

## AVICENNA ON UNIVERSALS A FRAGMENT FROM HIS LOST *AL-MŪJAZ*

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### **Abstract**

Avicenna's theory of universals is important in many ways. In the Introduction to the Logic of the *Shifā'* Avicenna divides universals into logical, mental, and natural universals. His account of natural universals raises questions concerning the meaning of the word "nature" and the universal's mode of existence. Thanks to the discovery of a fragment from his lost *al-Mūjaz* in a manuscript from the library of Leiden University in The Netherlands, these questions can now be answered.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** Avicenna, Philosophy, Universals, Manuscripts, Fragments from lost works.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

From among the many works attributed to Avicenna (d. 428/1037),<sup>2</sup> a considerable number has been lost. The monumental *Kitāb al-Inṣāf* for instance—twenty-eight thousand entries on matters of philosophy in twenty volumes<sup>3</sup>—was stolen from Avicenna's baggage by enemy soldiers when Isfahan was attacked by the Ghaznavid Abū Sa'īd Mas'ūd b. Maḥmūd (d. 432/1040)<sup>4</sup> in the year 421/1030.<sup>5</sup> And even though there is an unconfirmed report in al-Bayhaqī's (d. 565/1170) *Tatimmat Ṣīwān al-ḥikma* that a copy of it was bought in Isfahan and brought to Marw in the year 545/1150-51,<sup>6</sup> the work has never been found. All we have are some large fragments that were published in

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*editio princeps* by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī in his monumental *Aristū ‘inda l-‘arab* under the titles i. *Sharḥ kitāb ḥarf al-lām*, ii. *Tafsīr kitāb Uthūljīyā*, and iii. *al-Ta’līqāt ‘alā ḥawāshī kitāb al-nafs li-Aristātālīs*.<sup>7</sup>

When fragments do not circulate separately as in the case of the *Kitāb al-Inṣāf*, it is still possible to find quotations from lost works in the writings of others. As an example one could mention Avicenna’s *al-Ḥikma al-mashriqiyya*. There exists no complete copy of this work. What we have are parts of the logic and the physics, the parts on ethics and first philosophy apparently having been lost.<sup>8</sup> This is why it is interesting to note that one or more quotations from or references to what is claimed to be the metaphysical part of *al-Ḥikma al-mashriqiyya* can be found in some of the works of the Spanish Jewish thinker Avner of Burgos (1270 – ca 1345), who later in life converted to Christianity.<sup>9</sup>

Apart from the above, one sometimes finds quotations in the margins of a manuscript where these were added by their owners in explanation of some difficulty in the text. In this article I should like to discuss an example of such a marginal quotation. But before going into the matter of the quotation itself, it may be helpful to set the stage in the section that follows below.

## II. AVICENNA ON UNIVERSALS IN THE LOGIC OF THE *SHIFĀ’*

The universal is one of the seminal concepts of Avicenna’s philosophy and is associated with his logic, his epistemology, and his account of Creation.<sup>10</sup> In this article it is however not my intention to discuss the wider philosophical ramifications of Avicenna’s theory of universals. Instead, I shall limit myself to his account of the division of universals into “natural”, “mental”,<sup>11</sup> and “logical” universals.

The most important account of the threefold distinction between universals that are *manṭiqī* (logical), *‘aqlī* (mental), and *ṭabī‘ī* (natural) is found in chapter 12 of the first treatise of the Introduction to the Logic of Avicenna’s *Shifā’*.<sup>12</sup> In this fragment, which stretches over seven pages in the edition by Qanawātī, Avicenna says that the nature (*ṭabī‘a*) of a thing, for instance “animality” (*ḥayawāniyya*), is in itself just what it is; it is neither one nor many, neither existing nor non-existent, neither universal nor particular or any other some such con-

sideration, which all fall outside of the nature of animal taken just in itself;<sup>13</sup> but this nature, which is said to be a *form* (*ṣūra*), can be intellected, and as such it can be looked at as something universal, for instance a genus, predicable of many things differing in species in answer to the question of what it is, without referring to any concrete thing, stating that it is thus, in which case the genus is called “logical” (*jins mantiqī*);<sup>14</sup> one can also look at this nature as present—through appropriate determinations—in a concrete individual in the extra-mental world, but now in so far as we consider the *aptness* (*ṣulūḥ*) of the *mental* representation of this concrete instance of that nature of being regarded as universal and predicable of many things, in which case the genus is called “natural” (*jins ṭabīī*);<sup>15</sup> finally, the natural genus can *de facto* be entertained in the intellect—as an intermediary step towards the logical genus—in which case the genus is called “mental” (*jins ‘aqlī*).<sup>16</sup>

From the above, a few things emerge: 1) universality is a *logical* consideration;<sup>17</sup> 2) there is *no* universality in individuals, just a nature in or with concrete determinations; while 3) universality is *not* constitutive of the mental representation of the nature of a thing, *qua* mental representation. This is why Avicenna says that a nature, individuated or intellected, is represented by a *form* (*ṣūra*), universality only resulting from an *additional* consideration.<sup>18</sup> This means that the natural and the mental genus are called thus *retrospectively*, in light of a previous,<sup>19</sup> *logical* consideration. Also, a) what is *logical* is both mental *and* universal; b) what is *mental* is merely intellected; and c) what is *natural* concerns the essence *in concreto*, seen as having the potential, in the form of an *aptness*, of a *logical* consideration, on the basis of its (prior) *mental* representation. Finally, the account of the Introduction to the Logic of the *Shifā’* has a number of special features: 1) Because of the examples given (man, animal) and the use of an expression like “individuals in the extra-mental world” (*a’yān khārija*),<sup>20</sup> the reader may be led to believe that the expressions “a this” (*al-mushār ilayhi*,<sup>21</sup> lit. “the thing pointed at”, referring to the individual, concrete thing, from Aristotle’s *to de ti*<sup>22</sup>), “natural thing” (*al-shay’ al-ṭabīī*)<sup>23</sup> and “natural things” (*ṭabīīyyāt*,<sup>24</sup> *al-umūr al-ṭabīīyya*<sup>25</sup>) all relate to “nature” in the common sense of the physical, objective, extra-mental world;<sup>26</sup> 2) From the fact that the natural genus is described as referring to a certain (derived) *aptness* in relation to the essence *in concre-*

to, it may be believed that a natural genus can have *independent* existence, in isolation from any *factual* mental consideration; 3) At the beginning of his account of the distinction between the “mental”, the “natural”, and the “logical”, Avicenna appears to compare this distinction to the one between what is *prior* to multiplicity (*qabl al-kathra*), what is *in* multiplicity (*fī l-kathra*), and what is *after* multiplicity (*ba’d al-kathra*). That this is however not entirely so, may be inferred from the fact that while his account begins with a discussion of the different aspects of the *genus* (natural, mental, logical), he does not use the word *genus* or *universal* in his statements on the various aspects of multiplicity, preferring the term *form* (*ṣūra*) instead. This is because the doctrine involving various aspects of multiplicity is constructed around forms (in God, the angels, in individuated essences in the world of Creation, in the human intellect), while the distinction between the natural, the mental and the logical turns around universals, which are forms that have been given a special consideration in and by the human intellect alone. There being no complete overlap, Avicenna had to change from universals to forms when he switched from one account to the other. The two accounts can be represented as follows:

	<i>Form</i>
<i>Before multiplicity</i>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="font-size: 3em; margin-right: 10px;">{</div> <div style="text-align: left;"> <p>Mental, in God, angels (Creation)</p> <p>Mental, in man (artefacts)</p> </div> </div>
<i>In multiplicity</i>	In the individuals of the natural world
<i>After multiplicity</i>	Mental, in man (abstracted <sup>27</sup> forms)

**Table 1. Form and multiplicity in Avicenna’s *Shifā’, al-Mudkhal*, I.12**

Now compare the above with the different kinds of genus, two of which are only *retrospectively* called thus:

*Genus*

<i>Logical</i>	The intellected nature, regarded as predicable of many things differing in species in answer to the question of what it is, without referring to any concrete thing that it is thus
<i>Natural</i>	The individual (= individuated) nature, looked at as having an <i>aptness</i> of being submitted to a <i>logical</i> consideration, <i>after</i> its intellection in and by the soul
<i>Mental</i>	The natural genus, intellected and “ready” to be submitted to a logical consideration

**Table 2. Genus under three considerations in Avicenna’s *Shifā*, *al-Mudkhal*, I.12**

According to Michael Marmura, “...Avicenna [in the Introduction to the Logic of the *Shifā*] registers dissatisfaction with the use of the term “natural genus”, and he substitutes “form” for “genus”, thus introducing the expressions “natural form” and “mental form”.<sup>28</sup> There is however no question of Avicenna’s registering any kind of dissatisfaction. It is just that the consideration in one and the other case is different, as may also be inferred from tables 1 and 2 above: when he talks about *form*, Avicenna’s consideration is *noetico-ontological* while in the case of the *genus* (and the other universals, viz. species, differentia, accident, and property), the consideration is *logical*.<sup>29</sup> But it is also true to say that mixing the two considerations in a single discourse that sets out to clarify the threefold, *logical* distinction between the natural, the mental, and the logical genus is potentially confusing and might better have been avoided.

### III. NAṢĪR AL-DĪN ṬŪSĪ'S COMMENTARY ON THE *ISHĀRĀT*

It is quite remarkable that none of Avicenna's smaller encyclopaedias, viz. *al-Najāt*, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, the logical part of *al-Ḥikma al-mashriqiyya*, viz. the *Manṭiq al-mashriqiyyīn*, or the Persian *Dānesh-nāme-yi 'Alā'ī* contains a comprehensive account of the three kinds of universal comparable to the account from the Introduction to the Logic of the *Shifā'*. It seems that this omission occasioned Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) to make up for this by including his own description of them in his *Ḥall mushkilāt al-ishārāt*, which is the most important commentary on the *Ishārāt* to have come out of the middle ages.<sup>30</sup> In *Ishārāt*, *Manṭiq*, I.10 ( اشارة الى الذائق المقوم ) Avicenna uses the expression "fundamental nature" (*ṭabī'a aṣliyya*) to refer to the immutable essence that is shared by all individuals that come under the same universal (genus or species). In his explanation of the expression "fundamental nature" Ṭūsī states the following:<sup>31</sup>

"Notions whose connotation does not preclude any participation in them may be regarded *per se*, not in as much as they are one or many, particular or universal, or existent or non-existent, but rather in so far as they possess an aptness of having any of these things as an accidental property—it being in virtue of this accidental relationship that they are one or many, particular or universal, or existent or non-existent (in which case the accident and the subject in which it inheres are two things rather than one)<sup>32</sup>—and in so far as they are thus, they are called "natures", viz. the natures of the individual things and their essences *in concreto*. These natures are called *natural* universals, and the accidental property that makes them apply to many is [what makes them to be] called *logical* universals, their composite being a *mental* universal. And where he [Avicenna] says: "And because the fundamental nature...", the reference is only to the notions aforementioned."<sup>33</sup>

Even though it is not my intention to give a detailed analysis of the account by Ṭūsī, one might question his apparent qualification of the mental universal as a "composite" (*murakkab*) of the natural and the logical universal.<sup>34</sup> For if anything, it is the *logical* universal that results from a "combination", viz. of the natural and the mental universal. This is because according to Avicenna the natural genus (= universal) is the individual (= individuated) genus, looked at as having an

*aptness* of being submitted to a *logical* consideration, *after* its intellection in and by the soul.<sup>35</sup> But there is of course no real composition, but rather an inseparability of being that is not convertible: “if logical, then mental”, but not: “if mental, then logical”.

It could be argued that the property of being composite of the mental universal is validated by the following statement in Introduction to the Logic of the *Shifā'*:

“Even though that which is logical has no existence except in the mind, it does not necessarily follow that what is understood by its being mental is identical with what is understood by its being logical. For the meaning understood by its being mental is other than what is understood by its being logical. This is because the comprehended meaning that is understood by its being mental, a necessary adherent and a concomitant of the meaning that is understood by its being logical, is not identical with [the latter], since the difference between the two different ways of considering them has become clear to you.”<sup>36</sup>

Looking at the above quotation, someone might argue that the (supposed) property of being composite of the mental universal is vindicated by Avicenna's claim that its being mental is “a necessary adherent (*lāzim*) and a concomitant (*muqārin*) of the meaning that is understood by its being logical”. This is because the Arabic *lāzim* conveys the meaning of temporal and analytical succession, which might lead someone to explain Avicenna's words as implying that the being mental of the universal is (in some way) dependent on its being logical. However, the term *lāzim* also has the meaning of inseparability.<sup>37</sup> And looked at in this way, Avicenna seems to be saying no more than that the being logical of a universal is inseparable from its being mental: “if logical, then mental”, which is consistent with his description of the natural universal as the individual (= individuated) genus, looked at as having an *aptness* of being submitted to a *logical* consideration, *after* its intellection in and by the soul. In the next section, it will be explained how Ṭūsī's *murakkab* (composite) is probably best understood.

Apart from the above, I think that Ṭūsī's understanding of the natural universal is in agreement with Avicenna's understanding of it,<sup>38</sup> although we shall see that the accidentalness of the attribute of universality that the natural universal has an aptness to possess is *analytical* rather than *ontological*. Also, Ṭūsī's use of the expression *a'yān al-*

*mawjūdāt* (individual things) leaves the impression that *ḥaqā'iq* or essences *in concreto* are only to be found in *physical* things in the extra-mental world, similar to Avicenna's account in the Introduction to the Logic of the *Shifā'*.

#### IV. A QUOTATION FROM AVICENNA'S LOST *AL-MŪJAZ*

In the above we have seen that there are two things in connection with natural universals on which Avicenna and Ṭūsī would seem to agree: 1) the natural universal has an *aptness* to being submitted to a logical consideration, and 2) essences *in concreto* are only to be found in physical things in the extra-mental world. These two points are not altogether unproblematic because the first one would seem to allow the natural universal to have an existence independent from any factual logical consideration, while the second would seem to imply that incorporeal individuals (e.g. God) cannot be submitted to any logical consideration, which is counter-intuitive (God is for instance a *cause*). This is why it is important to note that one of the surviving copies of the *Ḥall mushkilāt al-ishārāt*<sup>39</sup> contains a marginal gloss that is of the utmost interest to students of Avicenna and Ṭūsī. This gloss is contained in MS Leiden OR 652, a manuscript that was bequeathed to Leiden University by the Dutch diplomat, businessman and man of letters Levinus Warner upon his death in 1665.<sup>40</sup> OR 652 was copied by its owner (*māliku-hu*) in Sabzevār Bayhaq at the beginning of Jumādā al-ākhirā 734<sup>41</sup>/15-25 February 1334. It comprises 340 folios and contains numerous glosses. At times, these glosses are very long. Especially when references by Ṭūsī to Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī's commentary on the *Ishārāt* are concise, there is a tendency of providing full quotations from Rāzī's work. In the margins of the Logic which I studied in full, there are also many quotations from the works of others, notably 1) Abū Naṣr Fārābī (d. 338/950), 2) Avicenna, 3) 'Umar Ibn Sahlān Sāwī (d. ca 549/1154-55), 4) Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. after 560/1164-65), 5) Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 586/1191), 6) Sirāj al-Dīn Urmawī (d. 682/1283), 7) Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284), and 8) Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311).<sup>42</sup> We further find direct eyewitness reports on Ṭūsī's own observations in class<sup>43</sup> and on statements made by other famous persons in classroom situations

(Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī (a), Najm al-Dīn Kātibī (d. 675/1276) (b), and Shams al-Dīn Samarqandī (d. 703/1304?) (c)).<sup>44</sup> All in all, MS Leiden OR 652 offers an excellent example of the way in which Avicenna's *Ishārāt* was transmitted and studied in Īl-Khānid Iran (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries) and certainly deserves further study.

This much for the manuscript and its importance for the study of the teaching tradition around the text of the *Ishārāt*. The quotation in question is found on folio 14b, top of the page (see Plate 3) and is completed on folio 15a top of the page, right-hand side (see Plate 4). As can be seen, on folio 14 b, top, right side, the quotation is introduced by the words *min al-Mūjaz li-l-Shaykh* (see Plate 5). There is of course no doubt about the identity of *al-Shaykh*, who is none other than Avicenna. The title *al-Mūjaz* on the other hand, is somewhat more difficult because *al-Mūjaz* has more than one occurrence in Avicenna's bibliography. In the most authoritative study on the subject to have been published so far, which is the one by Mahdavī, we find the following titles: 1) *al-Manṭiq al-mūjaz*,<sup>45</sup> 2) *al-Mūjaz al-ṣaghīr fī l-manṭiq*,<sup>46</sup> and 3) and (*al-Risāla*) *al-Mūjaza fī uṣūl al-manṭiq*,<sup>47</sup> while Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī quotes from the *Burhān* (*Demonstration*, i.e. *Posterior Analytics*) of what he calls Avicenna's *al-Mūjaz al-kabīr*,<sup>48</sup> which is thus instance 4) of *al-Mūjaz* in connection with the works of Avicenna. From among these titles, 3) can be eliminated because *al-Mūjaz* is not the same as *al-Mūjaza*. Number 2) can be eliminated as well, for the following reason: as Mahdavī explains, Avicenna included his *al-Mūjaz al-ṣaghīr fī l-manṭiq* in his *Uyūn al-ḥikma* of which it forms the logical part. I checked the whole text of the *Uyūn al-ḥikma* and the fragment in question is not there. I take this to mean that the quotation is not likely to be from that work. As for number 1), *al-Manṭiq al-mūjaz*, this is a possibility, although I find it less likely that the quotation was taken from there because I think that the shortened version of a title is more likely to contain the first word of it than the last. It will of course be important to check the existing manuscripts of *al-Manṭiq al-mūjaz* (all in Istanbul as it seems) in verification of this thesis. I think therefore that the quotation in question was most probably taken from Avicenna's lost *al-Mūjaz al-kabīr*. Now here follows the quotation in full, first in Arabic, and then in English translation:

من الموجز للشيخ

ومن عادة بعض الناس أن يقسم هذه المعاني إلى المنطقي والعقلي والطبيعي ثم ليس يجرى لهم فيها كلام سديد والمستحبّ عندنا في تفصيلها أن يقال المنطقي مثلا من باب الجنس هو المقول على كثيرين مختلفين بالنوع في جواب ما هو من غير إشارة إلى شيء من الموجودات أنه ذلك بل الجنس المطلق المجرد فقط وأما الطبيعي فهو الشيء المشار إليه في الموجود الذي يعرض له معنى الجنسيّة مثل اللون والنبات والحيوان وغير ذلك وأما العقلي فهو ما حصل من المعنيين في العقل سواء كان مجرد معنى الجنس المنطقي او معنى الشيء الذي عرض له إعتبار الجنسيّة ويُعنى ههنا بالطبيعي الموجودى كيف كان طبيعياً أو خارجاً عن الطبيعة وإلا انقسم أصنافاً اخرى فكان من الأجناس طبيعيّة كالحیوان والنبات وصناعيّة كالبيت والكرسى وإلهيّة كالعلة والمبدأ والجوهر والعقل ورياضيّة كالشكل والعدد وقد تكون أشياء غير هذه ويُعنى ههنا بالعقلي ما حصل صورةً في أى عقل كان وإلا انقسم اقساماً اخرى فكان منه إلهى وهو المتصور من هويّات الموجودات عند البارئ على النوع الذى يخصّه وعقلي وهو المتصور فى ذات العقل منها بالنوع المستفاد من ذات الأول.هـ. ٤٩

From the Shaykh's *Mūjaz*:

“Some people are accustomed to dividing these notions<sup>50</sup> into the “logical”, the “mental”, and the “natural”, whereupon they fail to produce an accurate account of [any of] these. We recommend that it be stated in explanation of them: “The “logical [universal]”, for instance, a genus, is said of many things differing in kind in answer to the question of what it is, without indicating that some existent is [qualified by] it; rather, it merely is the bare genus, absolute. The “natural [genus]”, on the other hand, is a “this”,<sup>51</sup> among the things that are,<sup>52</sup> that has the accidental property of being a genus, such as colours, plants, animals, and the like. The “mental [genus]”, in contrast, represents either one of the two [previous] notions as they occur in the intellect, regardless of the fact whether it is the mere notion of a logical genus, or the notion of the individual thing that hap-

pens to be considered as a genus. [The qualification] “natural” refers in this context to “what[ever] has existence”, no matter how, be it natural or outside of nature. Were this not to be the case, then [“natural”]<sup>53</sup> would split up into other categories, some of the genera being “natural”, such as “animal” and “plant”, some “artificial”<sup>54</sup>, such as “house” or “chair”, some “divine”, such as “cause”, “principle”, “substance” and “intellect”, and some “mathematical”, such as “shape” and “number”. And they<sup>55</sup> may be other things. [The qualification] “in the intellect” refers in this context to what occurs as a form, in whatever intellect it may be. Were this not to be the case, it would divide into other parts, some being “divine”, which stands for that which the Creator conceives, in the manner characteristic of Him, concerning the being of the things that are, and some “in the intellect”, which stands for that which is conceived of them<sup>56</sup> in the intellect itself, in the manner acquired from the First itself.” H.

While I am sure that this fragment will provoke a lot of new research around Avicenna’s understanding of universals, I should like to focus on the following implications:

First of all, it is clear that for Avicenna, the *natural* universal stands for the essence *in concreto* that is *actually* (*ya’riḍu la-hu...*) viewed as a universal,<sup>57</sup> predicable of many, the accidentalness of this attribute being analytical rather than ontological, since without this attribute, there *is* no natural universal. From this it follows that the *aptness* that Avicenna talks about in his account of the natural genus in the Introduction to the Logic of the *Shifā’* must be understood as an *actualized* aptness.<sup>58</sup> It is therefore unlikely that Avicenna should ever have believed that natural universals could have an existence independent from any *factual* logical consideration.<sup>59</sup>

In the context of his account on universals, *nature* is to be understood as *everything* that exists, from the physical existents in the sub-lunar world all the way up to God as the First Cause. My use of the expression “essence *in concreto*” is therefore to be understood as *individuated essence*. This last point is important in as much as it implies that even God can be viewed as a natural universal, namely in case we submit Him to some kind of logical consideration as when we say that He is a cause, a principle, or an intellect. In connection with *ṭabī’a* as individuated essence it is further interesting to note that in the *Metaphysics* of the *Shifā’* Avicenna uses the expression *kullī wujūdī*<sup>60</sup> (“existential”, i.e. “empirical” universal) rather than *kullī ṭabī’ī*, which I

believe is also more appropriate in referring to the logical aspect of individuated essence.

Avicenna's wide understanding of "nature" is not as strange as it may seem. Already in his *Physics* II.1 Aristotle mentions the various senses of "nature" (*phusis*). An echo of this can be found in the brief account of "nature" (*ṭabī'a*) in Avicenna's *Kitāb al-ḥudūd*. And in the *Physics* of the *Shifā'* there is a whole section on nature's derivatives (*alfāz mushtaqqā*) such as "natural" (*ṭabī'i*), "what has a nature" (*mā la-hu ṭabī'a*), "what is by nature" (*mā bi-l-ṭabī'a*), etc.,<sup>61</sup> in imitation of Aristotle's *Physics* II.1. But once again, in the context of the universals, "nature" refers to individuated essence alone.

Avicenna's explanation of the term "mental" is important for our understanding of Ṭūsī's use of the expression *murakkab* (composite) in his commentary on the *Ishārāt*. Earlier on in this article it was argued that the wording of his commentary might lead someone to believe that the mental universal is composed of natural and logical universals. With the text from Avicenna's *al-Mūjaz* in hand we can now lay this problem to rest. This is because Avicenna's explanation makes it very clear that whether logical or natural, a universal is always a universal in the mind. In other words: the mental universal is only a "composite" in the way in which a genus can be said to be "composed" of the species (plur.) into which every genus divides.

Avicenna's use of the term "form" (*ṣūra*) while speaking about the intellect has the same reason as the one given in my discussion of universals and the Introduction to the Logic of the *Shifā'*: it makes no sense to impute to God the kind of logical reflection on intellected forms/essences that humans have, a reflection that produces universals. If there is anything that humans and God have in common at the level of intellect, it is *forms* rather than universals.

All of the above insights are also important for our understanding of Ṭūsī's commentary on the *Ishārāt*. Indeed, the quotation from Avicenna seems to have been inserted in clarification of the commentary alone, there being no mention of universals in the text of the *Ishārāt*.

## V. CONCLUSION

I think that the above discussions have amply demonstrated that the importance of glosses can hardly be overestimated. They often contain a lot of information on the wider context in which a text was transmitted and studied. The quotation from Avicenna's *al-Mūjaz* in MS Leiden OR 652 is a case in point. Apart from its obvious importance as new evidence on the philosophical heritage of Avicenna, the significance of this fragment is threefold: 1) In the first place it informs us on the richness of the teaching tradition around Ṭūsī's commentary on Avicenna's *Ishārāt*. 2) In the second place, it provides some new and significant information on Avicenna's understanding of universals, notably on the *natural* universal as (i) *individuated* essence when (ii) *actually* submitted to (iii) a *logical* consideration. 3) Thirdly, it resolves an apparent lack of clarity in Ṭūsī's discourse on universals in his commentary on the *Ishārāt*. It is hoped that this fragment from *al-Mūjaz* will inspire a lot of philosophical research in the widest possible sense.



Plate I. MS Leiden OR 652, title page.

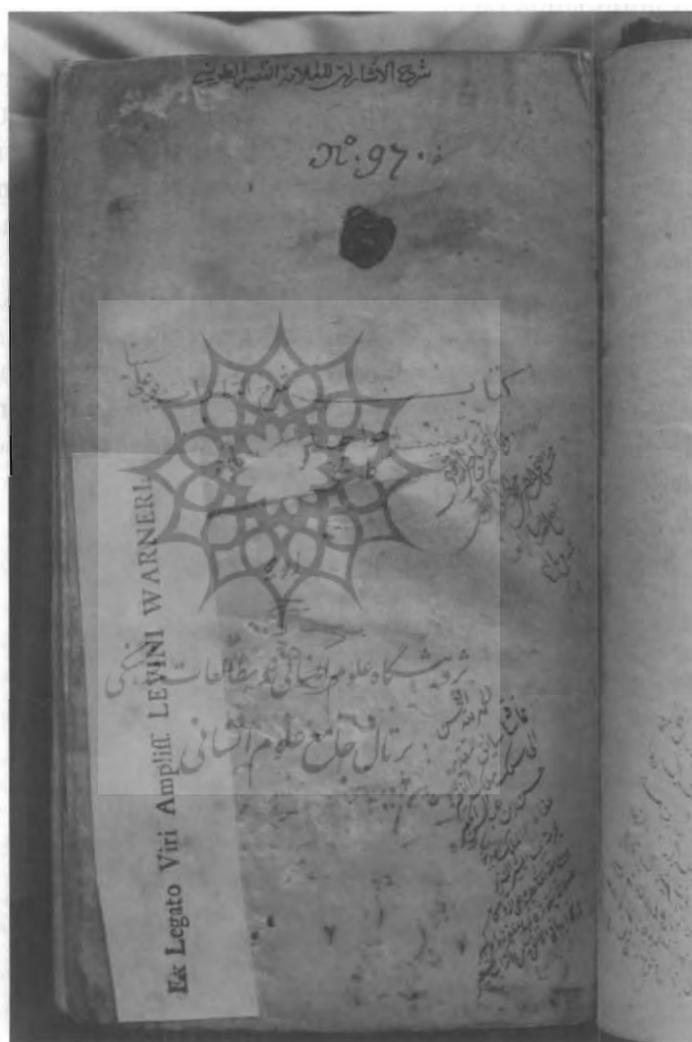






Plate 4. MS Leiden OR 652, fol. 15a,  
end of quotation from *al-Mūjaz*.

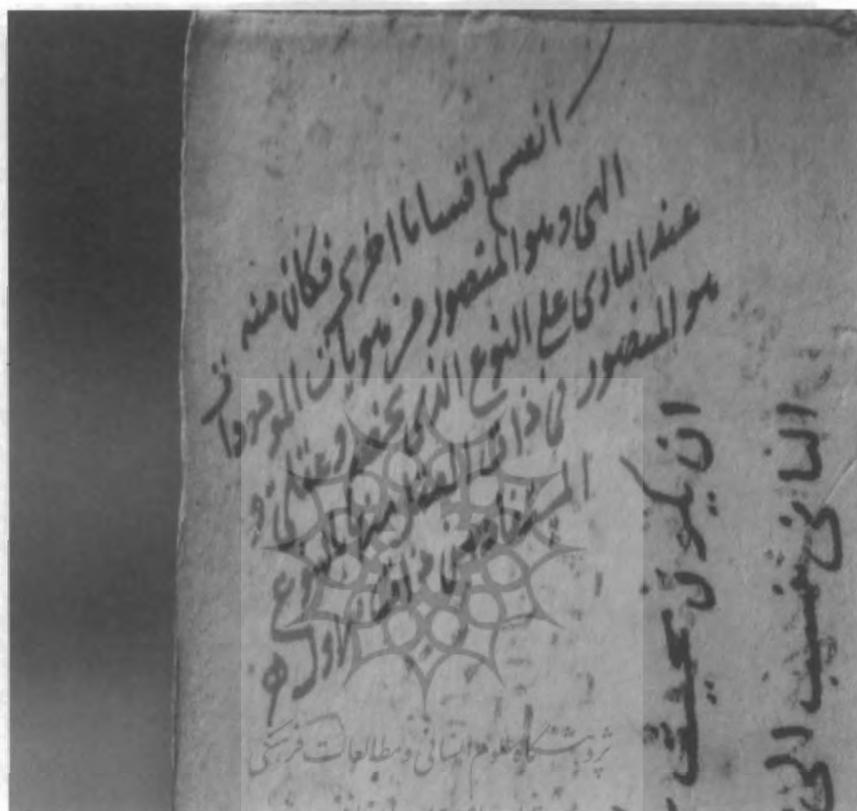


Plate 5. MS Leiden OR 652, fol. 14 b, ascription to Avicenna: *min al-Mūjaz li-l-shaykh.*



## NOTES

1. I should like to thank Dr Mohammad Javad Esmaeili of the Iranian Institute of Philosophy for his comments on an earlier version of this article.
2. For a brief overview of the ancient bibliographical tradition around Avicenna, see W.E. Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina*, 13-15.
3. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Mubāḥathāt*, 121.16-21; Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina*, 80-81; D. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 130-140.
4. On Mas'ūd Ibn Maḥmūd, see C.E. Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, 296-297.
5. An analysis of various reports on the loss of the *Inṣāf* is given by Gutas in his *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 134-136.
6. *Ibid.*, 133, fragment [8].
7. Badawi, *Aristū 'inda l-'arab*, 22-33, 36-74, 75-116; Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 136-140. About twenty years ago, Yaḥyā Michot reported the existence of two other copies of fragments i and ii in the General Library of Bursa in Turkey, for which see his "Un important recueil avicennien du viie / xiiie siècle : la *majmū'a* Hüseyin Çelebi 1194 de Brousse", 125-126, texts 15 (16) and 16 (17). In this collective volume Michot also discovered a letter by Avicenna whose existence was unknown until then and which he calls *Demande de médiation (Request for mediation)*, and which he describes on page 126 of his article, text 18 [19]. This text was later edited by him in his *Ibn Sīnā. Lettre au vizir Abū Sa'd* (reviewed by D. Gutas in *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14/2003, 379-381).
8. The only authoritative study on this work to have appeared to date is D. Gutas, "Avicenna's Eastern ("Oriental") Philosophy. Nature, Contents, Transmission".
9. M. Zonta, "Possible Hebrew Quotations of the Metaphysical Section of Avicenna's *Oriental Philosophy* and Their Historical meaning". In his "Avicenna's Eastern ("Oriental") Philosophy...", 171-172 Gutas voices doubts concerning the identification of these quotations as coming from Avicenna's *al-Ḥikma al-mash-rīqīyya*.
10. From among the many Western studies on universals in Avicenna I just mention by way of example S. Van Riet (ed.), *Avicenna Latinus. Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina v-x*, Introduction (by G. Verbeke), 2\*-19\* (*Le problème des universaux*); Alain de Libera, *La querelle des universaux*, 177-206; J. Owens, "Common Nature: A Point of Comparison between Thomistic and Scotistic Metaphysics"; Timothy B. Noone, "Universals and Individuation"; Martin Pickavé, "On the Latin Reception of Avicenna's Theory of Individuation"; A.M. Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne)*, esp. 67 ff; Michael M. Marmura, "Quiddity and Universality in Avicenna"; *idem*, "Some Aspects of Avicenna's Theory of God's Knowledge of Particulars".
11. "Mental" (i.e. in the intellect) must here be understood in a pre-Cartesian sense, perception still belonging to the domain of the senses and the faculty of imagination. This changed with Descartes, for whom perception took place in the intellect/mind, not by sensation, but by understanding. Cf. M. F. Burnyeat, *Aristotle's Divine Intellect*, 9-15.
12. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā', al-Mudkhal*, 65.1-72.7. This chapter was translated and analyzed by Michael Marmura in his "Avicenna's Chapter on Universals in the *Eisago-*

ge of his *Shifā'*". The account of universals in Metaphysics V.1 of the *Shifā'* is certainly of great importance but does not define nor describe the three kinds of universal as a set, even though we do find Avicenna refer to *al-kullī al-musta'mal fī l-mantiq* (the universal used in logic, i.e. logical universal), *al-kullī al-'aqlī* (the mental universal) and *al-kullī al-wujūdī* (the "existential", i.e. "empirical" (= natural) universal, a qualification that will be referred to again below). Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā', al-Ilāhiyyāt*, vol. 1, 195.1 ff, with the terminology at pages 196.2 and 201.11. Cp. idem, *al-Najāt min al-gharq fī baḥr al-ḍalālāt*, 536 ff (فصل في تحقيق معنى الكلى); idem, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, *Mantiq* I.8 (إشارة الى اللفظ الجزئي واللفظ الكلى), in any edition), which is reminiscent of the beginning of the passage from the Metaphysics of the *Shifā'*; and so is his *Mantiq al-mashriqiyyīn*, 12 (في الكلى والجزئي). Finally, see also: idem, *Mantiq-i Dāneshnāme-yi 'Alā'ī*, 11-12 (پدید کردن لفظ کلی و جزوی).

13. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Mudkhal*, 65.8-66.1, with the expression *ṭabī'a* (nature, i.e. essence) only being mentioned for the first time at 67.1.

14. Ibid., 66.4-16.

15. Ibid., 66.17-67.5.

16. Ibid., 67.7-8.

17. This is in my understanding also confirmed by the account in the Metaphysics of the *Shifā'*, for which see Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā', al-Ilāhiyyāt*, vol. 1, 195.6-196.3.

18. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Mudkhal*, 68.18-69.2.

19. The reference is to *analytical*, and not to temporal priority.

20. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Mudkhal*, 66.3.

21. Ibid., 65.19-66.1 and elsewhere in that chapter.

22. On the correspondence see for instance M.C. Lyons, *The Arabic Version of Themistius' 'de Anima'*, 265.

23. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Mudkhal*, 67.4.

24. Ibid., 67.4.

25. Ibid., 67.5.

26. It seems that de Libera understands *ṭabī'ī* precisely in this way in his French translation of the Latin version of *al-Mudkhal*, 65.4-5: "L'usage était, quand on distinguait les cinq (prédicables de Porphyre), de dire que, d'un premier point de vue, c'étaient des êtres physiques (*naturalia*)....." Cf. de Libera, *La querelle...*, 183.

Compare the Arabic: . إنه قد جرت العادة في تفهم هذه الخمسة أن يقال: إن منها ما هو طبيعي ...

27. On abstraction in Avicenna and the importance of the Active Intellect, cf. de Libera, *La querelle...*, 192-197.

28. Marmura, "Avicenna's Chapter on Universals in the *Isagoge* of his *Shifā'* ", (38).

29. I therefore disagree with de Libera (*La querelle...*, 183), who maintains that Avicenna's distinction between natural, logical, and mental universals corresponds to the neo-Platonist distinction between universals that are physical, logical, and theological.

30. The *Ḥall mushkilāt al-ishārāt* has seen quite a number of editions over the last hundred years or so, but none of these is authoritative. For a concise overview, cf. A. Gacek, “The Osler Codex of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī’s Commentary on Avicenna’s *Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*”, 3, note 1. Gacek mentions 8 lithographic and 4 printed (typeset) editions, the latest one being by H. Hasanzadeh Amoli (ed.), *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*. See also the facsimile edition of a manuscript from the National Library of Iran by Seyyed M. Emadi Haeri, *Ḥall mushkilāt al-ishārāt. Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn.... Ṭūsī*. Review by J. Lameer, “An Autograph of Ṭūsī’s *Ḥall mushkilāt al-ishārāt*? The Facsimile Edition of MS AR 1153 of the National Library of Iran”. The Persian version of this article appeared as: “*Ḥall mushkilāt al-ishārāt. Dastneveshte-yi Ṭūsī? Nashr-i ‘akṣi-yi noskhe-yi 1153 ketābkhāne-yi melli-yi irān*”.

31. Ṭūsī’s explanations can be found in the section corresponding to *Ishārāt, Maṅṭiq*, I.10 in any edition of his commentary. For a similar account see also his *Asās al-iqtibās* I.2.4 ( فصل چهارم در دیگر معانی لفظ کلی ), in any edition). Even though

Ṭūsī’s account is of universals while Avicenna’s account in the Introduction to the Logic of the *Shifā* is of the genus, it should be remembered that the genus is a special kind of universal, viz. one of the five predicables discussed by Porphyry in his *Eisagoge*: genus, species, differentia, accident, proprium. And it is also in preparation of the discussions on the *Eisagoge* proper in *al-Mudkhal* II that the three kinds of genus are discussed in *al-Mudkhal* I.

32. This in the sense that the property is extraneous to the essence of the notion taken *per se*.

۳۳. المعانی التي لا تمتنع مفهوماتها وقوع الشركة فيها، قد تؤخذ من حيث هي هي، لا من حيث أنها واحدة أو كثيرة، أو جزئية أو كلية، أو موجودة أو غير موجودة، بل من حيث تصلح لأن تكون معروضات لهذه المعاني، و تصير بحسب عروضها واحدة أو كثيرة، أو جزئية أو كلية، أو موجودة أو غير موجودة (ذلك var. reading)، و حينئذ يكون العارض و المعروض شئين لا شئنا واحدا، فإنها تسمى من حيث هي كذلك طبائع، أي طبائع أعيان الموجودات و حقائقها، و هي التي تسمى بالكلية الطبيعي، و يسمى عارضها الذي يجعلها واقعا علي كثيرين بالكلية المنطقي، و المركب منهما بالكلية العقلي، فقله: “و لأن الطبيعة الأصلية” إشارة إلى تلك المعاني وحدها.

34. It is interesting to note that Michael Marmura understands Ṭūsī precisely in this way. Cf. Marmura, “Avicenna’s Chapter on Universals in the *Isagoge* of his *Shifā*”, (42). The (apparent) property of being composite of the mental genus can also be found at the end of Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī’s (d. 606/1209) commentary on *Ishārāt, Maṅṭiq* II.4 (إشارة إلى الخاصة والعرض العام), in any edition of the commentary): “... “animal”, qua animal, is a thing, called a “natural genus”; and the mere notion of its being a genus, comprises something else, which is called a “logical genus”; the[se] two things together [i.e. natural and logical genus] represent yet another thing, called a “mental genus.” The Arabic runs thus:

المحیوان فی كونه حیوانا شیء و ذلك یسمی الجنس الطبيعي، و فی مجرد مفهوم كونه جنسا شیء آخر و یسمی الجنس المنطقي، و المجموع الحاصل من الأمرین شیء آخر و یسمی الجنس العقلي.

35. In this context, “after” must be understood in an analytical sense.

36. Marmura, “Avicenna’s Chapter on Universals in the *Isagoge* of his *Shifā’*”, (49); Ibn Sīnā, *al-Mudkhal*, 67.10-14:

و ليس؛ و إن لم يكن لهذا الذى هو منطقي وجود إلا فى العقل، يجب أن يكون المفهوم من أنه عقلي هو المفهوم من أنه منطقي؛ و ذلك أن المعنى الذى يفهم من أنه عقلي، هو غير المفهوم من أنه منطقي؛ و ذلك أن المعنى المفهوم الذى يفهم من أنه عقلي لازم و مقارن للمعنى الذى يفهم من أنه منطقي ليس هو هو، إذ قد بان لك اختلاف اعتباريهما.

37. On *lāzim* in its relation to inseparability, cf. J. Lameer, *Conception and Belief in Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī*, 183-185.

38. This is also very clear from his account in the passage from the *Asās al-iqtibās* afore-mentioned.

39. The *Ḥall mushkilāt al-ishārāt* has been preserved in numerous copies throughout the world. Emadi Haeri (*Ḥall mushkilāt...*, 21, note 6) says that at least 238 copies have survived, but I would not be surprised if the total number of copies comes close to or exceeds 300.

40. The title page of MS Leiden OR 652 is reproduced in Plate 1. For a description of the manuscript, cf. J.J. Witkam, *Inventory of the Oriental Manuscripts of the Library of the University of Leiden*, vol. 1, 276. This inventory which is only accessible through the Internet is updated from time to time and is meant to supersede previous descriptions of the collection, especially because since Voorhoeve’s *Handlist*, the amount of oriental manuscripts in the holdings of Leiden University Library has more than doubled. In Voorhoeve’s *Handlist*, the manuscript is found on page 139. A description of this manuscript can also be found in P. de Jong & M.J. de Goeje, *Catalogus Codicum Orientalium Bibl. Acad. Lugd.*, vol. 3, 321, no. 1453.

41. MS Leiden OR 652 folio 340a. See Plate 2.

42. 1) → 8) can for instance be found on the following folios of the manuscript: 1) fol. 36b, right margin, just below the middle; 2) fol. 3b, right margin, bottom; 3) fol. 14a, left margin, lower quotation, at the beginning; 4) fol. 27a, top margin, middle, at the end of the quotation; 5) fol. 21b, top margin, right side, at the beginning of the quotation; 6) 14a, upper margin, starting from the middle and written askance; 7) fol. 36b, top margin, right side, at the beginning of the quotation; 8) fol. 4b, top margin, middle, at the beginning of the quotation that is written askance.

43. Cf. fol. 27a, top margin, left side, beginning of gloss.

44. These reports can be found at: fol. 46a, left margin, below, towards the end, after the reference to Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī (a); fol. 56b, top margin, beginning of quotation (b); fol. 58b, right margin, upper part, upside down, at the end of the gloss (c).

45. Y. Mahdavi, *Fehrest-i noskkehā-yi moṣannaḡāt-i Ebn-i Sīnā* (Tehran, 1333/1954), 221-222.

46. *Ibid.*, 222.

47. *Ibid.*, 222-224.

48. Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, *Durrat al-Tāj li-‘Izzat al-Dabbāj*, vol. 2, 2. On this title, see also Mahdavi, *Fehrest...*, 217.

49. MS Leiden OR 652, folio 14b, top, 15a top, right. The letter “H” marks the end of the quotation.

50. I.e. universals (*kullīyyāt*).

51. “A this” renders *al-mushār ilay-hi*, referred to earlier and must be understood as referring to individual being.

52. “Among the things that are” renders *fī l-mawjūd*, lit. “in that which is”, *al-mawjūd* here being used in the sense of “all that is”.

53. I have been thinking for some time whether the subject of *yanqasim* is “natural” or “whatever has existence”. I decided for the first in order to keep the symmetry with Avicenna’s statement on the division of *‘aqlī* a few lines further down.

54. *Ṣinā’iyya*, i.e. the product of some craft or skill.

55. I.e. the attribute “natural” may refer to other things as well.

56. I.e. these universals.

57. This emphasis on factual consideration appears to be consistent with Avicenna’s brief account of the three kinds of universal in his *Ta’līqāt* (ed. A. Badawī. Bēghazī, 1972), 31:

الجنسية من حيث هي جنسية إذا اعتبرت غير مخصصة بجسم أو حيوان أو غيرهما من المعاني التي يعرض لها هي الجنس المنطقي، و هي المعنى المقول علي كثيرين مختلفين بالتوع. و المبحوث عنه منها في المنطق هو هذه الجنسية غير مخصصة. و أما الحيوان معتبرا فيه الجنسية فهو الجنس الطبيعي، و هو بما هو حيوان أعم من حيوان جنسي فإنه قد يكون شخصا. و هو من حيث هو حيوان معنى عقلي. و هو في ذاته ليس بكلي و لا جزئي بل هو موضوع لأن يعرض له الكلية و الجزئية.

58. This confirms my earlier statement that the natural and the mental universals are only called such retrospectively.

59. What *does* exist independently from any logical consideration, are individuated (natural) and intellected (mental) *forms*.

60. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā’*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt* vol. 1, 201.11.

61. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā’*, *al-Ṭabī’iyyāt* 1, *al-Samā’ al-ṭabī’ī*, I.7, 38-40.

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