, al-ithbāt, al-ḥāsil, ta'yīn,* and so on.[2]

In his Persian work *The Book of Scientific Knowledge*[3] he uses *hasti* for the general sense of being, and reserves the terms *"wujūd"* and *"mawjūd"* for existence. This certainly made it possible to avoid some likely confusion in those passages where one has to speak of being, existence, and the copula all with *wjd* derivatives. But that confusion, if it does occur, is self-inflicted and avoidable. For as we have seen in the first and third chapters, the different func-

[1]In the logic sections of his works Ibn Sina mentions the fact that a copula is not necessary for the construction of the Arabic sentence, and that such terms as *huwa* and *kāna* may be used or omitted. (See *The Book of Remarks and Admonitions,* Vol. I., Pt. 1, faṣl 7, p. 285.)

[2]In this area one just defers to Amelie-Marie Goichon and her thorough works on Ibn Sina's philosophy and philosophic vocabulary. See especially *Distinction* and *Lexique, passim.*

[3]We have referred to the English translation of the metaphysics section of the *Dānish Nāma-i 'alā'ī* by Morewedge and have benefited from the Introduction and Commentary.

tions of "to be" could be served by words stemming from different roots. Thus *kaynūnah* could have been used for the general sense of being, *al-wujud* for existence, and so on. In any case, for both the Persian and the Arabic, merely to have two different root words for two different things or different aspects is not *thereby* to have supplied a precise distinction, any more than to have two words stemming from the same root necessarily lands one in inaccuracy or confusion.

Ibn Sina clearly makes up for the relative lack of preoccupation with the linguistics of being by his profound sense for being and its primacy in metaphysics. The philosophic reader of Ibn Sina is also amply rewarded by the abundance of arguments for the claims he makes. In this respect Ibn Sina is a veritable philosophers' philosopher.

2

Being

1. One of the things stressed by Ibn Sina about being is its primary familiarity. In the psychology of knowledge this means that it is a primary intuition of the soul. It can impress itself upon the soul in a direct and primary way.[4] It can be known without the mediation of any other principle or concept. This it shares with the necessary and with "thing."[5]

In the analysis of ideas the idea of being is primitive. There is nothing more familiar than it in terms of which it can be explained. Thus no proposed definition of being can be truly informative, and all attempts at defining "being" are essentially circular.[6] For one will have to use terms with equivalent or near-equivalent extension, like *shay'*

[4] *"Tartasimu r-tisāman awwaliyyan," The Book of Healing,* I, 5, p. 29. (Note on references to *The Book of Healing:* "I" for the chapter *(maqālah),* "5" for the section *(faṣl).* All references are to the metaphysics portion *(al-ilāhiyyāt).* When the reference is to the second or later volumes of the printed edition, this will be indicated.)

[5] *The Book of Healing, ibidem.*

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

(thing) and its equivalents such as *'amr'* (matter, thing) or *mā* (that which) or *al-ladhi* (the one which), in order to initially set up before us that to which "being" preeminently applies. But these are all terms which invoke or presuppose being.

This feature of definitional primitiveness is repeated in turn for the word *"shay',"* which is considered by Ibn Sina as an extentional synonym for "being," and with it the same circularity is encountered. Suppose one considers the traditional definition of *"shay'"* current among the theologians as "that about which something could be said" *(al-ladhī yaṣuḥḥu 'anhu l-khabar).* In this formula we have already used "that . . . which" *(al-ladhī),* which is a synonym for *shay'.* How, then, can *"shay'"* be properly defined if the definiens is itself defined by the concept of *shay'?* The above definition would simply amount to saying that a *shay'* is a *shay'* about which something could be said.[7]

2. The primary familiarity of *al-mawjūd*—the primacy of its knowability and its primitiveness in definition—is a function of another and more important feature of being: its generality. For there is nothing (no thing) in which being is not involved.[8]

Sometimes Ibn Sina speaks of *al-mawjūd* as the most general concept without mentioning whether anything else shares this privilege.[9] At other times, however, *al-mawjūd* appears as *one* of the most general concepts, sharing generality with *"al-shay', al-wāḥid, wa ghayruhu* ("the one, the thing, and the like"),[10] or *al-wiḥdah* (unity),[11] or *al-wāḥid* (the one).[12] However, "the one" must be said to have a derivative or parasitic generality in that it itself is one of the special accidents of being *(al-'awāriḍ al-khaṣṣah).*[13] *Al-*

[7] *Ibidem.*

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[9] ". . . for there is nothing more general *(a'amm)* than *al-mawjūd," ibid.*, 2, p. 14. The same point is made about *hasti* in *The Book of Scientific Knowledge (Dānish-nāma),* Morewedge-translated text, p. 3.

[10] *The Book of Healing,* I, 5, p.30.

[11] *Ibid.*, 2, p. 15.

[12] *Ibid.*, III, 2, p. 103.

[13] *Ibid.*, I, 2, p. 13.

mawjūd is the logically prior concept, and consequently its generality is also logically prior. In *The Book of Salvation* (p. 220) we are explicitly told that *al-wujūd* is more general than the one and the many.

Being, Thing, and the Nothing

For Ibn Sina being and thing are co-extensive, and this is most easily seen in their opposition to the nothing, the *ghayr mawjūd* or *al-'adam al-muṭlaq*. The *mawjūd* is either in the mind or in reality (or in both), and that which is in neither is not a *mawjūd*, not a *shay'*:[14] The case of being in reality raises no unusual problems. Being in the mind is more complicated because it seems that one can think about the Nothing, and this would seem to make the Nothing into a thing by giving it a reality in the mind.

In rejecting this possibility Ibn Sina argues that when we speak of some thing, X, as in the mind, it must be possible for that thing to be the subject of real predicates. Absolute *'adam* can only be talked about in pure negation, and therefore, although it can be subject of discourse, and thus in a sense in the mind, it is not the positive or informative discourse which is necessary for identification as *shay'*.[15] Another argument that Ibn Sina uses runs as follows: When we say 'The Nothing is P', if the P is a *real* predicate then to apply it to the Nothing, the latter will have to *be*, which is logically impossible. On the other hand, if the P is not, then how can it be for (i.e., belong to) the Nothing (or anything else) if it *is not* in itself.[16] The Nothing can neither be described nor known, nor can it possibly stand for anything outside the self.[17]

But even though *shay'* and *mawjūd* in their most general sense are co-extensive, they are not equal in logical priority. Although whatever is called a being is called a thing and whatever is called thing must have being, to be a thing is *defined* in terms of having being, but the converse does

[14] *Ibid.*, 5, p. 32.
[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 32f.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 33.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

not hold here. Thus the two concepts are logically connected, or *mutalāzimān* in Ibn Sina's word,[18] but there is a one-way priority in favor of being.

There are, of course, more restricted uses of *mawjūd* and *shay'*, especially of *mawjūd*, which break the co-extensiveness established at the level of their most general sense.

The existential uses of *mawjūd*, whether in the mind or in reality, first come to mind. Then there is a non-existential sense. "Each thing *(amr)* has a *ḥaqīqah* by which it is what it is. The *ḥaqīqah* of a triangle is that it is triangle, of white that it is white."[19] This is the special being, *al-wujūd al-khāṣṣ*, and is different from the existential *wujūd*, which is here called *al-wujūd al-ithbatī*.[20] To the latter the word *shay'* also applies, in the more restricted sense.[21] This is also called *shay'iyyah*.[22]

The existential-essential uses of the vocabulary we have just briefly mentioned bring us to the discussion of "the essence-existence distinction." Here we are not going to discuss all that Ibn Sina has to say on that subject, nor are we going to go seriatem through all the issues of the previous chapter that invoke that distinction. Rather, we shall concentrate on two major topics on which Ibn Sina's discussion is of some historical importance: (1) the accidentiality or "externality" of existence and (2) the relation of essence to existence in God.

3

Essence and Existence

Ibn Sina has been critcized by several writers[23] for having

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[19] *Ibid.*, V, p. 31.
[20] *Ibidem.*
[21] As is implied in *ibidem.*
[22] See Goichon, *Distinction*, p. 29.
[23] By Ibn Rushd (see the next chapter); by Gilson in *Thomism* 5th ed., p. 56n.; Goichon, *Distinction*, p. 136; Raeymaeker in *Avicenna Commemoration Volume*, p. 124.

given ontological priority to essence and thus violated his Aristotelian commitment to the ontological priority of substance. For Ibn Sina, following Farabi,[24] clearly refers to existence as non-constituent of essence. It is an "accident" added to the essence (of created things).

As far as I know Rahman[25] is the first writer to have pointed out a confusion committed by Ibn Sina's critics and pointed out the inaccurate understanding of his philosophy on this point. In what follows I shall support Rahman's general conclusion, although my presentation will be somewhat different from his.

Rahman contends that Ibn Sina's critics have confused two distinct contexts in which essence and existence are related: the logical and the metaphysical, and that the sense of "accident," when Ibn Sina says that existence is an accident added to essence, has been misunderstood. In *logic* a predicate is called accidental if it is not part of the essence of the subject. In this context all accidental predicates are equally marginal to essence. Thus "is white" and "exists" are equally "external." If this logical sense of accidental is taken to be the relation intended in the *metaphysical* analysis of the individual substances that make up this world, then the Aristotelian notion of substance as—in one conception—the concrete existing individual (the horse) would be shattered. Ibn Sina's doctrine, in the eyes of Thomist critics in particular, gives priority to essences and is an implicit endorsement of essentialism. This not only compromises Ibn Sina's status as an Aristotelian, but also contradicts explicit texts of his own about the metaphysical priority of the existing individual.

The gist of our analysis will be this. (1) According to Ibn Sina, in any definition—except for the case of God, which we will consider later—existence is always external to, always an accident of, essence. Two doctrines in Ibn Sina are responsible for this: first, the conception of what an

[24]Farabi, *Explanation of the Treatise of Zeno*, p. 4.

[25]Fazlur Rahman, "Essence and Existence in Avicenna," in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. by Richard Hunt, Raymond Klibansky, and Lotte Labowsky Chondon: The Warburg Institute, University of London, (1958), Vol. IV, pp. 1-16.

essence is "in itself," which as we shall see excludes more than just existence from a *given* essence. Second is the view accepted from Farabi that existence is not a property, and hence can never be part of the nature of any created thing. In logic,then, existence is opposed to any given substance as subject. It is an accident in a technical sense, as Rahman rightly contends.[26]

(2) On the other hand, in metaphysics existence is not an accident of substance, either of the idea of substance, or of a given substance before us now. When Ibn Sina speaks of the accidentiality of existence in metaphysics, he is not advocating the priority of essences, but underscoring the *contingency* of created things.

4

The "Externality" of Existence

Both Farabi and Ibn Sina assign to essences three modes of being: in themselves, in things, and in the mind. As is often the case, Ibn Sina's discussion is more elaborate and philosophically more interesting. We shall now consider his discussion of essences "in themselves."

1. Before we ask what ontological status is conferred on an essence by Ibn Sina's "in itself," there is a perfectly straightforward logical sense that he has in mind. Now it is most important for understanding this sense that we consider an essence not qua essence, but qua essence *of something:* of animal (animality), of man (humanity), and so forth. For our first point about the "in itself" does not apply to the essence qua essence but always to the essence of something. It is thus incorrect to speak of the idea or the essence as "in itself." It is the idea *of horse*, the idea *of man* that is being considered "in itself." This is clearly implicit in Ibn Sina's discussion in *The Healing*[27] which is our main source for the moment.

[26]Rahman, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

[27]*The Book of Healing*, V, I, pp. 195-206.

The force of this minimal sense of "in itself" is purely logical-semantical. If you consider the essence of horse, there are certain "constituents" of that essence without which the idea would not be the idea of horse. But at the same time there is much that is excluded or accidental. Existence is not being singled out or picked on, as it were. The obvious excludables would be such predicates as being brown or on the field or in the stable. One might call these the relevant excludables, in that these predicates, accidental though they may be, are nonetheless what could properly apply at one time or another. In contrast, one can think of excludables which could never apply to horse, for example being triangular or crunchy.

Now existence, universal, the one, the many are also to be excluded, although these might appropriately apply at some point or another. But they cannot be part of the idea *of horse.* The idea of horse may apply to some existent, but that fact would not make it part of the idea *of horse.* Similarly, the idea may be universal, or considered by the mind in its universal dimension. But the idea would be universal not because it is the idea of horse, but in virtue of another or additional respect—namely, that it applies to *many individuals* who answer to the description of horse.[28] In other words universality is characteristic of an idea qua idea not qua idea of X or Y. Thus existence—or instantiation, as Rahman prefers—[29] and universality do not make nor are part of what makes the idea of horse the idea *of horse.* We propose, therefore, to equate Ibn Sina's "the idea of X *in itself*," at this level of our discussion, with "the idea of X *qua X.*"

It should be clear now why horse-ship (or any other essence) "in itself," considered from a logical-semantical standpoint, does not include existence. Whether an essence refers to actual existents or not is logically external or incidental to the conceptual identification of that essence. One can say that this is true even of the definition of

[28]The definition of "horse" and the definition of "universal" are not the same, nor does the one enter in the definition of the other: *ibid.*, p. 196, where arguments are given for that separation.

[29]Op. cit., p. 8.

the term "existent." Whether there are existents or not is logically incidental to what "existent" means, altough contextually the existence of some subject may be implied.

There should be no doubt that Ibn Sina gives the notion of "an idea in itself" this minimal logical-semantical sense. For when he is telling us what is excluded from horse-ship, animality, humanity, he explicitly speaks of what is excluded from the *meaning* or *definition* of each of these.[30] If this point applies to *every* essence, then Ibn Sina would have completed the logical or conceptual "separation" of essence and existence, as did Farabi before him and Kant after him. In this context one can say that Ibn Sina advocates the "distinction" or logical "separation" of existence from essence.

What we have said so far about considering ideas "in themselves" does not commit Ibn Sina to any view of the *ontological* separateness of essences, nor to the ontological priority of these. For this way of regarding ideas is neutral as to the ontological status they may have. "Man qua man, that is in terms of definition and meaning, is nothing but man."[31] Nothing will change this. Even if one takes the *idea* of man *qua universal,* i.e., the idea of man together with the addition: "applies to many," one can still consider the idea of man "in itself" (or man qua man), and "that which has (received) the addition is still itself."[32] The same is true of the addition of other incidentals, even the total set of accidents which delimit an existing individual. It must be clear that these additions—"applies to many," "exists in a certain time and place" are incidental or accidental to the idea as logically-semantically considered, for it is "man" in terms of its "definition and meaning" of which Ibn Sina speaks here. From this perspective "is white" is as accidental to being human as "exists." But this does not mean, as we shall see, that with respect to an individual human being, when con-

[30]*The Book of Healing, ibid.*, pp. 195ff, especially p. 201, where we read (literally translated): "Man qua man, that is in terms of definition and meaning, is nothing but man."

[31]*Ibid.*, p. 201.

[32]*Ibidem.*

sidered from the point of view of metaphysics, "exists" and "is white" are *equally* "external."

The adventures of an idea into the many possible composite modes of being (universal, particular, in the mind, in reality, etc.) do not alter the fact that it can still be considered in its simplest or most uncomposed ontological status: in itself, simply as the idea of X. To complete this absolute mode which he has been calling "in itself," Ibn Sina argues in a subtle passage that even the perspective from which one considers an idea is not part of that idea. Thus the consideration of the idea of man "in itself" is not part of the idea of man.[33] This is the antidote to the possibility that the logical-semantical perspective might relativize essences and give them a status merely in relation to man's thinking or in relation to a particular language.

With such an absolute status completed, and set against all the contrasting manifold composite modes of being in the biography of essences, it is no wonder to find Ibn Sina calling the "in itself" status a mode of *"being"*—"in this mode of being *(bi-hādha l-wujūd)* it (the idea) is animality only or humanity only."[34]

However, this ontological push in the characterization of the in-itself-status of essences does not establish for them an independent mode of existence. An essence is after all a mode of being. An essence *in itself* is an essence in *its purity,* but this does not mean that its mode of being is independent. In their composite mode they exist in things, part of the individuals that make up the real world. They also exist abstracted in the human mind, and their universal character applies to them only in the mind. Their mode of being prior to things and the human mind is in the Active Intellect.[35]

3. When one moves to the subject of individual things, accident is opposed to substance not to essence. In logic existence is called an accident of essence in the sense that

[33]*Ibid.*, p. 199.
[34]*Ibid.*, p. 201.
[35]*The Book of Healing,* Vol. II, 5, pp. 410, 413; *Avicenna's De Anima,* p. 249; *The Book of Remarks and Admonitions,* Part II, p. 400; *The Book of Salvation,* p. 281.

existence is not part of the essence or definition of any (created) thing. This is the third sense of accident *('araḍ)* outlined in *The Book of Definitions.*[36] Is existence an accident of (primary) substance, and if so in what sense?

The opposition between substance and accident hinges on the question of independence in existence. What exists "by itself," not in another, is substance. What exists in another is accident of substance. White is an accident of substance not because it is excluded from the definition of substance, but because it cannot exist by itself. It exists in substance. It has a parasitical mode of existence. Substance by definition has an independent non-parasitical mode of existence. It would be difficult to make sense of the thought that existence is an accident of substance in the sense that existence, like the quality white, cannot exist by itself, but must exist in substance. Existence cannot then be related to individual things in the manner of the dependent existence of qualities. It cannot be an accident of substance the way any of the nine other categories relate to substance. Consider the following two propositions:

1. The idea of X qua substance is the idea of X whose existence is not in another.
2. This substance (this horse) before me now exists.

The *idea* of (independent) existence is not excluded from the *idea* of substance, for (primary) substance by definition is that which exists not in another. But it must be noted that (independent) existence is here part of the essence of substance *qua substance* not qua horse or qua man. This is true of any substance qua substance, but not qua the specific substance it happens to be. God, who is not a substance, according to Ibn Sina, as we shall see, is nonetheless the only individual whose essence includes (or is) existence qua the specific individual He is.

However, and this is crucial, Ibn Sina makes it clear that although the idea of (independent) existence is used in the definition of substance, it is still open whether any *given substance in fact exists.*[37] This is why we have expressed

[36]See p. 25.
[37]*The Book of Remarks and Admonitions,* p. 479.

the first of the two propositions in terms of the content of the *idea* of substance.

Now proposition No. 2 implicates existence in a different way. The "this" can be said to occasion "contextual analyticity," which can be translated into the logical analyticity seen in the first proposition. If the "this" were to be unpacked, we would have something like the following: 'The existing horse before me now exists'.

These two propositions have shown different ways in which existence may be analytically implicated, in the one case with the idea of substance, in the other with an individual whose existence is given. Ibn Sina warned in connection with the definition of substance that no actual existence of any substance follows from that definition. No substance has to exist in fact. In the second case, although the existence of the individual before us is given *in the example*, there is no necessity about that existence. It *happens* to be an existing thing; it is nonetheless a contingent being: a being *possible in itself* but necessary (only) through another. Making use of the logical sense of "accident" as "not part of the nature of _____," we would say that existence is never part of the nature of created being. It is, in the logical sense, an accident of any existing X, but not of X qua *substance*, nor of X qua *horse*. We speak here of a third identifying aspect: of X qua created or contingent being, or in Ibn Sina's preferred phrase, of being qua possible-in-itself. Existence was excluded from the idea of horse, as were some other concepts, for these are not part of what we mean by "horse." Now existence is being excluded from any given individual thing, not in so far as it is already before us—that would be irrational—but in so far as it is created. Horseness was earlier seen to be "opposed to" or separated from existence not because horseness was *an essence*, but because it was the essence of a *horse*. On the other hand, this horse before me now may also be said to be "opposed to" existence, but not because it is a substance nor because it is before me now—that would not do—but because in itself it is only possible being. As such it does *not necessarily* include existence. This is one place where we see the full force of the contrast in Ibn Sina between

being that is necessary in itself (God) and being that is possible in itself but necessary through another, as well as of Ibn Sina's acknowledgement that although substance is defined as that which exists in itself, it does not follow from this definition that substance X does exist in fact.

It would be true then both to "include" and to "exclude" existence from substance, depending on the point of consideration. Existence is analytically implicated in the idea of substance and whenever we point to a substance before us. However, existence can be logically excluded even from what is before us now, but in a special sense. For obviously we cannot mean by this that existence can *never* be "included," for there would be no world, and yet these things are already before us. What is meant is that since existence is never part of the nature of "caused things,"[38] existence does not belong *necessarily* to whatever exists and is caused. This, ontologically, signals their contingency. In this respect existence can never be "external" to God, and we turn to this topic now.

5

God and Necessary Existence

Like Farabi, Ibn Sina maintains that God is a being whose essence is (necessary) existence.[39] Rather than going through the details of that doctrine all over again, we shall discuss some of Ibn Sina's special arguments on the subject.

We have already noted that Ibn Sina, like other Islamic philosophers, does not admit that God has an essence in the sense that presupposes His having a genus and differentia, for He would then be constituted by what is other than Him.[40] Yet there is another conception of essence for God which Ibn Sina argues against in *The Healing*.[41]

[38] *The Book of Healing*, II, 4, p. 347.

[39] "*Lā māhiyyah (lahu) ghayr al-anniyyah*," *The Book of Healing*, Vol. II, 4, p. 345.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 347.

[41] *Ibid.*, pp. 345ff.

When Ibn Sina affirms that God's *māhiyyah* is His *anniyyah*, he wants to make sure that the essence is not understood as some kind of part or aspect of the "self" of God which is then characterized by necessary existence (as if we had the nucleus of a cell and what characterizes it). For this, besides introducing composition and thus plurality,[42] makes God dependent on this aspect of Him for being a necessary existent. He would then be a necessary existent by virtue of this aspect, His essence, whereas God must be thought as a necessary existent by virtue of His very and total self. He is nothing but "sheer existence."[43]

Furthermore, if the character of necessary existence were to be thought of merely as a characteristic of the essence aspect, then a certain metaphysical priority is inadvertently given to essence, for then God's existence becomes dependent on His essence (". . . and nothing precedes existence").[44] This would go against the whole intent of the doctrine of God as necessary existent and as *"mujarrad al-wujūd."*

There is another interesting way in which Ibn Sina states his view about God as a being whose "essence" is existence, and this in terms that can connect with the literature on the ontological argument. Ibn Sina would agree with Malcolm and disagree with Kant; for to say that God is a being whose existence is necessary is not to say: "If there is a God then such is His property."[45] Ibn Sina would call the existence expressed by this proposition an existence without the condition of affirmation,[46] whereas what he wants to maintain for God is a pure existence with the condition of negation.[47]

[42]Ghazali, summarizing the Philosopher's doctrine here, says: "They went too far and said that if God had an essence predicated by existence, then this would be plurality." *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, ed. Bouyges, p. 178, lines 7-8.

[43]*"Mujarrad al-wujūd," The Book of Healing, ibid.*, p. 347.

[44]*The Book of Remarks and Admonitions*, p. 464.

[45]*"In kāna mawjūd hadhihi ṣifātuhu," The Book of Healing, ibid.*, p. 347. See Malcolm's discussion in "Anselm's Ontological Arguments," *Philosophical Review* 69, 1 (1960): 56ff.

[46]*"Al-wujūd lā bi-sharṭ al-ʾījāb." Ibidem.*

[47]*"Al-mawjūd" al-mujarrad bi-sharṭ al-salb." Ibidem.*

The negation is of any of the additions that would compromise His nature. We have already referred to Ibn Sina's denial of essence as an aspect of God which is composed of existence. Equally important would be the denial, in the case of God, of the notion of existence as an addition to essence. This denial is implicit in the arguments against introducing composition in God and giving priority to essence. Existence as an addition to essence is a mark of created things only. God's existence is not an existence *added* to an essence.[48] Existence is his very being.[49]

There is another interesting way that helps Ibn Sina to restate the character of God as a necessary existent. That is the question of whether God can be subsumed under the genus substance, since that is the class of what exists (independently) not in a subject. Apart from difficulties with the principle of class membership—regardless of the class—Ibn Sina has a specific objection to calling God a substance. For although a substance has an independent existence relative to its accidents, still a given substance may not exist.[50] Speaking of some human being whose existence is not known, one can say: He is undoubtedly one whose existence is not in a subject. One cannot say: He undoubtedly exists now not in a subject.[51] Ibn Sina would have accepted the hypothetical form in talking about the existence of substance, thus: 'If substance exists, then it exists not in a subject'. This form cannot be used of the Necessary Being, and God cannot be substance. It is not clear why Ibn Sina did not take the option chosen by some other philosophers and declare God infinite substance, absolutely independent, whereas other substances are finite, relatively independent.

[48]*The Gems of Wisdom*, p. 58.

[49]Ghazali, summing up the Philosophers, says that existence belongs to God as coloredness *(al-lawniyyah)* belongs to color; *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, p. 192, lines 8-9.

[50]*The Book of Remarks and Admonitions*, p. 479.

[51]*The Book of Healing*, II, 4, p. 349.

CHAPTER SIX
IBN RUSHD—1

1

A special feature of Ibn Rushd's writing on the question of the Arabic vocabulary for being is that besides his own vocabulary preferences and some remarks he makes about some of them, we have, in the instance of the *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, the set of terms selected by Ḥunayn in his translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* followed by Ibn Rushd's own, and often different, choices in the *Commentary*. Ibn Rushd, therefore, could not have escaped facing the problem of the proper vocabulary for being in Arabic.

However, this potential for an interesting discussion of such a problem is not fulfilled in a way that advances beyond Farabi. In at least one place[1] Ibn Rushd even refers to Farabi as having raised and settled certain issues related to the vocabulary problem.

There are a number of Arabic terms used by Isḥaq but "translated" further by Ibn Rushd in his *Commentary* into equivalents which he prefers. Why he chose the ones he did is not made clear, except in the case of his preference for *al-mawjūd* over Ḥunayn's *al-huwiyyah*, which he explains to some extent. We shall then move directly to this.

Ḥunayn uses *al-huwiyyah* as the general term referring to all that can be said to be.[2] It is a translation of Aristotle's *to on*. Ibn Rushd maintains that *al-huwiyyah*, unlike *al-mawjūd*, is an ad hoc term created for philosophy. It is an *ism ṣinā'ī* (technical term) not *lughawī*, not part of the natural language.[3] Furthermore, unlike nouns in a similar form, it is

[1]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, pp. 371-72.

[2]*Commentary on the Metaphysics*, I, p. 325; (*Metaphysics* 1004b, 20).

[3]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 372.

derived not from another noun, such as *al-rujūlah* from *al-rajul*, but from a particle *(ḥarf): huwa.* Translators coined *al-huwiyyah* because there was no term for being in Arabic, and despite its unnaturalness it was used to fill the gap.

Al-mawjūd of course, is part of the natural language.[4] But although it is native, there are two strikes against it. First, it suffers from the danger of having its already given meaning in the natural language cloud its use in philosophy. Second, as a derived term *(mushtaqq)* it suggests reference to an accident of something, and thus tarnishes its use in referring to primary being. Ibn Rushd says that *al-mawjūd* ("what is found") refers to some state in which something is *(ḥālat mā fī l-shay')* and this is always accidental.[5]

These two considerations should be familiar to the reader of Farabi, except that Ihn Rushd takes the second difficulty to be at the root of Ibn Sina's treatment of existence as an accident.[6] Ibn Sina is thus said to have gone contrary to the intention of the translators, who used *al-mawjūd* in the way they used *al-huwiyyah* primarily to refer not to an accident of some thing, but to its very essence or *dhāt.*[7]

It would seem as if the above-mentioned two difficulties would have served as reasons for Ibn Rushd to reject *al-mawjūd.* He himself admits that of the two, *al-huwiyyah* would be less misleading *("aqallu taghlīṭan"),*[8] but he chooses *al-mawjūd,* giving more weight to the naturalness consideration. Perhaps this gives the term better "maneuverability" in talking about the categories of being.[9]

Like Farabi, in settling on *al-mawjūd* Ibn Rushd decides that the term has to be used in philosophy without any

[4]It is surprising to find *al-mawjūd* given the meaning of "the true" in the *natural* Arabic. Ibn Rushd claims that this equivalence was assumed by Ibn Sina (*Incoherence of the Incoherence,* p. 371).

[5]*Epitome of the Metaphysics,* in *The Treatises of Ibn Rushd,* p.10.

[6]See *The Book of the Letters,* p. 113, where Farabi already envisaged the possibility of committing this sort of mistake, if it is one. See our discussion in the next section of this issue which Ibn Rushd sees between himself and Ibn Sina.

[7]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence,* p. 372. It is acknowledged, however, that the term *"al-mawjūd"* is also used for "the true."

[8]*Epitome of the Metaphysics,* p. 12.

[9]See *Commentary on the Metaphysics,* II, p, 558.

encumbrance from its ancestral meaning in the natural language. He would have found it ideal for his purposes if *al-mawjūd* already in its natural use were to refer unmistakably to what is referred to by *shay'* (thing) and *dhāt* (entity).[10]

Of Ibn Rushd's books that discuss the term *"al-mawjūd" The Incoherence of the Incoherence* is the least extensive on the subject. Two senses are given there: one is equivalent to "the true," the other is equivalent to "entity" and "thing."[11] In the latter sense *al-mawjūd* is said to be like a genus for the things that are, as these subdivide into the ten categories, or into substance and accident.[12]

The sense of "the true" is made to cover two kinds of examples, given in the form of questions: 'Does X exist (or not)?' and 'Is X such and such (or not)?' These two questions, and the assertions to which they could be converted, represent the existential and predicative uses of *al-mawjūd* respectively. In the *Commentary on the Metaphysics* this is made more explicit. The distinction there is drawn between the *mutlāq* (absolute) and the *murakhab* (composite) uses.[13] The examples of each, still given in the form of questions, are more specific now. 'Hal Zayd *mawjūd?*' (Does Zayd exist?) illustrates the *muṭlaq* or absolute, and '*hal* Zayd *yūjad mūsiqus?*' (Is Zayd musical?) is an instance of the composite, i.e., the predicative.[14]

[10]See *Commentary on the Metaphysics,* II, pp. 557-59; The *Incoherence of the Incoherence,* pp. 371-73; and the *Epitome of the Metaphysics,* p. 10. Perhaps, in this connection, one should beware of a confusion between meaning in the natural language and the meaning of the root from which a word happens to be derived. It might be worth an investigation to determine whether, independently of the philosophers' tradition, the word *"al-mawjūd"* was used to refer "to the very thing," rather than simply to the accidental condition of having been found suggested by its etymology.

[11]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence,* p. 302.

[12]*Ibid.,* p. 303.

[13]*Commentary on the Metaphysics,* II, p. 560.

[14]It should be noted that it is not unusual in Arabic to distinguish the predicative and existential uses of the same "to be" word (see our discussion in Chapter One), except that here the predicative use of *al-mawjūd* is created for logic examples and is not natural to the language.

It is the *Epitome of the Metaphysics*, Ibn Rushd's summary of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which contains the fullest discussion of *al-mawjūd* as the general term for being, although here as elsewhere there is less of Ibn Sina's sense for being as a generally pervading concept, and more of a stress on the subdivisions in use and meaning. We shall select only those points that we have not already made and incorporate what Ibn Rushd says both in the *Epitome of the Metaphysics* and the *Commentary on the Metaphysics.*

In the first sense, the one in which *al-mawjūd* applies to the ten categories, the term is used analogically. For not all things can be said to be in the same way, and only substance *is* in the primary or independent way. Ibn Rushd, as we shall see more fully in what follows, accuses Ibn Sina of assuming that *al-mawjūd*, being an accident common to the all ten categories, applies in the same way to substance and to the other nine categories, rather than by priority and posteriority, as a good Aristotelian would hold.

The use of *al-mawjūd* as a copula which is just touched on in *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*,[15] is briefly mentioned in the *Commentary on the Meraphysics*,[16] and gets only a few more words in the *Epitome of the Metaphysics.*[17] Essentailly two points are made clear. First, in a proposition the relation between subject and predicate which is denoted by the copula is "in the mind" *(fī l-dhikr)*, for that is the "place" for a proposition as a logical "entity." We have seen both Farabi and Ibn Sina make the same point. Second, and again following his predecessors, the mental status of the relation indicated by a copula and brought together in a proposition holds regardless of whether the proposition is negative or affirmative, true or false, or whether the attribution is essential or accidental.[18] This raises the question of how Ibn Rushd views the relation between "is true" and the copulative use of *al-mawjūd.*

In *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* reference to *al-mawjūd* as a copula is introduced in connection with the

[15]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 302.
[16]*Commentary on the Metaphysics*, II, p. 560.
[17]*Epitome of the Metaphysics*, p. 10.
[18]*Ibidem.*

sense of "is true." In explaining *al-anniyyah*, Ibn Rushd says that it is the being of what is outside the self or mind as it is thought within the mind.[19] This is said to be synonymous with "the true" and it (presumably the predicative relationship) is what is denoted by the copula in a predicative proposition. But clearly this does not say that the sole use for the copula is as the "to be" which means "to be so." What Ibn Rushd seems to be allowing for in the second point is the purely syntactical function which is neutral to the question of truth. It is the logical cement before the question of truth is raised.

Furthermore, the sense of *al-mawjūd* as "is true" can appear in existential as well as predicative propositions, whereas the copulative use can only appear in the predicative construction. In 'Zayd *mawjūd*' as well as 'Zayd *yūjad mūsiqus*' the *wjd* term can mean "is so."[20] In the former statement it has both the existential and the veridical functions; in the latter its functions are copulative and veridical.

So far two senses of *al-mawjūd* have been mentioned: "the true," which is a characteristic of the logical, and *al-mawjūd*, as thing and entity. The second sense applies to Zayd the individual, but in 'Zayd exists' we have a proposition, a logical "entity," and hence the former sense of *al-mawjūd* applies here. The copulative function, insofar as it is purely syntactical, does not provide a third meaning. We have thus analyzed it in connection with the sense of "is true."

Since the logical is classified as subjective in contrast with entities which are objective, we now get the most general subdivision of being. In language right out of Farabi, we are told that *al-mawjūd* can refer to essences entertained by the mind as well as to essences that exist outside the mind, whether these are entertained by the mind or not.[21] This subdivision, like the previous one into "the true" and

[19]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 302.
[20]In "substance exists," "exists," according to Ibn Rushd, means "the true" (*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 373). See also Van den Bergh's translation, vol. II, p. 130, n. 223, 4.
[21]*Epitome of the Metaphysics*, p. 9.

"entity," cuts across the subdivisions of being into the ten categories or into substance and accident. For these can have either objective existence or a mental-logical counterpart existence. In whatever pertains to the ten categories *al-mawjūd* applies to mean either 1) has a *dhāt* outside the self, or 2) refers to the essences of these *dhawāt* that exist outside the self—presumably the essences as entertained by the mind.[22]

In the commentary portion of the *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, in one of the few places where Ibn Rushd retains *al-huwiyyah*, Ibn Rushd says that *al-huwiyyah* is divided into perfect *(tāmmah)* and imperfect *(nāqiṣah)*. The former is primary objective reality; the latter is subdivided into a) what exists in the mind and b) what is an accident of substance.[23] Here the main classes are the perfect and the imperfect, into which the other subdivisions, subjective-objective, substance-accident, are fitted. The accidental *qua accidental* but objective would still be imperfect or secondary being. The accidental *qua subjective* would be imperfect because subjective. The subdivision into perfect and imperfect, therefore, can be consistent with the earlier subdivision of being into subjective and objective in which the substance-accident division can appear either under the subjective or the objective. However, when there is no qualification the ten categories in Ibn Rushd's discussion are meant to be subdivisions of objective reality.

One other term needs a few words, and that is *"shay'"* (thing). It seems to be the most general of the being vocabulary, although one classifies it as one of these with hesitation since it is primarily not a technical term. *Shay'* applies to all that *al-mawjūd* does, and could he said to be even more general, for it applies to every idea conceived by the mind whether it is purely subjective and fictitious, or has an objective counterpart. Thus it applies to what is real and

[22]*Ibidem.*

[23]*Commentary on the Metaphysics*, II, p. 742f; see also in *ibid.*, Chapter *(Maqālah)* XI, Lamda *(Lām)*, the Introduction, p. 1401, where a similar division is made into 1) the accidental, 2) the subjective *(fī l-nafs)*, and 3) the objective *(fī l-khārij)*.

to what is not real. Unlike *al-mawjūd*, it can even apply to false judgment.[24]

It is interesting to notice that far from abolishing the distinction between an essence that exists and an essence that does not,[25] Ibn Rushd, having already made that distinction in his discussion of *al-mawjūd*, now in effect says that in the case of essences that are subjective but have (or can have) no objective counterpart such as fictitious objects, the term *"shay'"* not *"al-mawjūd"* is to be used. Even though it is strictly correct to speak of a fictitious object as a *mawjūd*, but in the mind only—and as far as I know Ibn Rushd says nothing explicit against this possibility—still it seems that *shay'* is the preference of the *Epitome of the Metaphysics*.

2

The Externality of Al-Mawjūd

As we mentioned in the last chapter, Ibn Sina is repeatedly criticized by Ibn Rushd for his view that existence is an addition to the *dhāt* of a thing. We saw there that existence was indeed considered by Ibn Sina an element excluded in the analysis of the nature of anything other than God. Existence is not part of the idea of horse, of horse *qua horse*, in this case not part of the *dhāt* as *essence*. However, existence is part of this horse before us now, *qua substance*, qua this horse before us; existence is an essential part of the *dhāt* as *entity*.[26] Furthermore, this horse, though necessary through another, is only possible in itself. Thus one can say that existence is an "imported" aspect, even though it is undoubtedly a part of this horse before us. It is given to the horse, bestowed upon it. In the case of being which is necessary in itself, existence is a part of ("indigenous" to)

[24]*Epitome of the Metaphysics*, pp. 17-18.

[25]See Van den Bergh's *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, vol. II, p. 137, n. 237.4 for this claim.

[26]For the meanings of *dhāt* as entity and *dhāt* as essence (as in *dhāt al-shay'*), see *Epitome of the Metaphysics*, pp. 16-17.

that being, and necessarily. In the case of a being which is possible in itself, like this horse, existence is post facto a part of it—qua entity, though, not qua this sort of thing; but existence nonetheless must be regarded as superfluous to this horse *qua possible being.* The possible in itself is necessary through another, and whereas this removes contingency of one sort from the causal nexus, it does not have the least tendency to make things necessary in themselves. This sort of contingency about things is untouched. For the whole chain of causally necessary beings is still dependent on the necessary in itself,[27] and each member in the chain is dependent on its cause. The necessary in itself is the only absolutely independent being.

What is implicit here is a distinction between the "contingent"-"necessary" terms used in characterizing the *mode* of causal relation between existing beings, and the contingent-necessary which concerns the being of anything simply with respect to whether it is causally dependent or independent of any cause. Contingent being in the latter sense is the kind of being which is or would be dependent on or caused by another, regardless of whether the *mode* of that causal relation is necessary or contingent in the former sense. Thus the sort of being one calls dependent or contingent being may relate to its cause contingently, à la Ghazali, or in a necessary manner, à la the Aristotelians.

We shall see in the present chapter that Ibn Rushd was not quite mindful of certain distinctions, and that as a result he did not fully appreciate Ibn Sina's position on the accidentiality of existence in dependent being. We shall also see that if some of the things that Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd said were properly worked out one would find less of a disagreement between the two philosophers than Ibn Rushd thought existed. Let us now turn to Ibn Rushd's statement of Ibn Sina's position.

[27] *Remarks and Admonitions,* p. 451-53. When Goichon *(Distinction,* p. 158) and Van den Bergh (*"manṭiḳ," E.I.,* vol. III., p. 260) say that the necessary through another excludes the contingent, they are talking about the *mode* of causality among existing things, not about the mere fact of dependence on a cause, which is characteristic of anything other than God.

According to Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sina maintains that *al-mawjūd* (or *al-wujūd*)[28] is a *'araḍ* (accident) with respect to the *dhāt* of a thing. It is also said to denote a *ṣifah zā'idah* (an added characteristic), or, in another phrase, a *ma'nā zā'id,*[29] an added meaning, to the *dhāt.* No further clarification or elaboration is given by Ibn Rushd of this accidentality or additionality. We thus shall make use of the analysis of our last chapter, the results of which have been summarized at the beginning of this one.

The view that existence is an addition to the *dhāt* as essence and not part of it could be described as a view that existence and essence are "distinct." In terms of the analysis of this notion of distinction in our fourth chapter, this would mean that existence is logically distinct from essence, that existence is not part of the nature of a thing—except in the case of God, of course.

This distinction, or distinguishing, was used by Ibn Sina to put forth another claim: that one can apprehend the essence *(māhiyyah)* of X without knowing whether X exists. This falls under the fifth case of "to distinguish" discussed in the fourth chapter. Both Ghazali and Ibn Rushd acknowledge that it was upheld by Ibn Sina. As Ghazali sums up the view:

> Man has an essence *(māhiyyah)* prior to (his) existence, and existence comes upon it and is added to it. Similarly, a triangle has an essence . . ., and existence is not part of that self-same essence (nor) constitutive of it. For this reason it is possible for the rational man *(al-'āqil)* to apprehend *(yudrik)* the essence of man and the essence of triangle without knowing whether they exist in the exterior world or not.[30]

This doctrine of course antagonizes Ibn Rushd's strict Aristotelianism. His answer to it is that Ibn Sina cannot be

[28] Both *wjd* derivatives are used by Ibn Sina in this connection, although of these *al-wujūd* more readily translates as existence. *Al-mawjūd* is the general term for being, and is used besides in the more restricted sense of existent(s). However, it is also used to mean existence as distinct from being.

[29] In this discussion *'araḍ* and *zā'id* must be taken synonymously.

[30] *The Incoherence of the Incoherence,* p. 303, where the quotation from Ghazali is given.

talking here about objective existence, for that is inseparable from essence. Knowledge of the objective existence of X must precede and is presupposed by our apprehension of the essence of X, otherwise the apprehension of this prior essence in the mind is not a knowledge. It would be nothing but the explication of the meaning of some word.[31]

As against Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd thus maintains that existence is not accidental to a thing, rather it is nothing but the essence *(dhāt)* of a thing. This is what Van den Bergh has called the "identification of essence and existence" in Ibn Rushd's thought.[32] We shall come to this shortly, but first we want to note that despite the "distinction" urged by the one, and the "identification" upheld by the other, both philosophers would agree that of all the things one can say about some X, existence is a special thing.

Ibn Rushd criticizes Ibn Sina for reducing existence to the status of "is white." For, according to the former, a thing does not exist by virtue of a property added to its essence *(dhāt)*, but by virtue of its very essence *(bi-dhātihi)*.[33] However, Ibn Sina could reply that the equality in status of "exists" and "is white" pertains only when the question is: Is existence or white part of the nature of X qua X? When *this* is the question, then white and existence are *equally* excluded from the definition of X. But in the general analysis of being and its principles, existence is special and white is not. To signal the specialness Ibn Sina treats existence as among the special necessities *(al-lawāzim al-khāṣṣah)* of being.[34] We may also recall its specialness in the treatment of substance. Ibn Rushd also wishes to emphasize the specialness of existence, but in his own way. He tells us that such things as *al-taḥrīk* (movement) and

[31]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 304; see the discussion of this in Chapter Four, pp. 62f. above. The possible separation between essence and existence, however, is acknowledged by Ibn Rushd for the true, i.e., in propositions as logical (or subjective) entities *(The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 372).

[32]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, (Van den Bergh), vol. II (Notes), p. 137, n. 237.4.

[33]*Commentary on the Metaphysics*, III, p. 1279.

[34]Ibn Rushd notes this doctrine as Ibn Sina's alone and criticizes it *(The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 223).

al-tarkīb (composition) may be considered as added to the essence *(dhāt)* of a thing, but existence is unlike these. It is a quality which is the very essence *(dhāt)*.[35] The specialness of course is more fundamentally indicated in the "identification" just mentioned.

We may now recall Ibn Rushd's analysis of *al-mawjūd* and the two senses: 1) what exists outside the self, and 2) what exists within, including "the true." In the latter case, and if we take as our example a logical entity such as a proposition in which *al-mawjūd* means "is true," then, according to Ibn Rushd, existence can be considered an accident.[36] Here he is following the Aristotelian principle that the subject-slot in a proposition is for substance and the predicate-slot for one of the other (nine) categories, and hence an accident. Even in a proposition where the predicate is a *wjd* derivative the meaning of which is "to exist," as in "x exists," then that predicate (exists) is an accident.[37]

On the other hand, when *al-mawjūd* is taken in its other (and primary) sense to mean the same as "entity" and "thing," then the externality of existence will have to be denied, for in this sense *al-mawjūd* is a name for the existing thing, not for an accident in it. This would seem to be the crux of the seeming difference between the two philosophers.

This is how Van den Bergh sums up the difference between the two philosophers on this issue: "For Averroes existence is the *existent (to on)*, the individual *(tode ti)*, the substance *(ousia)*, the subject of a sentence" whereas "for Avicenna existence is to exist *(to einai)* added to a subject as predicate, e.g., 'Socrates exists,' and as predicate in an accident."[38]

One would suppose that this is not intended as a sum-

[35]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 331.

[36]*Commentary on the Metaphysics*, II, p. 560; *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 371.

[37]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 224; *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, III, p. 1280.

[38]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence* (Van den Bergh), vol. II (Notes), p. 131, n. 224-5.

mary of all that each philosopher means by *al-mawjūd*, for that would clearly be false. Rather the quotation singles out that difference which is behind the controversy over the accidentiality of existence. According to the quotation, what makes Ibn Sina speak of existence as an accident is his taking it in the sense of "is true," and what makes Ibn Rushd reject the accidentiality of existence is that he takes *al-mawjūd* primarily in the sense in which it is the name for the existent, for substance, for the individual—i.e., for the very thing. Given this, Ibn Sina's error, according to Ibn Rushd, can be stated, at this stage of our discussion, as follows. Ibn Sina did not err for taking *al-mawjūd* to mean "is true," for that is one of its legitimate meanings. Rather his error is in taking this to be the model sense, and hence of letting the consequent notion of accidentiality (proper for "is true") intrude in the ontological discussion of entity and thing, where existence is not accidental, but is a name for entity and thing. We shall discuss Ibn Rushd's analysis of Ibn Sina's position in more detail in our next chapter.

Is there a genuine controversy between Ibn Rushd and Ibn Sina, as the former thought, and where exactly does it lie? This question is being asked in view of three considerations. 1. Both philosophers distinguish the same (Aristotelian) senses of the term *"al-mawjūd"* which they inherited more imediately from Farabi. 2. Ibn Rushd grants accidentiality for Ibn Sina's use of *al-mawjūd* as "the true." 3. Ibn Sina is Aristotelian enough to have understood and accepted the ontological relation between existence, in Ibn Rushd's first sense, and substance, as we have been in our last chapter.

Ibn Rushd is said to have identified essence and existence in things. For him *al-mawjūd* is taken as the name for primary being, for substance. It is not *an addition* to the essence *(dhāt);* it *is* the very essence *(dhāt).* But one is more likely to describe this as the identification of primary being with substance. How shall we see it as the identification of the *essence* and *existence* in individual things? It must be recalled that this is not the same sort of identification permitted for God and denied for other things by Farabi and Ibn Sina. That concerned the inclusion or exclusion of existence in what X is, qua X. But the essence in the case

now is not the essence of a horse qua horse. The essence is the essence of the horse qua entity, qua this concrete individual horse before us.[39]

It might help to see Ibn Rushd's identification of "existence with the existent" as an identification of essence and existence if we were to take "the existent" to refer to a realized essence, the essence of a concrete individual. Then one can say that the essence (of this horse) is its existence (as this horse).

Does Ibn Rushd's "identification of essence and existence" constitute a reply to the "distinguishing" that Ibn Sina has proposed? The answer is in the negative. 'Existence is the essence of this horse *qua substance (qua this horse)*' is an irrelevant reply to and logically compatible with 'Existence is *not* part of a horse *qua horse*' or with 'Existence is not a part of this horse *qua contingent being.*' In other words, that to which existence is supposed to be accidental, according to Ibn Sina, and that with which it is said to be identical by Ibn Rushd are not the same thing. Ibn Sina says existence is external to what-a-thing-is (what a horse is, what a man is). He does not say existence is external to the individual as substance (this horse). And it is the being of the individual substance with which, according to Ibn Rushd, *al-mawjūd* is identical, or which it is said to name. Moreover, this latter sense of *al-mawjūd* is only one sense, albeit the primary sense. On the other hand, Ibn Rushd realizes that *al-mawjūd* legitimately has another sense, that of "the true." Here the focus is not on individual things that populate the world but on logical units, propositions, in which predicates, be they "exists" or "is white," are an addition to the nature (or essence) of what is referred to by the subject. Ibn Sina has advocated this too.

There remains the issue of the accidentiality of existence in things insofar as they are not necessary in themselves. We shall leave this for our next chapter and conclude now on the subject of contingency by recalling the contingent status of substance which Ibn Sina would insist on in the face of the so-called identification of essence and existence

[39]For the relevance of this difference between the essence of an X and the essence of this X, see the next chapter, pp. 108-111.

in the concrete individual existents. This should help to deepen the contrast between the identification of essence and existence in the two contexts of God and finite things.

Generally the Islamic philosophers accepted that Aristotelian conception of substance according to which substance is what exists in a primary sense, and "absolutely," not in a qualified sense. But this is still short of the idea of a being whose existence is necessary. For finite substances exist independently only in a relative sense, and by contrast with qualities and other accidents. That is all the force of "absolutely." Beyond this acknowledged status of substance, the Muslim theists and philosophers reserved the status of absolutely independent existence to God alone. As Ghazali puts it in his summary of the position of the Philosophers:

> Substance . . . is a reality which *when it exists*, exists not in a subject; but we do not mean by this that it exists at the time of the definition . . . . The First has no essence except necessary existence. Necessary existence is His and for no other.[40]

[40] *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 368 (our italics).

CHAPTER SEVEN
IBN RUSHD—2

Let us begin by considering the arguments used by Ibn Rushd against Ibn Sina's doctrine of the accidentiality of existence.

Ibn Rushd attacks along two main lines: 1. by the reductio method he tries to show the unhappy consequences that follow from the claim that existence is accidental; and 2. by explaining why, in the sense of how it came about that Ibn Sina committed his error. This is done by pointing out the confusions Ibn Sina made that led him to the erroneous doctrine. We shall begin with the second line of attack, but after we first introduce a cousin-mistake that Ibn Sina is supposed to have made.

The error that Ibn Sina supposedly committed with respect to existence is also committed with respect to "the one." In Chapter Five we saw that the same considerations that led Ibn Sina to "exclude" existence from what-a-thing-is led him to exclude the one. There may be one man (or more), or more strongly, even if humanity existed only as one, the one would still be a fact additional to what-a-man-is.[1] Moreover, the one, like *al-mawjūd* (as existence), was classified as among the necessary but not constitutive elements of essence. So the one and *al-mawjūd* were treated, for the most part, in a similar way. Of all the excludables "the one" and *al-mawjūd* are more specially related to each other. The reason is not hard to find, for one of the senses of "the one" is as a synonym of *al-mawjūd* as entity and thing. Thus the discussion of *al-mawjūd* and the one runs on similar lines both in Ibn Sina's treatment and in Ibn Rushd's criticisms as in Aristotle before them. While we

[1] *The Book of Salvation* III, p. 220.

shall be concentrating primarily on *al-mawjūd*, inevitable references to the one will be made.

1

The Sources of Ibn Sina's Alleged Error

According to Ibn Rushd, one fundamental confusion committed by Ibn Sina is that between the "accidentiality pertaining to a thing in the mind with the accidentiality attaching in reality."[2] This is also called the confusion of the *mawjūd* which refers to the ten categories with the *mawjūd* which means "the true."[3] Ibn Rushd reaches this conclusion after he summarizes an argument which is said to be Ibn Sina's. The argument is as follows. Let us assume that the one refers to substance only, then an absurd consequence follows—namely, that substances shall be in accidents. For if the one meant the same as substance, then when we say of an accident that it is one, we are in effect saying that substance (which has been identified with the one[4]) is in the accident.[5] To see this more clearly, let "X" stand for "an accident" and "one" be synonymous with "substance." Then in the proposition "X is one," that which is in the position of predicate is the same as substance. This puts substance in an accidental relation to X which is the accident, and the world is thus made to stand on its head.

Ibn Rushd's reply to this argument could be constructed as follows. The accidentiality that is accorded to substance in "X is one" is simply the accidental character of a predicate in a proposition which as a logical entity is "in the mind." So for Ibn Sina to conclude that the substance of reality has been turned accidental, when it is only the predicate "in the mind" that has, would be a case of confusing subjective with objective accidentiality.

What puzzles us is that we have been unable to find out

[2]*Epitome of the Metaphysics*, p. 22.
[3]*Commentary on the Metaphysics* III, p. 1280.
[4]*Epitome of the Metaphysics*, p. 20.
[5]*Ibid.*, p. 22.

where in his writings Ibn Sina offers this particular argument attributed to him. Recalling our analysis in the last chapter, we would say, rather, that the distinction between logical and metaphysical accidentiality is precisely the one in terms of which Ibn Sina's position is to be *stated*, not criticized. Now we find that Ibn Rushd explicitly urges that the distinction be observed. This further confirms our claim that there is much less of a divergence of views between Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd on the issue of the externality of existence than the latter thought obtained. How much difference there is, we shall see shortly.

The other confusion that is laid at Ibn Sina's doorstep concerns "the one" more directly. Ibn Sina is said to have confused the numerical one with the metaphysical one which is the equivalent of *al-mawjūd*.

In the *Commentary on the Metaphysics*[6] Ibn Sina's reasoning is summarized as follows. Since the numerical one falls under the category of quantity and this is counted among the accidents, then the one which refers to all the ten categories is an accident. In its brevity it seems to make Ibn Sina claim that the one which refers to the ten categories must be accidental merely because it happens to have earned that label by its falling under quantity, a sort of automatic carryover of a label once acquired. It is as if Ibn Sina were saying that since quantity is an accident and the numerical one falls under quantity, the one is an accident in any other context.

However, in the *Epitome on the Metaphysics*,[7] Ibn Sina's reasoning is stated by Ibn Rushd in a fuller and more complex way. Here is a systematic re-creation. Two facts about the one are assumed as given. First, the one refers to all the ten categories. Second, the numerical one falls under the category of quantity. Although the category itself is counted among the accidents, the one is involved in the category of quantity essentially, not accidentally. The problem now is how should Ibn Sina construe the involvement of the one in all the categories. One argument summarized

[6]III, p. 1280.
[7]P. 21.

by Ibn Rushd is as follows. If the one—given the first assumed fact, namely, that it falls under quantity—were to refer to substance and to accidents in the manner of referring to the *dhāt* of the substance and the *dhāt* of an accident, then this would make number "composed of substance and accidents." Number would then no longer fall under one category, let alone the category of quantity.[8] To avoid this consequence Ibn Sina was led to lessen the involvement of the one with each of the ten categories and make it refer to what stands in an accidental relation to the *dhāt* of each of the ten modes of being.[9]

Ibn Rushd maintains that Ibn Sina has failed to keep distinct the characteristic features of the numerical one and the metaphysical one. For whereas the numerical one can be said to stand in an accidental relation to the modes of being, it is a feature of the metaphysical one which is synonymous with *al-mawjūd* that it refers to the *dhāt* of a substance and the *dhāt* of an accident. The metaphysical one is not the same as the numerical one which falls under the category of quantity. Thus if one is doing metaphysics one takes the one in its metaphysical sense and with its special features. Ibn Sina's dilemma arose because in doing metaphysics he wanted to talk about the one in terms of features peculiar to the numerical one.

Ibn Rushd's Arguments

We shall here present just a sample of the arguments used by Ibn Rushd.

a) The first argument we shall consider is not a reductio by Ibn Rushd himself, but the refutation of a reductio employed by Ibn Sina. The latter had claimed that if the one and the *mawjūd* were synonymous, then statements like "the existent is one" *(al-mawjūd wāḥid)* would be nonsensical *(hadhar)*, and to say "The man is one" is simply to say "The man is the man." Ibn Rushd argues back that for this to follow the terms in question must be *strict* synonyms—namely, apply to the same *dhāt*, and apply the

[8]*Ibidem.*
[9]*Ibid.*, p. 104.

same in every respect. As it is, however, they don't. They refer to a *ma'nā* which applies to one subject, but in different respects.[10] Presumably this means that "the one" and *al-mawjūd* have the same denotation but different designations. However, it would seem as if Ibn Rushd accepts virtual synonymity, for when in another place he argues against Ibn Sina's notion of existence as an addition, he uses Ibn Sina's example but for his own purpose. In 'This is one man.' we are told, the one adds nothing to 'This (is a) man.' The former is just more explicit, for having singled out a *substance* (this man), one has already marked out an individual being.[11]

b) There is another argument which appears in different versions, and this is a reductio proper offered by Ibn Rushd. The basic form is this. Let us assume that existence is an accident. Of this accident we can ask, as we do of anything, "Does it exist?" But the question would then be merely whether the accident has an accident. And of the latter accident we can ask: "Does it exist?" which is to ask whether it has an accident, and so on to infinity.

One variant takes this form, and here the one is included: Are the one and existence by which a thing is one and exists— are each of these what they are by virtue of an addition? If Ibn Sina says "by an addition," then we go on to infinity, if he says (of each) "in or by itself," then he would have granted that something is one and exists by virtue of itself.[12]

c) A different sort of argument turns to Parmenides' statement that *al-mawjūd* is one. Ibn Rushd insists that *al-mawjūd* here must refer to the *dhāt* not to an accident of it. If it were to mean accident in a substratum, then Parmenides' statement would be self-contradictory. For, presumably, it would be equating *al-mawjūd* the accident with the one which means the *dhāt* of primary reality, and thus the accidental would be identical with the substantial.[13]

[10]*Commentary on the Metaphysics* I, pp. 313-14.
[11]*Ibid.* III, pp. 1281-82.
[12]*Ibid.* III, p. 1280. Another variant makes use of the two senses of *al-mawjūd;* see *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, pp. 304-05.
[13]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 224.

d) This argument[14] is a little more involved. If *al-mawjūd* did refer to an accident, as Ibn Sina claims, then there are two possibilities: (i) this accident is one of the secondary intelligibles *(al-ma'qūlāt al-thawānī)* and is in he mind, or (ii) it is one of the primary intelligibles *(al-ma'qūlāt al-'uwal).*

If (ii) the primary intelligibles, then necessarily it must come under one or another of the nine categories, for these comprise the accidents. The *mawjūd* would then apply to substance and the remaining eight only insofar as the (ninth) category under which it falls happens to relate to substance and the other eight. This runs counter to the pervasive character of *al-mawjūd.* The only other possibility for *al-mawjūd* in relating to the other categories would be for it to be a genus for all of them (rather than relate to them, if at all, through the one category under which it was considered to fall in the early part of the argument). But this is impossible, for being is not a genus, and applies to the categories by "priority and posteriority." The latter is the right mean between the restricted and the excessive pervasivenesses considered.

On the other hand, if the *mawjūd* is both an accident and in the mind, i.e., is of the secondary intelligibles, then this is acceptable to Ibn Rushd, for these conditions are fulfilled by one of the meanings of *al-mawjūd* as "the true." But this meaning and the one referring to entity or thing are distinct and one must not cross characteristics.

The Nature of Ibn Rushd's Challenge

We are nearing the point for a final statement of the challenge that Ibn Rushd is thrusting at Ibn Sina, but first we want to offer a few remarks on the sort of criticism according to which someone is accused of confusing two things that should be kept distinct.

There are two sorts of cases in which a thinker may be said to confuse the meanings of terms. One would be when that thinker has overlooked a distinction that had not occurred to him, but which he would readily accept if it

[14]As developed in *Epitome of the Metaphysics,* p. 11.

were pointed out convincingly. Let us call these the non-controversial distinctions. They are usually not too tightly connected with a specific metaphysical theory. Of course there are distinctions which are theory based but which may not be controversial for those who are among the followers of that theory, and these don't concern us here. What we have in mind for this first case, for example, is the distinction between essence and existence simply as a differentiation in meaning between 'What is X?' and 'Is X?' or, say, a distinction such as that between necessary and sufficient condition. At their best distinctions of this sort have a kind of silencing force to them, especially the ones that are so forcefully evident upon statement, and are theory-neutral besides, or if they originate with a theory, they may be the kind that export well by themselves. To point out to someone that he has confused or overlooked a distinction of this sort often leaves little room for debate except as to whether the accusation is true.

On the other hand there are the distinctions which are so theory-based that ordinarily they cannot be made or accepted without commitment to some theory or part of a theory. The distinction between matter and form is of this sort, although it may be possible to abstract a version of the matter-form distinction, detach it from its theoretical base, and show that in a given context someone has overlooked it. How successful one will be in making this accusation stick depends on the details of the case. At any rate, we shall see shortly that the apparent differences which Ibn Rushd saw between himself and Ibn Sina—differences which prompted him to accuse Ibn Sina of confusing what should be kept distinct—are based on divergent theoretical options taken by each philosopher. This will compromise the silencing force of Ibn Rushd's confusion accusation. We shall see that these options center primarily upon Ibn Sina's view of the contingency of all being other than God, and the specific sense of the accidentiality of existence that follows.

Now to get back to Ibn Rushd's challenge. We might baptise this Ibn Rushd's "fork," since we see it in the style of "Hume's fork" when he challenged the rationalist theologian's mixing of the characteristics of the rational (demon-

strative certainty) and the empirical (reference to reality) in the proofs for God's existence. What Ibn Rushd's attacks on Ibn Sina boils down to is this. *Either al-mawjūd* is the objective being (or entity) in which existence is the *dhāt* of that being and not an accident in it, *or al-mawjūd* means the true, and its domain is the logical (and hence is "in the mind"), where it appears in the slot of the predicate and is an accident. Ibn Sina, in Ibn Rushd's eyes, wanted to have his cake and eat it. He wanted *al-mawjūd* to refer to an accident in objective being. But, for Ibn Rushd, this cannot be done. If we are talking logic, *al-mawjūd* is accident, but if metaphysics, then it is the very self of the things that are. Existence as an *accident* in *objective* being would be a strange animal, perhaps like the goat-stag, a chimerial hybrid.

According to Ibn Rushd, "the only course" for avoiding the absurd consequences and the infinite regresses which he has been exposing in Ibn Sina's thought is to abandon the separation (the distinction) between *al-mawjūd* and the *dhāt* of things, and to abandon the accidental status given to the former by Ibn Sina.[15]

Ibn Sina's reply might be constructed along the following lines. There are three contexts in which to consider the externality of existence. There is (1) what enters into or is excluded from an essence qua the essence of X (horse), and may be called the domain of the *logical.* There would be agreement between the two philosophers about the externality of existence in this domain. Their reasons would be different. Ibn Sina would approach this through the notion of the logical purity of any essence qua the essence of something. Ibn Rushd would grant the accidentiality because of the status of "exists" as a predicate in a proposition. This difference may be only superficial, and it is possible that Ibn Rushd's reasoning may be stated in Ibn Sina's terms, or the other way around. In other words, one can put the accidentiality of existence as predicate in terms of its not being part of the essence of X qua X. Or, one can underscore the purity of an essence qua essence by noting the

[15]*Ibid.*, p. 103.

position of existence as predicate. The possibility of succeeding in these conversions does not achieve much beyond securing further agreement of detail over and above the general agreement over the accidentiality of existence in the domain of the logical.

(2) The second context is *metaphysical,* although it does take a logical form. This concerns the relation between existence and primary being, existence and *this X, qua substance.* Here again we have indicated there should be fundamental agreement between the two philosophers.

(3) It is the third context—call it the *theological*— which is crucial: this is the context of being which is possible in itself (necessary through another). This does not undo the connection between substance and existence granted in the previous context. It just makes that connection for any given X depend on an outside agent. Individual things (other than God) come to be, but only if some antecedent condition makes that happen. Only in God is existence unconditioned, independent. That is His status as the ontologically necessary being.

The "accidentiality" of existence in this context as applied to any substance simply means that the involvement of existence in finite beings is dependent and not necessary. It concerns their aspect as originated, as coming to be. It says of this X that although as necessary through another it had to be, it and its antecedents are not necessary in themselves and might not have been. It does not say that this X, once it is, exists half-heartedly, or that it exists only on the outside, so to speak, since existence did not permeate the heart of the entity! Perhaps Ibn Sina did not help matters when in speaking of existence in the sense of this third context he often used the verb form *'araḍa* untechnically, meaning "to befall," "to happen to." This contrasts with the technical senses of *'araḍ* (accident) in the other two contexts, the logical and the metaphysical respectively.[16]

At this point it should be clear that when Ibn Sina speaks of the existence which characterizes possible being as an existence that befalls such being and is thus not indigenous

[16]See Rahman, *op.cit.*, p.14.

to it, he is making a theoretical option, not confusing a distinction. It is his way of declaring the "superfluity" of existence in all being other than the being of the First. Ibn Sina was not being a semantical weakling, confusing a distinction that he should have observed had he been mindful of it. He was developing the consequences of his view of the nature of being. Ibn Rushd in his turn insisted on not allowing the accidentiality of existence in objective being. However, he was wrong in his view that Ibn Sina spoke of the accidentiality of existence in objective being *simply because he* (Ibn Sina) *was mislead by its accidentiality in the logical domain. It was rather the consequence of his view of possible being.* The latter view was also challenged by Ibn Rushd, as we shall soon see. But the situation is no longer the simple one Ibn Rushd had thought, namely, that in which he could simply "correct" Ibn Sina over a "confusion" he committed, and then wait for the silence.

A word should be said about Ibn Sina's use of *compositional* vocabulary about things. It is the opposite of the way the identifiers see things. Given the theological context, Ibn Sina is obviously driven to refer to things as "made of" essence and existence. Indeed one finds such compositional language explicit. But this is just the beginning of the matter, for a few points of clarification must be kept in mind. First, if the motive is to stress the superfluity of existence in contingent being, then to say of anything that it now exists is to want to say, at least, that the *origination* of any such being required the "importing" or addition of existence. This clearly invites a compositional conception. Secondly, in the context of theological origination Ibn Sina would have to speak of essence as the essence of a thing of *some sort*, say, of horse,not the essence of a *particular* thing, of *this* horse. The reason is obvious, for there is no particular thing to speak of yet. Whereas Ibn Rushd, and Sadra later, try to capitalize on this point in criticizing the compositional conception, it should be clear that the parties in the dispute are not talking about the same essence. The essence that the identifiers talk about is the essence of this horse. This essence is identical with the existence of this horse, in the sense we have explained; and there will

be more on this in our chapter on Sadra. The essence of an *existing* horse—namely, of this horse—is identical with the existence of this horse. We are obviously no longer in the theological origins context. Whatever were the constraints of that context on Ibn Sina, there is nothing about it that requires him in the metaphysical context to analyze the existing world—after it exists, so to speak—in the same way. There is no contradiction in saying existence is added to the essence of a horse, but in *this existing* horse *its* horseship (the horseship of it) is in its being this horse.

One does not find in Ibn Sina the language of the identity of essence and existence in existing things. There is too much concern in his writings with the logical-semantical and theological contexts and these call for the separation of essence and existence. However, in our analysis of Ibn Sina's metaphysics we have seen that there is a clear involvement of existence in the individual substances before us now. It is another matter whether Ibn Sina would have gone further to identify essence and existence in existing things. We are claiming that his separating essence and existence in the theological and the logical-semantical contexts need not have stood in his way had he wanted this further option. Another way of making the point is that if Ibn Sina did not speak of the identity of essence and existence in things, it is not because of his "separating" them in conception or in their coming to be. This should have bearing on whether his critics have hit their target or not.

2

God and Necessary Existence

In *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* Ibn Rushd joins the controversy between Ghazali and the Philosophers over the precise way of formulating the relationship between necessary existence and God's essence. The Philosophers, in their desire to safeguard God's unity and simplicity, had argued against any formulation that would make it seem as if God has an essence which, among other things, is charac-

terized by necessary existence. They also had another reason for denying an essence for God, for such an essence might compromise His uniqueness by giving Him a genus and a differentia. We have seen in the last chapter how Ibn Sina fought against assigning an essence to God and insisted that the best thing to say is that God is sheer necessary existence.

Ghazali in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* protested against this move that seems to deprive God of an essence. He thought it possible to speak of God as having an essence which is necessary existence, in the manner of an essential attribution which does not introduce plurality.

As Ibn Rushd enters the discussion it is fairly obvious that there is no disagreement among all parties on the substantive doctrine that God is a necessary being. The issue is simply one of adequately relating this necessary existence to God's nature.

In our discussion of Ibn Sina's handling of this matter we noted that it was a technical sense of essence, the one with the implication of having genus and differentia, that ought to be denied of God. As it happens this is a denial which was also promoted by Ghazali and the Ash'arites before him.[17] But such a denial does not require one to maintain that God has no nature or essence in any sense. Ibn Rushd believes Ghazali to have read this further move into the Philosophers' first denial. If it is a fact that the Philosophers did reject any talk of God having a nature, then they would be on indefensible grounds, according to Ibn Rushd. However, the latter interprets them differently from the way Ghazali does, and we believe Ibn Rushd is right in his interpretation.

Ghazali had said in his criticism:

> . . . an existence without quiddity or real nature *(ḥaqīqah)* is inconceivable; for how could it (the existent) be defined as single, conceptually differentiated from others if it did not have a real nature? . . . Indeed the denial of the essence is the denial of the real nature, and by the denial of this reality nothing remains but the word "existence." . . .[18]

[17]The point about the Ash'arites is noted by Ibn Rushd in *The Incoherence of the Incoherence;* p.364.

[18]In *Ibid.*, p. 397.

When Ibn Rushd comes to the rescue of the Philosophers, he tells Ghazali that he has misunderstood his opponents. For these do not say that God has an existence *without* essence, they simply say that the First, unlike other things, has no essence which is differentiated from Its existence.[19] Thus Ibn Rushd would interpret Ibn Sina's assertion that the First is sheer existence not in the sense taken by Ghazali—namely, that the First has existence *instead* of an essence, but that the two are coincidental, "identical," undifferentiated. In the uncompounded, i.e., simple being, existence is the essence itself.[20] And to keep this clearly distinguished from the identification in finite things, we repeat that in God it is qua God not qua "concrete" individual that existence enters into or is the essence.

In the course of his defense of the Philosophers on this issue, however, Ibn Rushd takes the occasion one more time to criticize Ibn Sina on the accidentiality of existence. This time the context of the discussion of essence and existence in the First gives a new twist to Ibn Rushd's campaign.

If, as Ibn Sina maintains, existence is an accident (in the case of composite existents), then it becomes difficult when speaking of the First to say how the simple can be identical with its essence. In Ibn Rushd's view this problem does not arise if *al-mawjūd* in the sense of entity were the sense intended, for then it becomes possible to speak of existence in the simple as the essence itself.[21] We have already seen how *al-mawjūd* in that sense was used by Ibn Rushd to refer to the very *dhāt* of composite being as well.

In his reply Ibn Sina could probably explain that the accidentiality of existence does not, indeed cannot, carry over in the talk about God. For if it is the accidentiality of the logical context, where existence is external to the essence of a thing qua that sort of thing, then God is declared an exception. He is the *only being,* qua the being He is, Whose essence is existence; and there are independent philosophical reasons why essence and existence have to

[19]*Ibid.*, p.399.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 400.

[21]*Ibidem.*

be identified in the First.[22] If, on the other hand, it is the accidentiality of the theological context, where existence does not belong necessarily to any thing qua dependent being, then God is precisely the being, *the only being*, who stands in marked contrast to this, for He is the Necessary Being. So it is not as if Ibn Sina has to face the problem as Ibn Rushd puts it to him: how can existence be the essence in the simple if it is an accident in the composite?

The Possible and the Necessary

Ibn Sina divided being into the possible, the necessary, and the impossible. As an Aristotelian he rejects the occasionalism of the Ash'arites and advocates necessary causal connection among things. Thus the possible in itself becomes in fact the necessary through another. For the possible, as that whose essence does not include existence, must depend on a cause, and its existence thus becomes necessary in relation to that cause.

Ibn Rushd is unhappy with the way Ibn Sina explains these concepts. For one thing, Ibn Rushd maintains, it is an insufficient characterization of the Necessary Being simply to say: He has no cause. As a necessary being it would follow, of course, that He is not dependent on a cause, but simply to say He "has no cause" is not to capture the true character of the First's absolute necessity.

Moreover, the notion of the possible as what has a cause cannot give the true nature of that sort of being either. For what has its existence from another must by itself be non-existent.[23] Ibn Rushd wants to substitute his own notion of the possible, the "really possible," which is a character of existents qua existents.[24] In defining possibility by reference to an external condition rather than inherent nature, Ibn Sina has robbed that concept of having objective anchor

[22]See *The Book of Healing* I, 6, pp. 37-42, and *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* (Vol. II) VIII, 4, pp. 343-49.

[23]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 199.

[24]That Ibn Rushd is concerned with the character of existents qua existents may be inferred from *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 279, lines 10-13.

in the nature of things themselves rather than in the relations into which they enter.

This difficulty becomes compounded, according to Ibn Rushd, by the idea of such possible being *becoming* necessary when it enters a causal nexus. How, asks Ibn Rushd critically, can that which is possible in itself become necessary through another ("receive necessity from another") without presuming a change in its nature? But if a change *in nature* is required, then how is this conceivable in Ibn Sina, if existence and its related conditions such as possibility and necessity are *accidental* to a thing and its nature?[25]

Several points need to be made about the issue. First, it is true that Ibn Sina often characterizes the possible as what has a cause outside it and the necessary as what has no cause, but there is also another and more fundamental way in which these sorts of beings are characterized. In *The Book of Salvation* Ibn Sina states: "Necessary being is the being the non-existence of which is impossible to suppose; possible being is that the existence or non-existence of which is not impossible to suppose."[26] Here having or not having a cause are not the primary characteristics used in defining each sort of being respectively. Indeed a being the non-existence of which is impossible to suppose will have to be an independent being, one the existence of which does not depend on an other. By any standard this is a perfectly adequate conception of the Necessary Being, and Ibn Rushd seems unfair to his opponent on this point.

As to the conception of possible being, if we take the formula in *The Book of Salvation*, we notice that unlike "has a cause," it is put in the negative—"not impossible to suppose." Furthermore, the non-necessary character of that existence is brought out in terms of the precariousness of both existence and non-existence. If such a sort of being does exist or if it does not exist— neither is impossible, and the contingent character is already portrayed—then the

[25]*Commentary on the Metaphysics* III, p. 1632; the point is repeated in *Exposition of the Methods of Proof*, p. 33; see also *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, pp. 195ff. on the externality of possible and necessary existence.

[26]*The Book of Healing* III, p. 224.

existence and non-existence will need to be explained by reference to an outside agent. Nothing about its being as possible *in itself* can explain either its existence (unlike the necessary) or its non-existence (unlike the impossible). Dependence on a cause, although uniquely characteristic of this sort of being, in the way in which not having a cause is uniquely characteristic of the Necessary Being, is nonetheless a derivative characteristic. What fundamentally captures the notion of possible being is that the existence or non-existence of beings of this sort is not impossible.

Ibn Rushd proposes to substitute for this his notion of the really possible which is characteristic of existents.[27] The advantage he reaps from that notion is exhibited in his criticism of Ibn Sina's method of arguing for the Necessary Being from the character of possible being as what has a cause. If "has a cause" is all that "possible" means, then Ibn Sina is unable to clinch his argument by relying on the impossibility of infinite regress, because that notion of the possible is precisely what leaves him with nothing but an infinite regress.[28] For, Ibn Rushd argues, if X is possible, it must be caused by Y. X is possible in itself, necessary through Y. But Y is not necessary in itself—nothing requires it to be—therefore Y is possible and has a cause. So we are led to Z, and so on. In other words the very notion of "has a cause" brings on the next link, and the chain goes on. On the other hand, the notion of real possibility does not have this logical link-adding feature. As Van den Bergh explains, "For material causes cannot proceed from one another endlessly, e.g., flesh from earth, earth from air, air from fire, and so on."[29]

Ibn Rushd is concerned here, among other things, with whether Ibn Sina's argument has a demonstrative form,[30]

[27]Insofar as they have a material principle; see Van den Bergh *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, Vol. II, p. 143, n. 252.2. It should be noted that for Ibn Rushd what is "really possible" is still factually or causally necessary.

[28]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, pp. 277ff.

[29]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence* (Van den Bergh), Vol. II, p. 104, n. 164.7.

[30]*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 420.

and he offers an alternative formulation which he says is more valid.[31] For our purposes we are not interested in the validity of the demonstration, but with the issue of the adequacy of the conception of possible being. Our excursion into the demonstration issue was merely to extend the area in which Ibn Rushd claims the superiority of his conception of the possible over Ibn Sina's.

Whatever advantages or disadvantages manifest themselves in the argument, the question is whether the two notions of the possible are on the same wavelength. Ibn Rushd, if we have understood him correctly, seems to be concerned with possibility as the possibility of being X rather than Y which might be subject of a scientific or metaphysical investigation. Or if it is the generalized form of the claim that all being is divided into the possible in itself (though necessary through another) and the necessary itself, then Ibn Rushd thinks that this "is only known through the nature of existing things."[32] On the other hand, Ibn Sina seems to make the division an *a priori* matter, and also a matter of theological outlook. From his theological perspective he would be concerned not only with the possibility of becoming this rather than that, but with the possibility of coming-to-be as such, of "coming out into existence," of existence occurring to or befalling (something). With that end in mind it is not clear what "real possibility" has which "plain possibility"—the non-impossibility of existing (or non-existing)—does not have.

We come now to the question of the possible in itself becoming necessary through another. Whatever happens when there is a change from the condition of possible in itself to necessary through another, it is not clear why a change in nature is required. If the existential status in Ibn Sina is, as Ibn Rushd charges, in the relational characteristics, then a change in those relational characteristics can take place without any change in nature. The possible in itself would be the dependent on a cause, for it is not necessary in itself; the necessary through another is still related

[31]*Ibid.*, pp. 278-79.

[32]*Ibid.*, p. 418.

to a cause except that the modality of the relation is specified. Both states, the possible in itself and the possible in itself but necessary through another, are relational states. If the modes of existence, the possible and the necessary, are accidental to the nature of a (finite) thing in the way existence is, then there can be a change in these relational conditions which are accidental without a correlative change in its nature. For the change in question is merely a specification of the causal mode.

CHAPTER EIGHT
MULLA SADRA

Of the philosophers in the post-classical period perhaps the most important is Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, otherwise known as Mulla Sadra. The first part of his immense *The Book of Four Journeys* is devoted exclusively to problems of being. This constitutes one of the most extensive treatments of the subject in the literature of Islamic philosophy. We shall select from that material what we need to continue our discussion of the vocabulary problem, on the one hand, and the classical controversy over essentialism, on the other. In each case we shall dwell on what seems novel to our discussion so far, if not in point of view, then at least in presentation or argument.

On the vocabulary issue there is in Sadra nothing self-conscious and explicit of the sort we saw in Farabi. However, we do find some interesting new *wjd* derivatives. On essentialism, we find Sadra fighting his battle primarily against Suhrawardi. There is no reference to Ibn Rushd's quarrels with Ibn Sina. As a matter of fact there is a singular absence of any reference to Ibn Rushd on this or any other topic. This is all the more striking since on the essentialist-existentalist controversy, Sadra basically defends the same sort of anti-essentialist position taken by Ibn Rushd.

1

THE VOCABULARY FOR BEING

Mawjūdiyyah and Wujūdiyyah

We find in Sadra two *wjd* derivatives not occurring among the philosophers we have discussed so far. Whereas Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd were content with the nominal types *mawjūd* and *wujūd* used for either being or existence, among other things, Sadra often uses *"mawjūdiyyah"* and *"wujūdiyyah,"* nouns formed from the adjectival forms of *"mawjūd"* and *"wujūd,"* respectively.[1] The new form of these terms suggests a further degree of abstraction. This leads one to expect that Sadra would perhaps use them in a specialized way for "being" in its widest extension. Or perhaps he may have devised them (one or both) especially for that sense of being or existence which in his philosophy is the pure mental abstraction *(intizā'i maṣdarī 'aqlī)*, i.e., the *concept* of being or existence which contrasts with real *concrete* being or existence. But this is not so, or, at least, not just plainly so. Rather than replacing the older terms, the new ones often overlap with them, duplicating their work. And it seems that the promise for introducing some specialization and tidiness in the Arabic vocabulary for being, raised by these one-step-more-abstract forms, remains unfulfilled.

In one passage in which Sadra presents Ibn Sina's ideas we read that *"al-mawjūdiyyah"* does not have the sense of the abstracted verbal noun *(al-intizā'ī al-maṣdarī)*, rather it means "pure existence" *(ṣirf al-wujūd)*, i.e. concrete existence, what has its *mawjūdiyyah* in itself.[2] Here the term *"mawjūdiyyah"* is used in a restricted sense. Not only does it exclude the *intizā'ī maṣdarī* sense of *wujūd*, but also the

[1]Sadra also uses *"wujūdāt"* for the things that are, but this is just a synonym for the familiar *"mawjūdāt"* and opens up no special possibilities.

[2]*The Book of the Four Journeys*, I, 1, 48. A note on the way we shall refer to this work: e.g., "I" is for the first of the four *Journeys*, "1" is for the first published separate volume in the Dār al-Ma'ārif edition, (Qom, n.d.) and "48" is for the page.

mental mode of being as such, the concept of *'adam* and the logically impossible.

However, in another location, this time speaking for himself, Sadra says that the *wujūd* in every thing is real, except for the abstracted *wujūd*, which is the *mawjūdiyyah*.[3] He then adds the clause "whether it be the *mawjūdiyyah* of *al-wujūd* (existence) or the *mawjūdiyyah* of essence."[4] Here the term *"mawjūdiyyah"* is used explicitly for the *intizā'ī maṣdarī*,[5] and is said to apply to both essence and existence. This latter fact makes the term function somewhat like the term "being" in its wide sense. But there is no evidence that Sadra used *mawjūdiyyah* for all the functions of "being" or "to be." For that or what nearly approximates to that, he still follows tradition and uses *wujūd* and *mawjūd*. Thus it is *wujūd* which is said to be the most extensive and most apparent to intuition.[6] The same is said of the *mawjūd*.[7] And the copula is called a term of *wujūd*[8] or of *mawjūd*.[9]

It does not seem, then, that the new *wjd* derivatives are given a specialized assignment, either for "being" in its most general sense, or for one or another of the various domains of being. The several terms are used instead for one meaning or another, and the sense for each use is distinguishable only in context.

But while the terms *"wujūdiyyah"* and *"mawjūdiyyah"* do not contribute to the technical aspect of the vocabulary problem for being in the way we have been concerned with it, they offer a distinct advantage, as, for example, when they are used in those near-duplicating phrases, *mawjūdiyyat al-wujūd*. This provides a sensible way for making a second-level and more abstract reference to *al-wujūd*, an abstraction certainly more precise and less clumsy than can be achieved by, say, the phrases *mawjūd al-wujūd* or *wujūd al mawjūd*.

[3]I, 1, 65.

[4]*Ibidem;* also *Ibid.* 174 *al-wujūdiyyah al-maṣdariyyah;* See I, 1, 415.

[5]The term *"wujūdiyyah"* is used that way also.

[6]I, 1, 60, 62; also I, 1, 146, 340.

[7]I, 1, 85; also I, 1, 340.

[8]I, 1, 146.

[9]I, 1, 291.

Being, Existence.

The second main vocabulary question is to determine when Sadra is talking about existence and when about being, and whether the two are at all differentiated. Some of the material for answering this has already appeared in the section just concluded.

One obvious rule of thumb is that when Sadra contrasts or identifies *māhiyyah* (essence) with *wujūd* or *mawjūd*—as in his controversy with the essentialists—it is safe to take the latter two terms as meaning existence. This *wujūd* or *mawjūd* is distinguished into the two traditional modes: objective or external *(khārijī)* and mental *(dhihnī,* or *'aqlī;* also called *i'tibārī).*

Another fairly obvious guideline is: where he assigns to the *wjd* derivative the widest extension, saying that *al-mawjūd* (or *al-wujūd*) is the most general "thing," ranging over (in his words "its shadow falls on")[10] existences and essences, both objective and mental, as well as over the concept of the nothing, the logically impossible, and vacuous concepts like God's partner, then in such passages he must be talking about being. Here is a typical passage:

> *(al-wujūd)* . . . is the most general *(a'amm)* of things by virtue of its including and extending over essences, even the idea of absolute nothing, relation, potentiality, disposition, the lack and similar negative concepts . . . and it is the most apparent in its reality *(taḥaqquqan)* and thatness *(inniyyah),* so that it is called self-evident *(badihī);* . . . nothing is realized in the mind or externally except by it. It comprehends all things within itself, and by it do things stand *(taqūmu.)*[11]

We have already seen that Sadra distinguishes between the *wujūd* which is a mental abstraction *(maṣdarī intizā'ī)* and the *wujūd* which is real *(ḥaqīqī).* One can say that the minimal difference between these two is their mode of being; one is conceptual, the other concrete and objective. A further difference is that the concept is abstracted by the mind and is thus like a universal. As he says, it is like man-ness *(al-insāniyyah)* and whiteness *(al-abyaḍiyyah),*[12]

[10]I, 1, 146.

[11]I, 1, 260. The examples of the logically impossible and God's partner appear in other places, see, eg., I, 1, 146.

[12]I, 1, 65.

like thingness *(al-shay'iyyah)* and possibility *(al-mumkiniyyah).*[13] In being universal it has a relatively wide extension. However, there is nothing about that fact in itself that makes the conceptual *wujūd* equivalent to the concept of being in its widest sense. The transformation from the concrete real to the conceptual universal does not necessarily widen the extension to the full "width" of the concept of being.

For example, the desk, the rug, the pen exist before me now. We might say this is what they are "doing" without me, on their own. I come into the picture and note that these things exist, and I begin abstracting the concept of something existing, of things existing, of existence. All of this can still be limited to the sort of existence of these concrete objects. The abstracted concept can still be the concept of what exists objectively or, even, in the manner of physical objects. Just for being a concept, and a universal one at that, it does not extend beyond the constituency from which it was abstracted. Unlike the general concept of being, this concept of objective existence in our example does not reign over the concept of the nothing, or the impossible. And although it is itself a concept, it does not reign over the domain of mental existence as such, for it is the concept of objective existence only. As a concept it has mental existence, but as the concept of objective existence it does not refer to itself.

Of course it is possible for the concept of *wujūd* or *mawjūd* or *mawjūdiyyah* to have a wider extension; as a matter of fact it can have as wide an extension as there are things that can be said to be, if that is the constituency for which it stands as an abstract concept. Indeed, Sadra maintains that the *wujūd* which is "general and self-evident" is a mental concept.[14] It is the one that is used for the concept of being in its widest sense.

Our point about the conceptual *wujūd,* then, is that it is mental for being universal, but it is not of the widest exten-

[13]I, 1, 406. By contrast, of course, the true nature of concrete existence is individual *(lā yanfakk 'an l-tashakḳkhuṣ,* I, 1, 305); it is not a universal essence, I, 1, 255.

[14]I, 1, 37.

sion just for being mental and universal. To be equivalent to the concept of being in its widest extension it has to be introduced independently as the concept that stands for all that can be said to be. It cannot derive that magic "width" merely from being a universal concept.

It would seem at first, then, that in Sadra one can speak of a contrast between being and existence, and that this contrast is not obscured by the fact that the same vocabulary is used for both. However, further analysis will show us that the contrast between being and existence is really on an existential scale, within the notion of existence. *Wujūd* in the wide sense just refers to a greater variety of modes of existents than the restricted sense of *wujūd*. It is not wider because it ranges over a variety of uses of the *wjd* derivatives, the existential, the copulative, the predicative, and the veridical. The width of *wujūd* is proposed for metaphysics, and significantly for an anti-essentialist metaphysics. It is not a width of the sort one observes when one surveys all the various uses of "to be." This is understandable, since Sadra is speaking as a metaphysician offering a theory of being, not as an analyst of the philosophic vocabulary of being. Others like Farabi and Ibn Rushd (Aristotle, of course) did both. For these "being" and "to be" have more than the existential sense or function.

Bi-l-tashkīk

According to Sadra, when the term *"wujūd"* is used in the widest sense, that sense is not univocal *(bi-l-tawāṭu')*. Nor is its meaning ambiguous or *mushtarak*. Rather it applies *bi-l-tashkīk*, i.e., there is one meaning, but this meaning does not apply equally *lā 'alā l-sawā'*[15] to all that "falls under it," for among the things that can be said to be there are differences in priority and posteriority, intensity and diminution. This is a difference in the share things have in being.

[15]I, 1, 258. Sadra reproaches al-Rāzi (Fakhr al-Dīn) for not distinguishing between *al-tasāwī fī l-mafhūm* and *al-tasāī fī l-ḥaqīqah;* so that for Sadra sameness in meaning does not necessitate sameness (or equality) in reality: I, 1, 120-21.

In this same passage on *tashkīk* Sadra tells us that this one meaning is the sense of *al-kawn*. This is not much help, even if it is meant to tell us that *mawjūd* has some vaguely existential sense. Of course it may be that we face here the consequence of the claim by Ibn Sina and Sadra, among others, that the concept of being is in a definitional sense primitive. It can be grasped by intuition, but cannot be analyzed nor defined in terms of any other notion.

Be that as it may, it is still possible to interpret Sadra's concept of being in an existential sense, as we shall see.

First, however, there is a minor terminological problem that should be cleared up. In the passage we have been discussing Sadra opts for *tashkīk*, rejecting both *tawāṭu'* and *ishtirāk*. However, earlier in the *Asfār*, in a passage that we will discuss shortly, he rejects *tawāṭu'* with respect to the meaning of *mawjūd*, but he advocates *ishtirāk*, which is what we have just seen he rejects. The explanation is in the fact that in the latter location,[16] where he accepts *ishtirāk*, *tashkīk* is implicitly treated as a kind of *ishtirāk*. This suggests that there is a broad non-technical and a narrow technical sense of *ishtirāk*. The broad sense is when we have one word that differs in some way in its applications. When the difference is a difference in meaning, we have ambiguity or *ishtirāk*. That is the narrow or technical sense. When the difference is only in priority and posteriority, intensity and diminution, i.e., in the share that things have in being, we have *tashkīk*. If this is so, then Sadra could be said to reject *ishtirāk* in the narrow sense (ambiguity) as the kind of meaning for *wujūd*. And in advocating *tashkīk* or analogy, he could be said to be accepting *ishtirāk* in the broad sense.

In that early passage to which we just referred[17] Sadra argues for the existence of a sameness in meaning in the applications of *wujūd* in spite of the differences in the share that things have in being. His argument is as follows. The mind perceives a similarity and analogy among the things that are which does not exist between the things that are, on the one hand, and the nothing, on the other. If the things

[16]I, 1, 35.

[17]*Ibidem.*

that are did not have this aspect of similarity, there would have been among them the dissimilarity that now obtains between being and non-being.

Furthermore, the analogy that exists among the things that are, in so far as they are, is not due to the fact that we refer to all of them with one word or phrase, say, "being" or "the realm of being." For suppose, Sadra says, we carved out a new ad hoc "class" composed of the nothing and *some* things that are, and then invented a word for this odd conglomerate. Then suppose it were the case that we had no word in the language such as we now have that stands for all that we now consider the things that are. This transformation, Sadra maintains, would not in the least create nor imply a similarity or analogy between the nothing, on the one hand, and that selected group of beings that were enticed to defect. And this is true in spite of our having one and the same word for the ad hoc grouping.

Conversely, the new situation does not invalidate the analogy that would still hold between the "defectors" and the "loyalists," even though in the stipulation we lack a word that names both cousin groups in being.

Briefly, what Sadra claims through this argument is that the analogy among the things that are, and the disanalogy between being and non-being, are directly apprehendable by the mind. And that neither the presence of analogy in the one case nor its absence in the other is a function of whether we have one common word where there is analogy and no common word where there is disanalogy.

This is interesting in at least two ways. Firstly, Sadra, along with Aristotle and some contemporary Western philosophers, seems to be rejecting the "one name, one nature" semantical assumption. The analogy or near common nature among the things that are is not to be inferred from the fact that we call all these things by one name.

Secondly, in the above argument, as indeed in Sadra's entire *tashkīk* metaphysics, the similarity or analogy is said to hold among the *mawjūdāt* as contrasted with the *ma'dūmāt*. Now the *mawjūdāt*, disparate as they are in their share in being, can all be said to be, i.e., *to exist*, in some sense. And the one meaning that is sustained despite

the differences is the existential meaning of *wujūd* and *mawjūd*. There is no attempt, not here at any rate, to show that the one meaning of which he speaks is a meaning common to all the uses of *"wujūd"* and *"mawjūd,"* i.e, common to the existential, the purely copulative, or the predicative and the veridical.[18] But let us now take a brief look at what Sadra calls *al-wujūd al-rābiṭ* (the copulative to be) and its relation to the existential *wujūd*.

Following tradition Sadra speaks of the copulative *mawjūd* as a kind of *wujud (ḍarbun min al-wujūd)*.[19] Yet he clearly wants to distinguish between the copulative to be *(al-wujūd al-rābiṭ)* and real being *(al-wujūd al-ḥaqq)*.

Like others before him, Sadra maintains that it is possible to use the copula to join a subject and a predicate without any implications about reality.[20] The official doctrine is that what is so joined is in the mind. But does this mean that the copula in that logical unit entertained by the mind is a kind of being *(ḍarbun min al-wujūd)* in the sense that it is existential in function though mental in reference?

Here we must guard against a possible confusion. The judgment *"S mawjūd or yūjad P"* as a judgment differs ontologically from the real subject who is characterized by P. The proposition as entertained by the mind may be called mental, i.e, exists in or for the mind. But the existential function which assigns mentality is performed by the "is" of another proposition: "'S *yūjad* P' is mental." This may be translated as: "The proposition 'S *yūjad* P' exists in the mind." The original copula, however, in 'S *yūjad* P' need neither assign nor deny mental or any other existence to anything. It is (at least) a purely syntactical device. The mental status of the unit does not convert the function of the copula in that unit into an existential, mind-referring function. Thus when Sadra says that the copula is a *ḍarbun min al-wujūd*, he can only mean that the copulative term is a *wjd* derivative or a *kalimat al-wujūd*, or *lafẓ al-wujūd*. Its

[18]In Arabic, the "is" of identity is indicated by *"huwa huwa,"* not by a *wjd* derivative, and hence does not enter the picture here.

[19]I, 1, 36.

[20]I, 1, 138f; also p. 180.

function cannot be assimilated to the existential just because it helps form a unit of thought which is mental in its mode of existence.

What perhaps facilitates thinking of the copula in Arabic as existential is the "to find" sense in the etymology of the *wjd* derivative. And of course there are cases such as those of singular propositions in which an existential inference is contextually implied. But as Farabi has made abundantly clear, on the first point, the meaning or function of words in language, especially of the technical terms, cannot be decided on the basis of etymology. And in the case where existential inference is justified and one is tempted to say the copula is doubling up in function, the two functions are still distinct.

If, then, the function of the purely copulative *mawjūd* cannot be assimilated to the existential function, this makes it more difficult to treat the one meaning that Sadra speaks about as a meaning common to all the uses of the term "*mawjūd.*" The one meaning Sadra has in mind, then, is to be understood for the purely existential metaphysical use of the term, where the typical function is to assert that something exists either in the mind or in external reality, or to refer to what so exists. This fits well with Sadra's claim that the differences that go with the one meaning are differences in priority and posteriority, intensity and diminution. These are appropriate differences within the realm of existing things, be they mental or external. They are not differences that can meaningfully apply to all the uses of *wujūd.*

The existential "reduction," shall we call it, while not succeeding with the purely copulative use of *mawjūd*—it would not work with the purely veridical use either, the "to be" as "to be so," or "the true," as Ibn Rushd would have said—such an existential reduction is carried more successfully in the case of such other topics of discourse as absolute nothing, negations, essences, the logically impossible, chimeras, and other vacuous concepts. For these are said to have *wujūd as ideas in the mind.* The absolute nothing in itself is not being, but the concept *(mafhūm)* of the nothing, insofar as it is mental, has being.[21]

[21]I, 1, 350.

Essences in themselves cannot be said to either exist or not exist, but they do exist in the mind or in things. It is not that they have being and in addition they enjoy a mental and objective existence. Rather they have being in that they exist in things, objective or mental.[22] Finally, the logically impossible, chimeras and vacuous concepts like the concept of a partner to God, these have being in that they are concepts in the mind, and thus have a mode of existence.

In the end, then, one will have to say that wide as the concept of being is in Sadra, the sense is existential. We say this on the basis of the analysis we have just given, and not from the superficial observation that is sometimes made that Arabic unlike some other languages has no word for being as distinct from existence. We have already seen in Chapter Three not only that this is false, but also that in order to distinguish between being and existence, it is not necessary that the words for being and existence should come from different roots. Even so, the different root condition in Arabic was available to Sadra, and he himself at times does resort to "*kawn*" among other appropriate alternatives.

Let us now move to a discussion of certain points relevant to Sadra's controversy with Suhrawardi over essentialism.

2

ESSENCE, EXISTENCE AND ESSENTIALISM

Introductory Statement

Suhrawardi's arguments are directed at someone who makes at least two assumptions: first, that essence and existence are two distinct aspects or ingredients of objective things, and, second, that to say of anything that it exists is to say that the property (or ingredient) existence has been added to it, or, that something exists by the addi-

[22]On the status of the Forms as individual existents, consult Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra, passim.*

tion of existence. This way of thinking leads to the difficulties that are the substance of Suhrawardi's arguments. And indeed the material is familiar from the Ibn Sina-Ibn Rushd controversy.

One of these difficulties that Suhrawardi mentions is that the addition of existence to essence presupposes some sort of reality or existence for the essence before existence comes to it. The other is that in such a compositional picture some reality or existence will have to be assumed for the existence component. By the second assumption—namely, that existence is an addition to what exists, this means that that existence exists by the addition of existence, and so on for each step in the regress.

Sadra's main thrust against Suhrawardi is on two fronts: the first is to show that the essentialism in the interest of which Suhrawardi advances his arguments is a fallacious doctrine; second, that Suhrawardi's arguments are directed at and possibly effective against a conception of the relation between essence and existence which is mistaken in the first place. Sadra's own doctrine of the relation between essence and existence is thus offered both as a corrective to Suhrawardi's essentialism and as an example of how to avoid the difficulties raised by Suhrawardi's arguments.

Sadra believes that these difficulties can be avoided by maintaining, as he does, that essence and existence are "identical" in things, that a thing exists by being the thing it is not by having existence added to it. Moreover, the identity of essence and existence, according to Sadra, is in a universe in which existence and not essence is the primary being. Yet this primacy has to be understood in a way which is consistent with the identity claim. We shall have a word about this at the end of the chapter.

Separation In the Mind

Sadra's identity thesis allows for the separating analytic capacity of the mind. For the mind there is a difference *in conception (taghāyur bi-l-mafhūm)* between essence and existence. This makes it logically possible for the mind to conceive the essence of something which does not exist,

e.g., the *'anqā'* (griffin),[23] a fictitious bird. Further, the mind conceives the essence of what could and/or does exist, but without regard to the question of its existence. The mind can also form a concept of what cannot exist: the logically impossible and the nothing. Another example of the "separating" capacity of the mind which is related to our discussion is when the mind extracts or abstracts the concept of existence. This is the *wujūd maṣdarī intizā'ī* discussed earlier, which is treated by Sadra like a universal.

"In Reality, In the Mind"

However, whereas essence and existence differ in conception and for the mind, they do not differ in reality. In *The Book of Insights* Sadra speaks succinctly of "their existential identity and their conceptual difference,"[24] or, again, "identity in the outside and difference in the mind."[25]

Before we discuss what it means to say that existence and essence are *identical* in reality, let us comment on the contrast phrases "in reality" and "in the mind." An important clarification is needed here, for the difference and the identity are not being measured on the same scale. The contrast is not of the coordinate or symmetrical sort.

Without the needed clarification it may be thought that Sadra's claim is that in the mental realm there is *only* separation, and, by contrast, the identity is only in external reality. But when Sadra says that essence and existence are identical in reality, he means for the expression "in reality" to include the mental realm as well. For mental existence is a realm of being and consists of particular existents, ideas, and the like. Even the idea of some universal which occurred to someone last Tuesday is a particular mental existent. Whatever leads Sadra to the doctrine of the identity of essence and existence in what is outside the mind must apply to mental existents as well. And Sadra explicitly says this:

> Essence is united with external existence in the outside, and with mental existence in the mind. However, the mind in so far

[23] I, 1, 269.
[24] *The Book of Insights*, p. 13.
[25] *Ibidem.*

> as it can conceive the essence without regard to anything pertaining to existence judges a difference between the two, but this only according to the mind.[26]

What he is saying, therefore, is that only in the mind is there a separation. He is not saying that in the mind there is only separation.

Another way of putting this is that ontologically there is identity between essence and existence, and this applies equally to the two ontological realms: mental and external existence. Semantically and conceptually, however, there can be separation, and this occurs only in the mind because that is the only domain of meaning and concepts. Thus if it is simply the difference in conception that is on Sadra's mind, it is understandable for him simply to say "difference in the mind but identity in reality outside."

Here is another quotation that is equally explicit on this matter:

> The otherness of essence vis-a-vis existence, and the attribution of existence to essence are a mental matter and obtain only in the mind not in the outside. But if the essence is in the mind, it is also not separated from existence, for the being *(al-kawn)* which is in the mind is mental existence just as the being outside (the mind) is external existence. However, it is characteristic of the mind to consider essence by itself without attending to the two modes of existence: the external and the mental.[27]

One should say that even the ideas by which the semantical differentiation between essence and existence is made, the particular incidence of the ideas of essence, existence, meaning, difference—these are mental existents, and therefore in each of them the identity of essence and existence is exemplified.

Let us now consider what it means to say that essence and existence are *identical.*

Identity But Not of Two Things

Sadra says that "essence is identified *(muttaḥidah)* with existence in reality *(fī l-wāqi')* in a sort of identity *(naḥwan min al-ittiḥād)*."[28] What sort?

One thing Sadra does *not* mean by *ittiḥād* is the union of two ontologically distinct things. On this he argues in the same way Ghazali did before him against any notion of identity between man and God. Either the two things remain present after the "identification," but then there are still two; or, secondly, one remains and the other disappears, but then we have the disappearance of one not the identification between the two; or, thirdly, they come together to form a third unit, each of the original two losing its identity in the process, but in this case we have a new third thing not an identity between the original two.[29]

The rejection of *ittiḥād* as a process by which two ontologically distinguishable things become one serves Sadra well in his dispute with Suhrawardi. For part of Suhrawardi's indirect case for essentialism is in pointing out the difficulties inherent in a dualistic compositional analysis of individual realities. Not only does such an analysis lead to logical difficulties according to Suhrawardi's view, but on the way to those consequences unacceptable claims are made about the reality of existence.

Sadra's rejection of the dualistic root for the *ittiḥād*-relation between essence and existence prepares the way for his view that *ittiḥād* refers to some sort of numerically single fact or event.

One Denotation, Diverse Descriptions

However, this is not a sufficient characterization of *ittiḥād,* for Sadra does not speak here simply of the *wāḥid.* Rather, it is *ittiḥād,* and this clearly implies an aspect of diversity. Indeed, Sadra speaks of a difference in meaning between essence and existence, but an identity in reality. This formula of identity with difference appears in more general terms in Sadra's explanation of *al-huwa huwa* or *al-huwa huwiyyah.* We turn to this for some useful material.

[26] I, 1, 59.
[27] I, 1, 56.
[28] *Ibidem.*
[29] I, 2, 97.

The *huwa huwa*, Sadra says, is "the identity of two things in existence while they differ in some other respect."[30] One of these respects of difference is in meaning.[31] Although he speaks here of the identity of *two* things, the intent is to say that in reality there is one thing, not two that become identified.

In explaining the *huwa huwa*, Sadra gives three examples, all of which illustrate how there can be *one* thing referred to despite a multiplicity of description.[32] The first example, 'Zayd is a man,' presents two ways of referring to the self-same individual substance in its aspect as individual substance. Thus "Zayd" and "a man" refer to the same existent, and refer to it qua individual substance. There is a total of one entity in question.

On the other hand, in 'The man is a writer,' while both subject and predicate refer to the self-same individual, the subject picks out the substance itself, the predicate an accident in it.

In the third example, 'The writer moves,' neither subject nor predicate picks out the substance as such, yet both refer to the self-same substance nonetheless—the man who writes and moves.

From the point of view of our discussion, these examples do two things. First they illustrate a way in which there can be one denotation but different descriptions. In other places Sadra considers the oneness of God and the multiplicity of His attributes as an example of the same thing.[33] Second, the examples show what it is that the descriptions pick out in the single individual they denote, the individual as such or one of its accidental features.

How does the relation of essence and existence compare with the relations brought out by the examples?

On the second point—whether the reference is substantive or accidental—it is clear that essence and existence do

[30]I, 2, 93-94.

[31]I, 2, 97.

[32]I, 2, 94. These are all examples of non-tautologous predication which Sadra calls *al-ḥ al-muta'āraf*. This contrasts with the tautologous form which he calls *al-ḥaml al-awwalī al-dhātī* (I, 1, 292f.). The latter provides its own sense of *huwa huwa*, that of strict identity.

[33]I, 1, 175.

not stand in a relation like that of *accident* to substance, neither in the relation of the one to the other, nor in the relation between either and the individual thing. Therefore we should rule out the relation between substance and accidents as the model for the relation of the many to the one which we are seeking.

That existence is not an accident added to essence appears very often in Sadra, and has figured in our discussion of his quarrels with Suhrawardi. Sadra explicitly says on this point that the relation of existence to essence is that of *ittiḥād*, not *ta'alluq* (attaching to)[34] or *luḥūq* (following, dependence),[35] which are the lot of accidents.

We shall note later that essence may be seen as having a sort of "accidental" status in relation to existence. But that turns out to be an affirmation of the general priority of existence in the dynamism of causal determination. It is not an ingredient-priority in the formation and make-up of each individual thing, for this would presuppose the antecedent reality of both, and the becoming one of two ontologically separate things— the very consequences that Sadra wants to avoid.

As to the relation of essence and existence to the thing that is said to have essence and is said to exist, i.e., the relation of the essence of the horse to the horse, the existence of the horse to the horse, it is fairly clear here that the reference is substantive and not accidental. The case would be like the first example, in which "Zayd" and "a man" pick out the individual substance, not an accident in it. The predicate "exists" in 'X exists' surely refers to X as an individual substance. Or, as Sadra's philosophic tradition has it, the existence of a thing is that thing individuated. As to essence—and here we speak of the essence of a thing, not of the universal essence—Sadra says "the essence of a thing has the status of its very self as entity."[36]

There is one further similarity between the 'Zayd is a man' example and the relation between essence and existence, this time on the point of one denotation but diverse

[34]I, 1, 100.

[35]I, 1, 56.

[36]*Ibidem, fī martabat huwiyyat dhātihi.*

description. Just as "Zayd" and "a man" can be said to be one in the sense that they both pick out the same single concrete existent that moves about, in the same way the existence of the horse and the essence of the horse—when we say the horse exists and has an essence—can be said to be "unified" in that they both refer to the same horse that kicks about.

However, close as the above may seem, it is not the model that would help us understand the *ittiḥād* of essence and existence in Sadra. For the essence of X and the existence of X are identified in X not only in the sense that they refer (substantively) to the same individual thing, that they have the same host, or live in the same room, as it were. This can still permit the dualism that Sadra wants to avoid. The substantive reference as such does not save the day. God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost all pick out the same individual substantively. But that there is no multiplicity has to be shown by further considerations.

Before proposing an interpretation of the identity in question, we shall present as background two Aristotelian principles accepted by Sadra. Epigrammatically put these are: 1. There are no suches which are not thised, and, 2. To be a this is to be suched.

There are many quotations from Sadra illustrating the first dictum. Here is a typical one: "Essence . . . *(al-huwiyyah)* has no standing in being *(qiwam)* except in existence."[37] This quotation speaks of existence, and our epigram is in terms of individuation, but the connection is not hard to find. For individuation is the only mode concrete existence takes.[38] As a matter of fact, as Sadra puts it, "existence is the same as individuation *('ayn al-tashakhkhuṣ)*."[39]

The second dictum hardly needs any special or even explicit textual support, for determination by essence *(ta'ayyun)* is the condition for any differentiation *(tamyīz)* implicit in the picking out of a this, granting that individuation entails a more complete description than determination by essence or definition.[40]

[37] I, 1, 187; see also I, 1, 174, 202, 246.
[38] I, 1, 305: *"al-wujūd la-yanfakk an al-tashakhkhuṣ."*
[39] I, 2, 10 and 12.
[40] I, 2, 15.

What these two principles require, at least, is that essence and existence are inseparable. There cannot be one without the other. Sadra wants to go a step further and say that the existence of a thing and its essence are one and the same. The essence of a thing is nothing other than the existence peculiar to a thing.[41] How shall we explain this?

I propose that essence and existence can be said to be identified in a thing (the horse) in the sense that they both refer to the same ontological fact about that thing, by means of two difference descriptions. The operative vocabulary in the one description is that of essence *(thubūt al-māhiyyah)*, in the other, of existence, the *wujūd* of a (determined) thing. To say "horseness is instantiated in the this-here horse" and "this horse exists" is to report the same fact or event.

This is suggested very strongly by the following three quotations:

1. Existence is the same as the realization *(thubūt)* of the essence, not the realization of something in (or for) the essence.[42]
2. Existence is the same as the being *(kawn)* of the essence and its actuation (or realization, *ḥuṣūluha)*, and that by which it (essence) is realized.[43]
3. The existence of each thing is nothing but the reality *(ḥaqīqah)* of its special essence *(huwiyyah)*.[44]

I take the language of these quotations to support the view that the ontological fact (or event) referred to by the term essence (as in "the essence of X") is the self-same ontological fact or event referred to by the term "existence" (as in "the existence of X"). In other words there is one ontological fact about the horse or one thing that happens in or to the horse which is described in the two ways.

One can still apply Sadra's formula that speaks of an ontological identity and a conceptual difference, except that the identity in question is not that we have the same horse as the locus of multiple properties. Rather it is that the existence of *this* horse is the same fact, the same event, as its determination as this *horse*. This horse and this instan-

[41] I, 2, 11.
[42] I, 1, 57.
[43] I, 1, 100.
[44] I, 1, 117.

tiation of horseness are one and the same ontological fact or event. This does not mean that "what a horse is" and "whether it is" have the same meaning. These can still be differentiated in the mind.

However, the identity in question is unlike the relation of strict identity of the *ḥaml l-awwalī*, in which Sadra says the identity is in *both mafhūm* and *wujūd*.[45] This makes the relation of essence to existence in between the relations that obtain in tautologous and non-tautologous predication.

Identification of the Realized with the Unrealized

In one interesting passage Sadra says: "*ittiḥād* cannot be thought to obtain between two existing things *(mutaḥaṣṣil-ayn)*, but can be between the realized and the unrealized as between genus and differentia."[46]

The suggestion that *ittiḥād* obtains between the realized and the unrealized rather than between two existing things reaffirms his rejection of the essence-existence compositional dualism, which is itself the reason for his rejection of *ittiḥād* as a process in which two ontologically separate things become one.

Moreover, the reference to the reality status of the genus and the differentia reflects his belief that there is no counterpart in existence to the genus. This makes it the unrealized *(lā mutaḥaṣṣil)*.[47] Only the differentia exists.[48] In the analogy, essence as such, like the genus, has no reality, but existence does.

This certainly underscores Sadra's anti-essentialism. In his general ontology existence is the sole reality and the only forum for any reality that essence can have. But Sadra must and does hold that there can be no existing things without some sort of determination. And in any determined existing individual thing the relation between essence and existence can still be understood in the way we have explained—namely, a thing's determination in this way rather

[45]I, 1, 293.
[46]I, 1, 100. This idea is more fully discussed in I, 2, 25-29.
[47]I, 1, 100; also I, 1, 273.
[48]I, 2, 36.

than that way is the same ontological event as its existence as this particular individual.

The analogy with the genus and differentia helps to clarify some of the points we have made. For here we have one thing in existence, say a black patch, which can be described as black but also as a color. So there is one thing in fact but a multiple description. This sort of the many-one relation is also discussed by Sadra in terms of the composed *(murakkab)* and the non-composed or simple. And a composition *(tarkīb)* in definition, in which one distinguishes a manifold, e.g., genus and differentia, does not imply composition *(tarkīb)* in reality.[49] Thus we can talk about the essence and existence of a thing, just as we talk about the genus and differentia, without implying composition or multiplicity.

Thus what Sadra wants to rule out by his *ittiḥād* thesis is the compositional two-stage model of creation. And it is this model that makes for easy shooting by Suhrawardi, and by Ibn Rushd before him. More specifically—to mention the usual reason given by Sadra—the model makes existence an addition to some reality rather than what the reality is. Thus:

> "(A) man exists" . . . means the realization *(taḥqīq)* of the self-same man, not the realization of something in him: existence. Similarly, speaking of the non-existence of a man means the nullity of the very entity, the man, not the denial of the property of existence to the man.[50]

However, in another location there is an altogether different reason for avoiding the two-stage compositional model. Humans create by putting together, but God is above that. For God, "creating and producing are not composing nor putting together, but establishing or founding (in existence; *ta'sīs*) and bringing out of nothing into existence."[51]

Furthermore not only does the existence of a thing have to be viewed as a one-stage, non-composed, non-dual ontological fact, but within the broad cosmic scale it has to be understood in dynamic terms as an event. For existence is said to be fundamentally realization *(taḥaṣṣul)*, actuality

[49]I, 2, 29.
[50]I, 1, 369.
[51]I, 1, 221.

(fi'liyyah), and appearing *(ẓuhūr)*.[52] Indeed process verbs and process metaphors for existence are abundant in Sadra, especially light metaphors: essences are "hidden," are like darkness,[53] since in themselves they cannot be said to exist. Light or existence makes them appear, gives them the chance to be.[54]

Whatever the metaphor, we are expected to put aside both the compositional analysis of things as well as the view of things as static entities. Then we would say that the event of the *taḥaṣṣul* of this thing is one and the same event as the *thūbut* or *ẓuhūr* of its essence as the thing it is. This is what we propose to understand by Sadra's doctrine of the *ittiḥād* of essence and existence in things, stated now in the language of the dynamic view of reality.

Identity Yet Priority

With the doctrine of the identity of essence and existence Sadra believed he could avoid Suhrawardi's criticisms. Since Suhrawardi had used his arguments against the ontological dualism of essence and existence indirectly to bolster his essentialism, Sadra's countering with the identity of the two was an indirect weapon against essentialism. The direct alternative to essentialism comes in Sadra's doctrine of the priority of existence.

From Ibn Sina, Sadra takes the view that essences in themselves can neither be said to exist nor not to exist. Essences, then, have reality only as they appear as determination of external reality, or as occurring or instanced in the mind. In the words of the clumsy formula: "Essences exist only through existence";[55] or again, "Existence exists by itself, all else by existence."[56]

Yet this realm of existence is not just a collection of all things, rather, it is the existents linked by the creative force of the First as It pulsates and brings about. The entire

[52]I, 1, 259.
[53]I, 1, 420, among other places.
[54]I, 1, 100.
[55]I, 1, 174.
[56]I, 1, 100.

realm of being is a realm that Sadra, like many before him, describes as the realm of God and His activity.

In such a picture the mark of reality is to be an existent that causes or is caused. Essences as such are part of reality in that they inform it, but they neither cause nor are caused. This is the mark of their unreality. Even God *(al-bāri')* does not cause an essence. He creates a thing which has determination.[57] Essence is in existence only by the bringing forth *(ja'l)* of existence.[58]

We make this brief summary to go on to ask about the connection between the identity of essence and existence, on the one hand, and the priority, or near-exclusive reality, of existence, on the other. For the latter doctrine leads Sadra to assign to essence the dependent status that is reserved to accidents. Now we did see earlier that essence and existence are not accidents, neither of one another nor of a thing. Also, the very identification of essence with existence suggests a measure of equality in status which now seems to be denied.

On that we say that there are different kinds of priorities working in either direction, and not every priority diminishes the other to the sort of accidental status that is problem-causing. Sadra himself recognizes what has been said before him: that from the point of view of knowledge essences have a priority. Moreover, it is the case that while essence needs existence as a floor to step on, existence is never blank and always has to be determined.

If essence needs existence to be real at all, this does not turn essence into an accident in the sense in which the accidents of substance are. Not every sort of metaphysical priority reduces other things to the status of accident. Nor is every sort of metaphysical dependence the sort that accidents have in relation to substance. For example, contingent being cannot be without God, but this is not the dependence of accidents. Therefore, we need not translate the helplessness of essence in the game of existing into an accidental status of the technical sort. And it is this sort that we had denied of essence.

[57]I, 1, 216, 409, 410.
[58]I, 1, 202.

There remains the question of how essence can be identical with existence when essence is such "a metaphysical nobody." Here we need to keep two frames of reference distinct. One is the causal dynamism that permeates the whole realm of reality. In this, existence is potent, essence impotent. However, in any given thing, the essence of the thing is real, and a thing's being and its being the thing it is are the single fact in which essence and existence converge. Whatever activates the chess pieces of existence, and no matter how true it is that the bishop-shape (or bishopness) requires an existing bishop-piece to be real, of this thing before us, Sadra can still say that to be this particular piece and to be the this-here instantiation of bishopness is one and the same ontological event in the launched career of this cunning bit of reality.

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