

Knowledge and Perception

In the history of Aristotelian epistemology, it was standardly assumed that there is a structural similarity between sensation and intellection. Of course a contrast was standardly drawn here too, most often in terms of the objects that are grasped: sensation deals with particular, material objects, whereas intellect grasps universals or immaterial intelligible paradigms. Still, the two kinds of cognition were frequently taken to be isomorphic, in that the form of the grasped object needs to arise in a subject of perception that potentially has that form. Thus the redness of a particular apple would actualize the potential redness in the eye when it is seen, while the intelligible form of apple would arise in the rational soul or intellect of someone who completes a scientific inquiry into apples. In fact this would go for all kinds of cognition or “perception (*idrāk*),” which taken in a broad sense covers not only sensation and intellect but also forms of cognition like imagination and “estimation (*wahm*)” [T56]. On the traditional account, then, perception is fundamentally passive, as it involves receiving a form from the perceived object. This will be the case whether a material, “divisible” form is received in a physical organ, or an immaterial, “indivisible” form is received in the mind [T12].

The passivity of perception is underscored by the use of the term *intibāʿ*, the “making of an impression” on the subject of perception, in many of the passages translated below. In [T1, T2] Avicenna uses a term with a similar force, “inscription (*irtisām*).” As al-Abharī points out, the need for an “impression” has to do with the fact that we are changed when we go from not perceiving to perceiving [T44]. When someone goes from not seeing red to seeing red, a red object has produced redness in their vision. There are different ways of thinking about taking on a form like redness, though. It is not entirely clear whether Avicenna himself wanted to say that the form itself (like redness or the quiddity of apple) arises in the perceiver, or only a representation (*mithāl*) of the form. So one task for authors in our period was to work out exactly what the impression theory amounts to.

Another, still more fundamental task was to work out whether perception should really be thought about in these passive terms. Doesn't the perceiver rather have to focus attention actively on the thing being perceived? This idea was crucial to an account of perception offered by Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, and widely accepted in the later tradition, according to which perception happens not because a form, impression, inscription, or representation arises in the

perceiver, but because the perceiver forges a link or connection to the object of perception, so that perception is a “relational state (*ḥāl idāfiyya*),” this cognitive link amounting to directing attention (*iltifāt*) and active awareness (*shu‘ūr*) [T5, T17, T24, T33].¹ As al-Kātibī says in [T58], this position also has various sub-options, which we’ll explore below. But the debate over perception above all concerns a question often pursued in the context of defining “knowledge (*‘ilm*),” which in this context is used for all veridical perception and not only, for instance, intellection. Should knowledge be defined as the occurrence of an impressed form or representation, or as a cognitive relation between knower and known?

Early in our period Ibn al-Malāḥimī already mounted a detailed refutation of the impression theory [T3]. For starters, the soul is meant to be incorporeal in the Avicennan theory. So how can that theory describe perception as the taking on of an “impression,” which sounds like a physical change? Furthermore, there were problems as to how divisible forms could be received even in a divisible thing like a sense-organ. For instance, when we see something large, like the dome of the heavens, how can we take on its enormous magnitude in something as small as the eye? This objection was often given as a basis for rejecting the impression theory [T7, T14, T23, T33, T73], despite attempts at solution, for instance by saying that the form in the eye corresponds only in shape or form, not in size. Which sounds plausible, especially if we assume that both eye and visual object are infinitely divisible, since then there can be a one-to-one match between parts [T16]. Here one might imagine the sort of optical theory put forward by Ibn al-Haytham and Avicenna himself, where a straight line connects each point on the visible object to a point on the eye or its pupil.² But this would still not explain how we are able to see that some things are large and others small [T73].

There was a further reason to deny that the form in the perceiver is just the same as the form in the perceived object: it is absurd to suppose that the perceiver literally acquires the properties of that which it perceives.³ One shouldn’t actually become hot when feeling heat, or become an apple when thinking about apples [T14, T18, T21]. This “becoming argument” was paired

1 This theory of perception probably goes back to *kalām*; see further F. Benevich, “Non-Reductive Theories of Sense-Perception in the Philosophy of Kalām,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 34 (2024), 1–23.

2 For more on this topic and further references, see our chapter on Vision and Light in the volume on Physics and Psychology.

3 Compare the debate over “literalism” in Aristotle’s theory of sensation, as famously discussed in by R. Sorabji and M. Burnyeat in M. Nussbaum and A. Rorty (eds), *Essays on Aristotle’s “De anima”* (Oxford: 1992).

with another problem, the “inherence argument.” This is simply the converse point, that if perceiving blackness is taking on the form of blackness, then anything that turns black should perceive blackness [T19, T20]. To respond to these two arguments, Avicenna’s defenders needed to offer some distinction between the form as it arises in the perceiver, and the form as it exists in the perceived object. Merely saying that the same form arises, but with no magnitude or smaller magnitude, will not be enough.

The most straightforward solution took its cue from passages like [T1], where as we noted above, Avicenna says that the perceiver has a *representation* of that which it perceives. Just as a picture of an apple is not an apple, and a picture of fire is not hot, perceiving would not involve becoming an apple, or becoming hot, but only having a form or impression that represents apples, or heat [T38, T49]. This solution could have other advantages too. For example, it would explain why the form in the mind can be an accident even when the object of thought is a substance [T45, T74].

But a cost is being paid here: the litmus test for truth in perception was always that the form in the mind has “correspondence (*muṭābaqa*)” with the perceived object out in the world [T65]. Falsehood or ignorance will simply be the failure of one’s mental forms to correspond to the extramental objects [T29, T51, T72]. Arguably, representationalism undermines this idea, for the very same reason that it offers a way out of the becoming and inherence arguments, namely that the mental representation is only a partial match with the extramental form. Several passages press this point, complaining that the “true nature” will elude the knower if the knower has only a representation and not the real form [T6, T28, T29, T34, T39, T77]. As al-Rāzī complains, truth in perception means that the form in the mind should fully share in the quiddity of what is perceived [T25].

But al-Ṭūsī is prepared to deny exactly this. He draws a distinction between the quiddity of a thing, which is what is extramentally instantiated, and the mere form of that thing [T49]. The point of this is presumably that the quiddity includes reference to the thing’s matter, and it is only when both form and matter are present that properties are concretely instantiated. The distinction between forms realized in matter and forms taken on immaterially can also be invoked to solve the aforementioned “inherence argument.” Blackness only makes things literally black when it is concretely existent in matter, instead of being an abstraction in the mind [T44]. Al-Ṭūsī makes another point along these lines: at least in the case of intellectual knowledge, what is taken on by the perceiver is a universal, whereas the form in the perceived object is particular [T52]. That Avicennan premise can also be used against the impression theory, though. Al-Rāzī deploys it as one part of a dilemmatic argument to show that

what receives an impression in perception could be neither corporeal (since it grasps universals, cf. [T12]) nor incorporeal (since it grasps particulars with their accidents) [T22, with rejoinder at T37].

Yet another line of attack on the impression theory was to mention perceptions of things that don't seem to have forms suitable for impressing in the perceiver. An obvious example here would be non-existent or impossible entities [T3, T76]. How can something that does not exist make an impression on a perceiver, or for that matter be accurately represented by a perceiver? Another case would be God, since He has no form, though this is not a problem as long as we are prepared to admit that He is unknowable [T15].⁴

While Avicenna in some passages looks to be endorsing representationalism, he elsewhere offers what sounds like a very different model of perception: “unification (*ittiḥād*)” between the subject and object of perception. Al-Rāzī thinks this might solve the inherence problem. Whereas the subject of perception would “become one” with, and thus simply *be* blackness when blackness is perceived, this is not true of a wall that is painted black [T26]. Al-Rāzī is, however, puzzled how the “unification” idea could fit with Avicenna’s other remarks on knowledge. He may be thinking of a passage from *Pointers and Reminders* which mocks Porphyry for saying that intellect unifies with the intelligible; al-Suhrawardī mentions that passage explicitly [T32].⁵ In any case al-Rāzī himself rejects the unification account on the grounds that it would be impossible to grasp more than one thing at a time [T27]. A surprising line of defense comes from al-Shahrazūrī, who alleges that Avicenna’s talk of “unification” was meant to capture something quite different from normal knowledge, namely Sufi mystical insight [T69]. But even here the knowing subject does not become fully identical with its object.

Let us now return to the most historically significant critic of Avicennan representationalism: Abū l-Barakāt [T7]. We’ve already seen that correspondence between the mental representation and the extramental object can only ever be incomplete. But never mind that: how would the knower ever be able to verify that their representation in fact represents the object *at all*? Al-Ṭūsī offers a remarkable response to this, which is to endorse an externalist view of knowledge: it is enough that the representation does in fact correspond in the relevant way, and one doesn’t need to be sure that it corresponds [T54] (a sim-

4 For more on knowledge of impossible things see our chapter on Non-Existence and Mental Existence and in our volume on Metaphysics and Theology.

5 For translation and discussion see the appendix in P. Adamson, “*Porphyrius Arabus* on Nature and Art: 463F Smith in Context,” in G. Karamanolis and A. Sheppard (eds), *Studies on Porphyry* (London: 2007), 141–163.

ilar point is made by al-Samarqandī in [T60]: we need not be aware of how our sense-perception works). But Abū l-Barakāt would surely reject this, holding on to the internalist intuition that one needs to know that one's knowledge is in fact accurate. Since the representationalist view cannot satisfy this requirement, and since the passive "impression" account is in any case subject to the other objections we have been discussing, we should give up on that account completely and try something else.

Abū l-Barakāt's alternative proposal is that the soul actively grasps, or "arrives at," its object [T8, T9, T10, T11, T13].⁶ (One verb he uses for this, *waṣala*, meaning "to get at something," is later used by al-Samarqandī to express the same idea [T59, T62].) In a case of sensory perception, like vision, the soul uses bodily organs and the images they receive as instruments for its acts of grasping. But it is always the soul, never the organ, that is the subject of perception, and perception is a direct relationship between the soul and the perceived object.⁷ Other thinkers were fascinated by this account and saw it as the main rival to Avicenna's. Several offered helpful summaries and critical evaluations [T16, T17, T71], with al-Sāwī for one arguing that Abū l-Barakāt will be in an even worse position to handle some of the puzzles he himself aimed at Avicenna. The anonymous author of *al-Nukat wa-l-fawā'id* is also unimpressed [T43]. He recalls examples given by Avicenna, like the spinning torch that is seen as a luminous circle, to show that we are directly perceiving internal images, and grasp external things only by means of those images. As more recent philosophers have had to re-learn, representationalism does very well at handling such illusion cases, but is always liable to skeptical worries of the kind raised by Abū l-Barakāt.

Fakhr al-Dīn can be seen as a proponent of Abū l-Barakāt's relation theory. One advantage of defining knowledge as a relation, he thinks, is that it can stand up against the sort of skeptical worries just mentioned [T28]. He does however realize that there are other potential difficulties with it, notably that we often seem to have knowledge in cases where there is nothing to which we might be related [T31]. This objection is also pressed by opponents of the relation view [T35, T51, T57, T66]. But as we saw, this problem also faces the impression theory. Non-existent objects seem incapable of producing an impression or mental form, and also unsuitable as targets of a relation. So this

6 On Abū l-Barakāt's theory of perception see further F. Benevich, "Perceiving Things in Themselves: Abū l-Barakāt al-Baġdādī's Critique of Representationalism," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* (2020), 229–264.

7 This connects to Abū l-Barakāt's rejection of multiple faculties of perception in the soul, on which see our chapter on the Unity of Soul in our volume on Physics and Psychology.

looks to be a difficulty for everyone. One solution, mentioned by al-Ḥillī, is to put the known objects not among existent things in extramental reality, but in the realm of *nafs al-amr*, that is, factual states of affairs.⁸ But al-Rāzī goes for a rather more fanciful, if easier to understand, solution, namely that the relata are out there after all. It's just that they are "hidden" somewhere, or are perhaps Platonic Forms [T29, T30, rejoinder at T78].⁹

This brings us to what is probably the most famous account of cognition in our period, namely al-Suhrawardī's celebrated theory of knowledge as "presence (*ḥuḍūr*)."¹⁰ Against the background of the debate just sketched, this theory turns out to look much less revolutionary than is often supposed. Basically it amounts to a rephrasing of Abū l-Barakāt's view: perception or knowledge is a direct relation or "connection (*ta'alluq*)" between the subject and object, such that the object is "present to" the subject. Thus for example in vision, perception occurs simply because the visible object shows itself to an attentive observer, with no representative form needed [T33; rejoinder at T46]. As al-Suhrawardī and others influenced by him like to say, it suffices that the object not be "hidden" from the perceiver [T64]. This explains why we are able to engage in self-awareness, or awareness of our own bodies: we are always present to ourselves [T48].

In fact Ibn al-Malāḥimī had already noted the difficulty of accommodating self-knowledge within the Avicennan theory that knowledge occurs through impressions: it seems absurd to say that one is passively impressed by one's own form [T4].¹⁰ Al-Abharī tries to fix the problem by admitting that self-knowledge is different from other cases of knowledge. For him, intellectual knowledge falls into two types, one directed towards oneself and another towards other things: the former is like Suhrawardian knowledge by presence, the latter is not. And, a point in favor of al-Suhrawardī: both kinds of knowledge at least have in common that a quiddity is present to the knower without corporeal attachments [T47]. In sharp contrast is the epistemology found in Bābā Afḍal, who assimilates *all* knowledge to self-knowledge. He thinks that we can turn towards ourselves to find knowledge of everything [T40]. This is because the "Intellect" which knows all things through itself has all things within its existence,¹¹ and

8 On the notion of *nafs al-amr* see H. Spiker, *Things as They Are: Nafs al-Amr and the Metaphysical Foundations of Objective Truth* (La Vergne: 2021).

9 Again, see our chapter on Non-Existence and Mental Existence in our volume on Metaphysics and Theology, esp. T33.

10 See further our chapter on Self-Knowledge in the present volume.

11 This Intellect is presumably God, not a second principle below God, as in classical Neoplatonism; see Bābā Afḍal's account of God as that which knows through itself in our chapter on Proofs of God's Existence (Metaphysics and Theology), T50.

knowledge is finding the “traces” of that intellectual existence within our souls [T41, T42]. Notice that Bābā Afḍal’s account would avoid the skeptical worries that plague representationalism, as we have mentioned above. The mind can be sure that its knowledge is veridical, because it is just grasping itself.¹²

But the Suhrawardian theory does accept a distinction between knowledge of the self and of other things, which are “present” in different ways. Regarding things other than oneself, the Illuminationists point out that it is not only the perceived object can be “present” to us, but also the form of that object, for instance if we imagine something we saw in the past but is no longer there [T33, T68]. Here representationalism is used to fill a gap in the presence theory, since it allows us to explain cases of cognition directed at absent things. Ibn Kammūna also says that presence comes in degrees, with vision for instance involving a stronger “unveiling” than imagination [T67]. Despite all this language of presence, hiddenness, veiling, and so on, talking of knowledge as presence did not seem to have any particular mystical significance in al-Suhrawardī himself. A mystical interpretation of “presence” is however prominent in the Illuminationists he influenced, like al-Shahrazūrī [T70].

Although the ideas of presence and non-hiddenness are the most celebrated elements of al-Suhrawardī’s theory of knowledge, a careful reader may notice that for al-Suhrawardī, something more than “non-hiddenness” is required if perception is to occur. In addition, the perceiver must focus sufficient “attention” on the object, which otherwise may not be registered [T33]. Fakhr al-Dīn likewise emphasizes the need for purposeful attention if perception or knowledge is to arise [T30]. Again, we see that a theory inspired by Abū l-Barakāt conceives of perception as having an “active” aspect, a point that was arguably missing in Avicenna. For instance, al-Ṭūsī characteristically accepts some Suhrawardian elements of the theory of perception, such as allowing that *some* cases of knowledge, like self-knowledge, do not need a form, while others do [T55]. Yet he still seems to reject the idea that we need a separate element of conscious attention to be involved [T50]. Hence, he faces a worry raised by the Avicennan picture, which is that in cases of sensory perception not one but *two* forms will arise, one in the sense-organ, another in the soul which grasps what the organ is perceiving. In fact though, there is no “double perception,” since perception happens only when the form is present to the soul, not just to the sense-organ [T50, T53]. Al-Ḥillī objects however that this is not really compatible with the Avicennan theory, since the perception is no longer the

12 This may be compared to Plotinus’ argument against Platonists who believed that the objects of intellect are outside the intellect, at *Enneads* 5.5.1.

occurrence of a form in the perceiver (which is the immaterial soul itself), but the occurrence of the form in something else (the organ) [T75]. On this telling, al-Ṭūsī effectively ended up abandoning Avicenna's inherence-based account of perception.

We might more charitably say that al-Ṭūsī typifies thirteenth century approaches to our topic, which often combine elements from originally disparate perceptual theories. We can see this by charting the history of another proposal, inspired by the *kalām* tradition, namely that perception is an "attribute (*ṣifa*)" in the perceiver, also mentioned in the doxography at [T58]. Al-Āmidī introduces this as a third option alongside the impression and relation options [T36]. We also find, for instance, al-Samarqandī calling perception an "attribute" [T61]. But there is an obvious question here, as to how my attribute of knowledge or perception allows me to know some specific object. A natural thought would be that the attribute is itself related to that object. In fact al-Āmidī also speaks of knowledge as a "relational attribute" [T35], while al-Samarqandī and al-Urmawī say that knowledge is in itself a quality, but one that involves a relation to something else [T62, T63]. Another syncratic proposal, which appropriately enough is found in the final passage we provide, is made by al-Ḥillī: perception is the presence of a form in the perceiver, which is "equivalent to" and thus in relation with a perceived object [T79].

Texts from: Avicenna, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, al-Shahrastānī, al-Sāwī, al-Mas'ūdī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Suhrawardī, al-Āmidī, Bābā Afḍal, Anonymous: *al-Nukat wa-l-fawā'id*, al-Abharī, al-Ṭūsī, al-Kātibī, al-Samarqandī, al-Urmawī, Ibn Kammūna, al-Shahrazūrī, al-Tustarī, al-Ḥillī.

[T1] Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 237.8–238.7

[*perception as representation*]

The perception (*idrāk*) of something is when its true reality is represented (*mutamaththila*) by the perceiver, and is observed through that by which he perceives. This true reality may be the true reality of something external to the perceiver itself, when it is perceived, where it is the true reality of something that lacks actual existence in extramental concrete individuals, as with many geometrical figures, and especially many impossible things that are posited but never actually realized, as one posits them in geometry. Or, the remaining option: it may be a representation (*mithāl*) of its true reality, inscribed (*mur-tasiman*) in the essence of the perceiver, without being separate from it.

[*types of perception*]

A thing is an object of sense-perception (*maḥsūsan*) when it is observed. Then, it becomes an object of the imagination (*mutakhayyalan*) after it is absent, by having its form represented inwardly, as when you see Zayd, for instance, but then when he is absent from you, you imagine him. Then he is an object of intellect (*ma'qūl*) when on the basis of Zayd, for instance, the idea (*ma'nā*) of human is conceptualized, which also exists for other [humans]. When he is an object of sense-perception, he is covered up with things extraneous to his quiddity (*māhiyya*) which, when eliminated, have no impact on the identity of the core of his quiddity (*kunh mahiyyatihi ... bi-'aynihi*), for instance location, position, quality, and size. If one supposed them to be exchanged for others, this would have no impact on the true nature (*ḥaqīqa*) of the quiddity of his humanity.

[T2] Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 244.8–15

[*inscribing of forms equals awareness of forms*]

You should know that it will be explained to you that that in us which is inscribed (*murtasim*) with the intelligible form is incorporeal, and is not in a body, whereas that which is inscribed with a form prior to it is a power in the body, or a body. And you know that the power's awareness (*shu'ūr*) of that which it perceives is the inscribing (*irtisām*) of [the object's] form in it, and that when the form arises (*ḥāsila*) in the power, the power is not unaware of [that form]. Do you suppose that, when the power is unaware of [the form], and then it turns back to it and directs attention (*iltafat*) to it, that it happens through anything other than the origination of its representation in [the power]? Thus it must be that the form eluding its awareness is the [form] that in some sense vanishes (*zālat*) from the perceiving power.

[T3] Ibn Al-Malāḥimī, *Tuhfa*, 72.21–73.2; 73.18–9; 74.1–7; 74.13–16;
74.20–75.12; 76.1–6; 76.16–17; 77.3–9

[*the philosophers' theory of knowledge as impression, with criticisms*]

Concerning the true reality of intellect and knowledge, they [sc. the philosophers] said that it is something existent that is free from matter. They said the knower is the existent who is free from matter, while the object of knowledge and intellection is separated from matter. They explained this by saying

that, when we posit the inherence of something that has been separated in that which is free [from matter], [73] then what inheres is knowledge, while the subject of inherence is the knower. For “knowledge” means simply that the impression (*inṭibāʿ*) of a form that has been separated from matter into an entity that is free from matter. That which is impressed is the object of knowledge, while that onto which it is impressed is the knower. This is just what “knowledge” means. [...]

[73.18] *We say:* what we understand by “knowledge” is for one of us to have clarity (*tabayyun*) about something, and for it to be evident (*ẓuhūr*) to him, in such a way that he can rule out the possibility (*tajwīz*) of what differs from it.

[74.1] *They said:* knowledge is perception (*idrāk*) through an internal sense, just as sense-perception of an object of sensation is perception through an external sense. Furthermore, the external sense is nothing but the impression of the form of the sensory representation (*inṭibāʿ ʿṣūrat al-mathal al-maḥsūs*) into the [organ] of sensation, which perceives and senses only the trace (*athar*) that is impressed in it. The external thing corresponds to this and is the reason for the occurrence of the trace. It [sc. the external thing] is the perceived object only secondarily, not primarily. You have an encounter with whatever occurs in your soul, and this trace is just what sensation is. Likewise, perception through an internal sense must be the impression of a representation of the thing that is known in the soul. The external existent corresponds to it and is the reason for its occurrence in the soul. Yet in reality the object of knowledge is that form which occurs in the soul. [...]

[74.13] *One may say to them:* what do they mean by the soul in which the form of the external object of knowledge is impressed? Do they mean the heart and its structure (*binya*), or rather the soul that is impressed [in the body], which is affirmed by the philosophers (*falāsifa*)? If they do mean the heart, *one may say to them:* there is a dense veil between the heart and the external object of knowledge which hinders the object’s from being represented in the heart, just as a dense veil hinders the form of an external object of sensation from being represented in the sense-organ. [...]

[74.20] The same result will be forced upon them if they say that soul is not the heart, but rather a substance impressed in the heart, through which one is connected to the world of the soul, in keeping with the teaching of Plato. But if by “soul” they mean that which other philosophers taught, namely that it is a substance existing neither in a body nor in a place (*jīha*), according

to the doctrine of Aristotle and later philosophers such as Avicenna, among others, *one may say to them*: this is based [75] on your argument for affirming that soul, which we reject. We will show the falsehood of [their] argument [for the Aristotelian account of soul] in what follows, if God wills. *One may also say*: even if we conceded that [theory of] soul, we might say to you, we have no intellectual grasp of the occurrence of the form of an object of knowledge in something that is neither in a body nor in a place. For our saying “such-and-such occurred in such-and-such” means just that the former occurred “where” (*khaythu*) the latter did, being subsequent to it by occurring “where” the latter is. This can be grasped intellectually only for something that has a “where” in which it may itself occur. Only then will it be possible to say that something else occurred in the place where it is, being subsequent to it. [...] [75.7] But if soul is not a body, it does not occur in any place, and we cannot intellectually grasp that a trace of something should be in it. Don't you see that, when you say “the form of the external object of thought occurs in the soul,” if someone replied that instead the soul occurs in the form of the external object of thought that has been separated from matter, you would have no response? You would not be able to distinguish between the occurrence of the soul in the form and the occurrence of the form in the soul, because just as the soul is not in a place, neither is the form impressed in the soul. If neither of them is in a place, one cannot say that it is more appropriate for either one to be in the other, rather than vice-versa.

[76.1] Next, *one may say to them*: we have shown in the *Mu'tamad*, in the chapter on vision, that sense-perception is not an effect (*ta'thīr*) of the perceived in the sense-organ. Rather the effect of the perceived object in it is the *condition* for sense-perception. We have proved this on the following grounds. Suppose someone else speaks to us and we hear what he says, so that the sound made does have an effect on our organ of hearing. If the effect of the sound in the organ of hearing were identical to our hearing what he says, then our hearing him talk would arise from the person speaking to us, since it would be him who brings into existence that which affects the organ of hearing. Yet every reasonable person knows that hearing him talk arises from the one who hears, not the one who speaks. So we know that our hearing (*samā'*) [what he says] is something beyond (*zā'id*) making us hear (*ismā'*) him: it arises from the one who hears, and is rendered necessary by the listener's being alive, through an instrument, namely his organ [of hearing]. That is why a speaker can be neither ordered nor prohibited from making Zayd listen to him. Nor is [the speaker] praised or blamed for it. So we know that the hearing of speech is something

additional (*zā'id*) to the effect of sound in our sense-organ. If it must be so in the case of the perception of sound, all other types of sense perception work in the same way. [...] [76.16] The same may be inferred concerning knowledge about the external object of knowledge: it would be something beyond the occurrence of its form in the soul, even if we were to concede that its form is in fact impressed in the soul, just as we have mentioned in the case of external sense-perception.

[77.3] *One may say to them:* someone who grasps with the intellect may freely conceptualize things that do not exist in concrete individuals, like the goat-stag. Likewise every artisan, builder, or scribe conceptualizes what he will make before bringing it into existence. The essence of that which does not exist, though, cannot be conceptualized in the soul, since it has no essence. So one may rightly say that the soul is what conceives of these things on the basis of other things, but without them being the effects of other things. And its conception of them is knowledge about them, as we have mentioned. Likewise, the soul must produce the perception of all external objects of knowledge through acts of knowledge (*bi-l-'ulūm*), without there being any external knowledge to make knowledge in [the soul] as an effect. By contrast this is not so with external sense-perception. Hence your analogy fails. Also, since we conceptualize the denial of things whose existence is impossible, as when we conceive another thing resembling the necessary existent, and deny it. One cannot in such a case say that its essence is impressed in the soul. There are many such cases one might discover by inquiry.

[T4] Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuhfa*, 77.15—22

[*self-awareness as counterexample to knowledge as impression*]

Furthermore, you said several times that if a person knows himself, his knowledge is precisely because he is not hidden from himself, and needs no representation or form to occur in him, in order to know himself. [...] [77.18] But initially, you said: whenever something free from matter is impressed upon something else free from matter, what is impressed is knowledge, and that in which it is impressed is the knower, and “knowledge” has no other meaning than this. How do these two different ideas amount to the same thing? The problem is obvious, because you made that in which the form of an external object of knowledge is impressed to be a self-knower; but you made the knower to be knowledgeable purely on the grounds of his being separate from matter. Then elsewhere, you made him to be knowledgeable due to the impression of

a form that has been separated from matter in something free [from matter]. This is a contradiction, unless one takes “knowledge” and “knowledgeable” to be equivocal notions, but they don’t say this.

[T5] Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu’tabar*, vol. 2, 323.14–15

[*perception as relation*]

We say: upon even slight reflection, one will realize that perception of whatever sort is primarily and essentially a relational state (*ḥāl idāfiyya*) between the perceiving thing and the perceived thing.

[T6] Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu’tabar*, vol. 2, 324.18–325.13

[*representational cognition would not grasp the object itself*]

It is said concerning each of these perceptions that their perceiver “encounters” (*yulāqā*) the perceived object, and “communicates (*yushāfiḥu*)” with it. Common to [all accounts of perception] is speaking of an encounter (*laqāʿ*) between the perceiver and the perceived, and their coming together, either at the perceiver’s end or at the perceived. Yet they have explained vision with reference to the way colored shapes are engraved upon surfaces, bodies, and mirrors, and how qualities, such as heat and cold, migrate by relocating from some bodies to others. Regarding mental perceptions and imaginative representations, they claimed that these [amount to] forming representations and representing figures (*ashbāḥ*) in specific organs, namely [325] the spirits which bear the faculties [of the soul]. But they made an exception among these perceptions when it came to what they called “intellectual perception.” It does not belong specifically to any organ, nor does it require any organ. Whatever the perceiver encounters among [intelligibles], he perceives through himself (*bi-dhātihī*), and makes it occur in himself (*fī dhātihī*). [...]

[325.9] According to these views, what is perceived (especially in the case of mental perceptions) primarily and essentially is not that which is said to be perceived because its meaning (*maʿnā*) and representation has been imprinted [in the perceiver]. Rather, [the primary object of perception] must be the meaning and the representation. It has not been verified how the possessor of the meaning is perceived through [the representation], or actually, it hasn’t been verified [that this happens at all]. If we introspect upon our own minds, what we will find to be correct is this general occurrence that perception is achieved

and realized through the encounter between the perceiver himself and object itself (*laqā' al-dhāt al-mudrik li-l-dhāt allātī tadrukuhu*).

[T7] Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, 327.23–328.1

[*magnitude argument*]

The decisive proof against those who believe in figures (*ashbāḥ*) that arrive [at the eyes] is for us to say: how can the pupil of the eye, or the spirit in it, hold the impression of the form of the heavens in correspondence to its size and magnitude, despite [328] being so much smaller than it? How can a large form be impressed in something small?

[T8] Abū l-Barākāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, 333.13–334.1

[*it is the soul that sees through the eye and visual ray*]

What sees in the person is his soul. It is his essence, of which he has awareness, with no misgiving that anyone else might be seeing, despite doing so through the eye. And it is [the soul] that hears, despite doing so through the ear. And so on with other acts, as no one doubts that he is the one who performs each of them. So it is established that he is the one who sees and hears, no one else. Nor is the one who sees in [the person] distinct from the one who hears, even as he sees each thing in its place and size, not a representation of it (*mithālahu*) within his brain. If he saw something within his brain, then he should really see the inside of his brain, in which he is seeing. He doesn't even see the eye, so how could he see what lies behind it? Rather one just sees *through* the eye, so that the one seeing is not the eye. If it were, then the eye would rather see itself. This [seeing] is achieved through the light of the eye and its sending out of rays (*shī'ā'*) that reach the visual object. If [the ray] does not reach the object, the person will not see it. This ray is like the eye in that it is an instrument for that in us which sees. [The ray] is not what sees. Rather, by means of it we see that which it reaches. Our perception arrives at (*yantahī*) [the visual object] without our souls separating from our bodies. Rather each of us is aware of the soul in his body and together with [the body] in the appropriate way. The [soul's] perception reaches the visual object where [334] it is and arrives at it.

[T9] Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, 348.19–20

[*soul does not need the body to grasp sensible things*]

With each act, [the soul] turns its attention to whatever is individually specifically selected by the organ, not because it could not [perceive them] through itself and by its nature (*fiṭra*), but because of its being connected [to the body] through character, inspiration, or custom.

[T10] Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, 394.8–17

[*linguistic analysis of idrāk*]

The lexicographic definition of “reaching/perception (*idrāk*)” is, as stated above, that someone who is searching and looking for something he is after comes upon it and gets hold of it. One may say that he “reached (*adrakuhū*)” it if he walks to it and catches up with it. Here it is characteristic that the thing was escaping him, but then the seeker follows it and gets hold of it. More generally, it is said of attaining and getting hold of something after looking and searching for it, as when two people are looking for one another and then they meet on purpose, this is called an “encounter (*talāqīyan*),” with each of the two having gotten at (*waṣala*) the other; but if they did not meet on purpose it is called a “chance encounter.” Either way it is called “reaching” and “attainment.” Thus *idrāk* is the encounter and arrival of someone who reaches something, at what is reached. “Understanding (*fahm*)” is said to be “reaching/perception (*idrāk*)” too, as when one says “the perception of this word’s meaning,” that is, understanding or conceptualization of it. Of reaching/perception there is the existential variety, which arises through bodily motion, and the mental variety, which happens through the soul’s looking for something without any motion in respect of place. Both are an encounter of the perceiver with the perceived, essence to essence (*al-dhāt li-l-dhāt*).

[T11] Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, 396.5–14; 397.17–398.3

[*two kinds of perception*]

There are two kinds of perception. One is the perception of a concrete existent just as it is in existence, in terms of place, proximity to or distance from the perceiver, what is next to it, far from it, facing it, above or below it, precisely as these things are perceived by the eye, where they are and with those attributes. If we cover our eyes, we do not perceive this thing as being as such-and-such.

But if there is someone else in the same place, he will obviously share with the first person in perceiving the perceived object in the same way, as long as there is nothing which obstructs only the second but not the first, like a blindfold, he doesn't direct his attention (*iltifāt*) to some other spot than where the object is located, so that he's distracted away from it, taking his attention away from being aware of that which he perceives.

The other is the perception of a mental form, which the perceiver realizes has no specific place, and is established in no location. For instance, one might conceptualize the form of an individual who is dead, or is hidden or distant from the location [the perceiver] can apprehend and perceive. [...]

[397.16] *Someone might say*: the benefit [of their doctrine] is that a corporeal power is the subject of inherence (*maḥall*) and substrate (*mawḏūʿ*) [for the perceived forms], and that this consideration takes place in it, that is, in the subject. This statement is wrong, for the reasons we've given. Namely that the spirit and human body do not suffice for [such a consideration of forms], not even a tiny, minimal part of them. Yet we know that we do perceive [such forms], without this occurring inside our bodies or outside them—not in our bodies, and not in any part of them. They belong to us in such a way that the eye does not apprehend them: neither one of our eyes, nor the eye of [anyone else] who sees. Rather [the forms] are in our souls, which are their subject of inherence, just as with other objects of knowledge, which we have distinguished into those intellectual universals and these sensible particulars. The sensible is nothing other than what we have already mentioned; the intellectual is nothing but the mental item we are discussing now. For if something mental is called "intellectual," meaning the universal that has no concrete measure or concrete place of its own, then this case is just the same. The soul is the subject of inherence for all the forms that are known, because it is through this thing of ours, in us, and with us, that we are aware, so that [398] we are aware through this, finding in this case [sc. universals] no difference that we can perceive in itself, and they have offered us no proof [that the two cases are different]. So there is no difference between [sense-perception and perception of universals] as concerns that which perceives both. The subject that stores and turns its attention to both of them is each one of us in themselves (*dhāt*).

[T12] Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, 403.6–8

[*summary of Avicenna's indivisibility argument*]

They said that the indivisible does not inhere in that which receives division, nor can the form of that which receives division inhere in the indivisible. On this basis they ruled out that the perceiver of the intelligible form is the same as the perceiver of sensibles.

[T13] Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, 413.11–15; 416.6–10

[*how do we have knowledge of particulars?*]

They claimed that intellect does not perceive sensible things and they believed that, if intellect were to perceive sensibles that have sizes and shapes, and are susceptible to separation and division, then intellect [too] would have to be divided along with them. For its essence would encounter their essences through its perception of them, and each of their parts would encounter a bit of the [intellect], which another of their parts does not encounter. So it would be divided through encounters with the different parts. But if the intellect were subject to division and partition, then it could not perceive intelligible forms, which are not subject to division and partition. [...]

[416.6] It has been verified, and repeatedly stated in different and similar ways, that what perceives intelligibles is the same as what we have that perceives sensibles, and what perceives concrete existents is the same as what perceives mental objects within ourselves. It is not subject to partition through sensible forms, nor is it divided, so that what it perceives would be divided in accordance to its division. And there inhere in it intelligible forms, which they say to be immune to partition.

[T14] Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, 341.4–18

[*incommensurability argument and becoming argument*]

We say the same about [the common sense] as we said about visual perception. There, one has denied that the shapes of anything having large dimensions would be inscribed (*irtisām*) [in the eye pupil] beholding its dimensions. So, how can thousands of such dimensions be inscribed in this small part [of the brain], how can a town be engraved (*tantaqishu*) [in the brain] beholding its measure, or a mountain beholding its largeness? Given that it was impossible

in the case of an eye when it was seeing shape by shape, one after another, it is all the more impossible here, in the case of the perception of many different objects at the same time. How can different types of perceived objects such as colors, shapes, hotness and coldness, hardness and softness, [different] types of taste and smell be altogether? How does one move in shortest time from the perception of something to perceiving its opposite?

Also, if one's perception is the occurrence (*huṣūl*) of those qualities in him, and the hot is that one in which there is hotness, and the cold is that in which there is coldness, and the hard is that in which there is hardness, and so on, then that spirit [which they claim to be the bearer of common sense] hardens as stone, softens as air, becomes wet as water, becomes dry as earth, burns as fire, and becomes cold as snow in the shortest time period. Likewise it becomes sweet as honey and bitter as cactus, and [changes] in terms of these states from one opposite to another [almost] without any time distance.

[T15] Al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāraʿa*, 74.2–5 [trans. Mayer, mod.]

[*if knowledge is an impression, one cannot conceive of God*]

Those companions deny that He is an object or subject of intellection. For intellection is the inscribing (*irtisām*) of the intellect with the form of what is intellectually grasped, but the True is exalted above having form and so being intellectually grasped, regardless whether the form is corporeal or an incorporeal quiddity. He is exalted above intellection, such that there would be both Him *and* a form. Rather, He is beyond knowing and being known!

[T16] Al-Sāwī, *Nahj al-taqdīs*, 137.13–138.3; 139.7–140.9; 141.6–12; 142.3–6; 143.1–8; 144.4–10; 145.9–13

[*summary of Abū l-Barakāt's view*]

All perceptions belong to the soul alone. There is no visual faculty in the eye, nor hearing faculty in the ear, nor smelling faculty in the nose, nor tasting faculty in the tongue, nor touching faculty in the whole body of man, which would distinguish between cold and hot, wet and dry, hard and soft, rough and smooth. Rather, all these perceptions belong to the soul itself (*bi-dhātihī*). [138] Likewise the inner perceptions involving the work of imagination, thought, estimation, and memory all belong to the soul. *He said*: if the soul turns its attention (*iltifāt*) to the spirit in the two hollow nerves of the eye, and the light

of vision¹³ falls upon an illuminated object that is facing it, then there arises a perception of the object of vision, which belongs primarily and essentially to the soul. [...]

[*arguments in favor of Abū l-Barakāt's view*]

[139.7] *The first* [argument] is that if vision took place through the making of an impression (*inṭibāʿ*), then something will be impressed upon the surface of the cornea, which is larger than it in magnitude. And we can see half of the heavenly sphere, or some say even more than half. *The second* [argument] is that we see things as being where they are. If vision were the impressing of figures (*ash-bāḥi*) in sight, then we could only see or sense them as being in the eye, and we should not ever sense nearness and farness. *The third* [argument] is that every reasonable person who is capable of intelligent speech knows from his own experience that he is the one who sees, hears, imagines, uses estimation, and remembers, no one else. But if perception happened through these faculties, it would be false to ascribe these perceptions to him, saying: "I have seen, I have heard, I have tasted, and I have smelled." Rather it would be true to say: "my eye has seen, my ear has heard." [...]

[*responses*]

[140.5] *As for the third*¹⁴ among these objections [posed by Abū l-Barakāt against Avicenna], it does not really prove the reverse of the true doctrine. For, even though particular perceptions happen through organs and corporeal faculties, the soul is nonetheless aware of them. If a visual form arises in vision and is impressed upon it, then awareness of it occurs to our souls. Whatever the faculty perceived in a particular way is transmitted from the faculty to [the soul] in a universal way. That is why every reasonable person knows from his own experience that he is the one who sees and hears. [...]

[141.6] If the soul's perception were not mediated by organs and powers which are impressed in them, then the relations we have mentioned would be impossible, and it would be necessary, or nearly so, that this sense-perception through these faculties would arise for *everything* else, so that whenever someone directs his thought to [anything at all] even a little bit, he would doubtless perceive it. But clearly perception of food occurs through saturation of the tongue and the tongue's taking on the qualities of each bit of food, so that they are

13 The "light of vision" here is a visual ray sent out from the eye, which allows us to see any illuminated surface.

14 In the text it says "first argument" but this is clearly a response to the third one.

perceived by the powers that flow through the nerves dispersed through the surface of tongue. Likewise the human being takes on the qualities of hot, cold, and other objects of touch, but this does not happen to the separate substance, which can be neither hot nor cold, wet nor dry, rough nor smooth, hard nor soft.

[142.3] *The response to [the second argument]* is that, just as the figures (*ashbāḥ*) of things are impressed upon vision, so the distance between it and the visible object are impressed too, through the intermediary of the colored image. For among sensible objects, there are some that are sensed without an intermediary, others that are sensed with an intermediary, like magnitudes, positions, motions, cases of rest, shapes, nearness, farness, and juxtaposition. Their being “sensed with an intermediary” means that their being inscribed and imagined follows upon that which is sensed primarily and without an intermediary, like color, hot, and cold, so that their representations can be inscribed upon imagination and sense only with these attachments and necessary concomitants [sc. magnitudes, positions, etc.].

[143.1] Actually, these cases are even more problematic and difficult [for the one who says that the soul perceives by itself], since soul cannot reach that sense-object where it is, so as to perceive it as being there, since it cannot reach sense-objects. It cannot in itself perceive [the object] there, the way it perceives universals. For it perceives universals without connecting or linking them with anything sensible. In fact, the problem is even worse for him than that, since the eye is a body in a location, and there is some interval of distance between it and the sense-objects, so it is possible for the distance to be inscribed in it also, following upon the colored [image], as we have mentioned. The soul, by contrast, is not corporeal, nor is it in a location, nor is there any distance between it and corporeal things. So how does it sense the distance between sight and its object?

[144.4] [*Response to the first objection.*] *We say:* if someone comprehends the knowledge of the infinite division of bodies, and [realizes] that [even] a small body can be divided into fractions of number or shape, and if each fraction differs from the others in magnitude, then it is not so implausible [that a large body can make an impression in the much smaller eye]. In general, [Abū l-Barakāt's] doctrine is harder to credit: doesn't he say that this perception occurs in the soul, that is, the perception of this particular thing which is half of the cosmic sphere, [perceiving it] as an individual whose magnitude is spread across different locations, whereas the soul has no magnitude? If this large object can be inscribed upon something that has no magnitude [sc. the soul],

even though impression and fitness can be conceptualized only in something that has magnitude, then it can certainly be inscribed in something that does have magnitude, even if its magnitude is small.

[145.8] *And we confront them with several problems. First:* if vision primarily and essentially belonged to the soul, then when it turned its attention to the spirit in the two hollow nerves [of the eye], and the light of vision fell upon an illuminated object that is facing it, then there would have to occur to it a perception of everything that is illuminated and lit up, regardless whether it is facing one's vision or not, and regardless whether a veil between it and vision were removed or not, since there has been a turning of attention to the spirit, and that object is illuminated at the moment of attention, whether or not the light of vision falls upon it.

[T17] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Shukūk*, 209.15–210.5; 210.9–12; 212.10–13; 215.8–11; 215.13–216.6; 216.7–18; 217.16–218.6; 223.11–18; 235.14–236.12; 237.12–238.8

[*defense and elaboration of Abū l-Barakāt's view*]

I said: [Avicenna] made the true reality of perception to be the occurrence (*ḥuṣūl*) of the representation of the perceived in the essence of the perceiver. The perceiving faculties are divided into corporeal and incorporeal. The incorporeal is the [210] intellectual faculty referred to as “rational soul.” Its perceptions are either universals—which are intelligible forms and true realities separated from matter, existing in minds alone—or they are particulars. The latter are essences existing among concrete individuals, separate, free, and denuded of corporeal matter, and subsistent by themselves, such as the essence of the First—may He be praised an exalted—or the essences of intellect and souls. [...]

[210.9] The perception of the perceived by the intellectual faculty is an encounter (*mulāqā*) between the intellectual faculty and the forms of the intelligible true realities. By “encounter” I mean their being inscribed (*irtisām*) in the faculty and the occurrence of those forms in it. This is the true reality of the intellection of something, the true reality of knowledge, and of the awareness of something. [...]

[212.10] This which we have reported is agreed by most. But in fact, investigation and inquiry lead to [a different result]: that the true reality of perception is

something other than encounter. Rather, it is a relational state (*ḥāla idāfiyya*) of the perceiver to the thing that is perceived. This state may be referred to as manifestation (*zuhūr*), disclosure (*kashf*), awareness (*shu'ūr*), and knowledge (*'ilm*). [...]

[215.8] Saying that the perceiver is divided into one kind that is corporeal, which perceives sensibles only, and another kind that is incorporeal, which perceives only intelligibles, is widespread and generally accepted; most people agree on this. Nobody disagreed with this apart from an eminent scholar of our own time, to whom God—may He be exalted—gave a special gift for investigation and inquiry. This is the author of the *Mu'tabar* [i.e. Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghādāī]. [...]

[215.13] For you are in no doubt that you hear sounds, see colors and shapes, and perceive certain intelligibles. Nor do you doubt that you are one in number, not two. Your one and the same self (*dhāt*) is not numerous faculties which are claimed to be in you as an individual. No reasonable person would hesitate over any of this. If, however, the perceiver of sensibles were different from the one who perceives intelligibles, then the substance of you yourself, which is in fact you, would not perceive both together. For if it did, then the perceiver of both would be [216] one, or you would be two in number, not one. So the faculty in you that perceives intelligibles is the substance of your rational soul, which is you, nothing else than [the soul], which is nothing other than you. If the faculty that perceives sensibles were something different from your substance, which is you, then it would not be you who sees or hears, as this would be impossible for you. Instead it would be something else that hears and sees. But if it is your substance itself, so that you do hear and see, and engage in intellection, then that which perceives everything is you yourself, and your single soul. [...]

[216.7] *If you say:* the visual faculty in the eye is my organ that perceives and sees, but then it transfers to me what it has perceived, owing to the contact between it and myself, so that I have awareness of something that the organ perceived, *we reply to you:* once it has been transferred to you, do you perceive the observed thing just as the organ did, or not? If so, then your perception and that of the organ being distinct, the perception of the organ is superfluous for your perception, just as would be Zayd or 'Amr's perceiving while you are perceiving. For in perceiving, you would have no need of the perception of your organ. Rather, you would need it only as transferring something to you. So why not just say that the image (*shabah*) of the visual objects is impressed in the eye, and then transferred to the soul by a "transferring faculty," not a "perceiving fac-

ulty”? All that’s needed, after all, is something that transfers, not something that perceives. But if you say that you do *not* perceive once [the image] is transferred to you, then you have not seen and not perceived. Instead, you have merely realized that the eye, which is your organ, or the visual faculty in it, has seen and has perceived something. And that realization would be one thing, the true reality of vision another, so realizing that one sees is not at all the same as seeing. Yet I can’t imagine you are in doubt as to whether it is you who sees and hears. [...]

[217.16] *If they say*: the only thing imprinted (*tantaqishu*) in [the eye] is a small form that resembles the form of a body that is large in measure, and is similar to it in everything apart from the measure, like the [image of the] human in the eye, for instance: it is just like the form of human apart from its measure.

We say: then we ought to see the [218] impressed form according to its own measure, not as bigger than it is. If the form of a large mountain, whose height exceeds one thousand cubits, is impressed in the brain, then it is impressed as small, fitting the measure of the brain. So we should see it small, just as it was impressed, without perceiving the mountain’s height, size, and measure, which were not impressed. If the visual faculty is aware only of this small form, and perceives only its measures, how does then the measure of the external body get to be perceived? [...]

[223.11] One way to undermine the theory of impressions (*inṭibāʿ*) is that we perceive the difference in proximity and distance between visual objects that are near or far away from us. If the object of perception and awareness were the form impressed in the brain, and not the external thing which occupies its own true place and location, then we should perceive no difference between near and far. For all forms would be impressed in one and the same place inside the brain, without some of them being closer to us and some further away. The distance between us and the objects seen cannot be intellectually grasped in the brain at all, unlike the forms of bodies, since these can be imprinted on the bodily surface [e.g. of the brain or eye] whereas the distance cannot. [...]

[235.14] Further, a refutation of the view that affirms this faculty [of common sense] and its perception is that, if we imagine a form or remember something (*maʿnā*), then awareness and knowledge arise as belonging to the substance of our soul, which is our true reality (*ḥaqīqa*), or this is not the case. But it is absurd that this should not be the case. For no one doubts that it is he who is knowing whatever he imagines or remembers. But if knowledge of it does arise, then our knowledge of it is either identical to the perception of the faculty, or it is not. And is absurd that it be identical. For, when there is a difference of per-

ceiver, there must [236] necessarily be a difference in perception. Therefore, our awareness and perception of whatever *we* imagine and suppose is different from the awareness of that thing by the faculty. For this faculty's awareness would be superfluous, since it would just come down to our being aware of [what is imagined]. For example, if we know that Zayd is a friend of 'Amr, or his enemy, then the one who perceives this friendship would be just a faculty in the brain, which is not the same as the substance of our soul. But then the substance of our soul would not know about it! Fine, it might perceive that one of its bodily faculties is perceiving that friendship. But knowing that some other faculty, which is not oneself, knows something, is not the same as knowing that thing. Then if the soul too perceives that friendship, doubtless its perception is different from the perception belonging to its faculty. We affirm and judge the existence [of something] on the basis of our soul's awareness of it, not on the basis of awareness belonging to the estimative faculty. Thus there is no need to affirm any perceiving faculty besides the soul. Admittedly, the soul does need organs of its own in order to perceive, these being parts of the brain, together with the spirits in them. Each part of [the brain] is an organ for a further kind of perception, as we have established in the case of the external senses. So there is no perception that does not belong to the soul, and no perceiver other than the soul. [...]

[237.12] A proof that soul does perceives sensible, corporeal items is that the objects of perception of these [aforementioned] faculties must either come to be perceived by the soul, or not. If not, then we have no awareness of what we hear, see, imagine, and suppose, but this is obviously false. On the other hand, if they are indeed perceived, then the soul does perceive sensible, corporeal items. Furthermore, the soul must also perceive these perceiving faculties, so as to be able to perceive whatever is perceived in them. But these faculties too are corporeal items, which exist in their subjects, as do all accidents.

Your claim that the soul enjoys only intellectual perception is senseless talk. If by this you mean that, when the soul perceives these faculties, or whatever they perceive, then it is perceiving intelligible items, not [238] corporeal ones, this is not so, as is pretty well obvious. On the other hand, if you mean that it perceives them insofar as they are faculties, and it is from this point of view that they are intelligible and universal—just as one might perceive the true reality of humanity on the basis of the individual Zayd—then this too is false. For, if it does not perceive these concrete, individual faculties insofar as they are these concrete beings, it will not perceive the individual objects of perception inscribed in them. It follows that we have no awareness of whatever we

sense and imagine. But we have no doubt that we do perceive all this. So the soul does perceive these objects of sensation and imagination, and does perceive these corporeal faculties. Moreover, it perceives the whole body which is its own.

[T18] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 440.14–441.2

[*becoming argument against knowledge as impression*]

If intellection were the result of impression, then when we intellectually grasp that black is opposed to white, the form of black and white would need to be impressed in us. Their subject of inherence must be one and the same, since a judgment about two things must be present to the one who judges about both. But they are by their very quiddities incompatible. The consequent is false, so the antecedent is likewise false.

If a quiddity is impressed in the intellect, then insofar as it is a particular form that arises in a particular soul, it is extramentally existent. Mental existence is either this, or some other existence. From the first [i.e. that mental existence is the impressed form's existing in the soul] it would follow that there is no difference between mental and extramental existence at all. Everything that applies to that quiddity when it is extramental would need to apply to it when it is mental. Thus intelligible heat would burn, and intelligible black would be visible and would contract vision. This is absurd. The second [i.e. that the impressed form has a different kind of existence] is also absurd, since it would follow that one and the same thing exists in two ways, so that it exists twice, which [441] is also absurd. Even if one granted that it has another kind of existence, extramental existence would arise [too], so again everything that occurs to it extramentally would need to apply [in the mind too, as in the objection to the first option].

[T19] Al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, vol. 2, 155.9–11.

[*knowledge is not just inherence*]

If the perception of blackness, for example—regardless whether this perception is intellection, imagination, or vision—came down to the occurrence (*ḥuṣūl*) of the true reality of blackness for something, then a stone that has blackness as an attribute would perceive it, because blackness does occur for it. The consequent is obviously false, so also the antecedent.

[T20] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 229.12–16

[*knowledge is not just inherence*]

If the true reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of knowledge and perception came down to the occurrence (*ḥuṣūl*) of one thing in another, separate [from matter], then when we conceptualize an existent which is neither a body nor something inhering in the body, and we believe that blackness inheres in it, in that case we would have to determine that this existent is knowing that blackness. For the true reality of knowledge would be nothing but the occurrence of blackness to that existent. As soon as we acknowledge this [sc. the occurrence of blackness to it], we have thereby acknowledged that the true reality of knowledge occurs for it. But we know necessarily that this is not so. For, once having learned that God the exalted is neither body nor inhering in a body, we may still be in doubt whether He, the exalted, knows Himself or not, and whether He knows that He is an agent for other things, or not. Thus we know that one thing's being aware (*kawn shā'iran*) of another is different from the occurrence of that thing to it.

[T21] Al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, vol. 2, 146.5–148.5

[*becoming argument, and two responses with replies*]

One thing's being attributed of another means simply the occurrence of the attribute for the subject of attribution. So when we intellectually grasp roundness, straightness, cold, and heat, the subject of intellection must become round, straight, cold, and hot, at the time it grasps them intellectually. But this is false.

Let it not be said: this does not follow, and for two reasons. *First*, we do not say that, when someone intellectually grasps roundness, roundness itself occurs in him. Rather we say that a representation (*mithāl*), form (*ṣūra*), or image (*shabāḥ*) of roundness occurs in it. And we say likewise regarding the conceptualization of fire. *Second*, “fire” does not come down to something that is “burning” without qualification. Rather, it comes down to something that is burning *if it exists extramentally*. Things being so, even if the true reality of fire occurs in the mind, it will not be burning, since the condition for its burning is that it exist extramentally. [147] And yet it is still fire, since it holds true of it, even when it is in the mind, that if its quiddity existed extramentally, *then* it would be burning.

For we say: as for the first response, it is wrong, since that which you call the “representation” and “form” of roundness either (a) has the same true reality as

roundness, or (b) not. (a) If the former, then these true realities do occur to the one who intellectually grasps them. So it must be that whoever intellectually grasps roundness is round, since by “the round” one understands simply that in which roundness occurs. (b) But if it does not have the same true reality as roundness, then the intellection of the roundness does not come down to the occurrence of roundness in the thing that is grasping it intellectually; and this was the result sought.

As for the second response, [it is wrong too,] because if we intellectually grasp fire as “that which implies burning when it exists in extramental reality,” then inevitably we have grasped “burning.” For our knowledge that one thing implies another under a specified condition presupposes our knowledge of the true reality of both what is implied and what implies it. But if we have grasped “burning,” and intellection comes down to the occurrence of the intelligible object in the subject of intellection, burning has after all occurred in our mind, so that the mind is burning, given that “the burning” means simply “that in which there is burning.”

[148] *Perhaps though they will say*: we do not intellectually grasp the true reality of burning either. Rather, we grasp concerning it that it is whatever implies certain necessary concomitant, *when it exists extramentally*. But our argument concerning this concomitant, whatever it is, will be the same as the former [concerning burning itself]. In general, the intellection of fire calls for either the intellectual grasping of its true reality, or the intellection of one of its necessary concomitants; on either assumption, absurdity follows.

[T22] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 222.6–13; 223.11–224.1¹⁵

[the subject of inherence cannot be corporeal]

If the subject of inherence for imaginative forms were a body, then the subject of inherence for the intelligible forms we have affirmed would also be a body. But the consequent is false, therefore so is the antecedent. Proof of the hypothetical: if we see Zayd and imagine his form, we can judge that he is a human, not a horse. Human and horse are both universal quiddities. And whoever judges one thing with respect to another, while being one and the same judge, must conceptualize both universal terms [involved in the judgement].

15 The same argument can be found in al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-‘uqūl*, vol. 2, 152.9–154.7.

For this is an assent, so it requires both conceptualizations. Hence, the one who perceives the concrete individual, whether by vision or by imagination, must, while being one and the same, perceive both the universal man and the universal horse. If that in which the imaginative form resided were a body, or were corporeal, then the one who is imagining is [also] a body, or is corporeal. And if this were so, then the one who perceives the universal man and the universal horse would [likewise] be a body, or would be corporeal. Thus the demonstration of the hypothetical. [...]

[the subject of inherence cannot be incorporeal either]

[223.11] When we imagine a square with two completely equal squares on its sides, the imagination distinguishes between the two squares on the sides. This distinction has nothing to do with the quiddity or its necessary concomitants, since the two squares do not differ in quiddity or necessary concomitants, insofar as they are squares. Thus this distinction has to do with accidents. The difference between individuals of the same quiddity is due only to the receptacle (*qābil*).¹⁶ This receptacle does not exist extramentally, given that we assumed that this square does not exist extramentally. So this receptacle is the mind. But if the subject of inherence of both forms were one and the same thing, then neither of them could be specified by an accident to the exclusion of the other. Therefore, the subject of inherence for one of the two squares must differ from the subject of inherence for the other square. Thus, the subject of inherence of these imaginative forms can only be divisible, and must be a body, or corporeal.

It has then been established that [224] the subject of inherence for imaginative forms cannot be a body or corporeal, nor can it fail to be a body or corporeal. [Thus imagination does not take place through inherence.]

[T23] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 224.2–225.13¹⁷

[Abū l-Barakāt's magnitude argument, possible responses, and replies]

Several arguments indicate that vision does not involve the impression (*intibāʿ*) upon vision of the forms of what is seen. Firstly, we can see the hemisphere of the world, but the large cannot be impressed upon the small.

16 For matter or its equivalent, the “receptacle,” as the principle of individuation see our chapter on Individuation in the *Metaphysics and Theology* volume.

17 The same discussion can be found in al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, vol. 2, 149.15–152.8.

Don't say: (a) this is refuted by the case of mirror. For although it is small, the form of the hemisphere of the world is impressed upon it.

(b) Also, why can't one say that nothing is impressed upon the eye apart from that which equals it in magnitude? It's just that the forms of the parts of the visible object are impressed upon it in rapid succession, so that the person supposes he has observed this whole large visible object all at once.

(c) If this is not so, why can't one instead say that a form equivalent *in shape* to that of the hemisphere of the world is impressed upon the eye, but not one that is equal to it *in magnitude*?

(reply to a) To the first we say: this is wrong, because the verifiers among the natural philosophers have agreed that the forms of visible things are not in fact impressed upon the mirror, as may be proven in various ways ...

[225.5] (reply to b) As for the second response, this is wrong, since in this case the eye could never sense anything apart from that which has its own magnitude, and could never sense any large thing. For when it observes something equal to it in magnitude, and then something else, then either its vision is still of the first object at the second moment, or not. If it is still [seeing the first object], then it has after all seen something larger than itself,¹⁸ even though what is larger than it cannot be impressed upon it. Thus vision does not depend on the making of an impression. But if it does not still [see the first object], then no human can ever in his life see anything large, since he only ever observes that which has the same magnitude as the pupil of the eye.

(reply to c) As for their third response, it is wrong too. For a small body cannot receive the shape of a body which is large in magnitude, although it might receive a *similar* shape. Hence the vision of a large body, insofar as it is large, will not take place through the making of an impression.

Thus it is wrong to claim that [perception is] through the making of an impression.

¹⁸ In other words, the first object which is supposed to be its own size, plus at least part of the second object.

[T24] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 226.9–11

[*accepts Abū l-Barakāt's theory of perception as relational state*]

On our view, the truth is that perception does not come down to the mere occurrence of that form, but rather a relational, connective state (*ḥāla nis-abīyya idāfiyya*), either between the intellectual faculty and the quiddity of the form existing in the intellect, or between [this faculty] and the item that is established in extramental reality.

[T25] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 227.4–7; 228.3–11

[*immateriality solution to the inherence argument, with response*]

[*Don't say*]: The occurrence of blackness in something would only mean this thing's perceiving it if that occurrence happens in a specific way, namely separation from matter. But this idea does not hold for the occurrence of blackness in the body, so it doesn't follow from the occurrence of blackness in a body that the body perceives it. [...]

[228.3] This is unconvincing too. For the blackness that is impressed in the mind either fully shares in quiddity with extramental blackness, or does not. If not, then this undermines the whole idea of forms in the mind, to say nothing of the claim that the occurrence of this form is the same as knowledge of that quiddity. But if it does [share fully in the quiddity of blackness], then knowledge must be either [just] that form, or the additional elimination from that quiddity of something, or the occurrence of something additional to it at this point. The first is false.¹⁹ The second too is wrong, since we necessarily know that knowledge is not something privative. And even if it were, this would still amount to recognizing that knowledge is not just the occurrence of that quiddity, but is rather something additional to it. The dispute would instead concern the question whether this additional item is privative or existing. But that's a separate issue. So, both of these options being wrong, the only one left is the third, namely that knowledge means something additional to the inherence of that quiddity in the intellect.

19 Because of the becoming argument, outlined in T21.

[T26] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 228.12–229.4

[on Avicenna's account in terms of "unification" of subject and object]

You should know that the ancient philosophers (*falāsifa*) believed that knowledge comes down to the occurrence of the quiddity of the object of knowledge in the knower. They understood the need for a distinction between the occurrence of the intelligible object "blackness" in the intellect, and the occurrence of blackness in the wall. They could find no difference apart from saying that, when blackness occurs in the intellect, it unifies (*ittahada*) with the intellect, and intellect unifies with it. The blackness inhering in the wall, by contrast, does not form a unity with the wall, nor does the wall form a unity with it.

The Sheikh [Avicenna] went with the account in terms of unification (*al-qawl bi-l-ittiḥād*) in *The Procession and Return*, in the section which shows that God the Exalted is both subject and object of intellection. He argued for the unification by saying that, if the object of intellection did not form a unity with the subject of intellection, then the subject of intellection would not intellectually grasp the object of intellection. For the subject of intellection is either the soul, or a form inhering in it, or the combination of the both. [229] He ruled out that the subject of intellection is the soul by saying that, if soul were to intellectually grasp blackness because of blackness' inhering in it, then a stone would intellectually grasp blackness because of blackness' inhering in it. And he established this extremely well. Thus it became clear that speaking of knowledge as nothing but the making of an impression will not go through, without additionally saying that the subject of intellection unifies with the object of intellection. But then he returned to the account in terms of unification in this book [*Pointers and Reminders*], and admitted that it is a kind of nonsense. It's a puzzle how the two statements can be brought together.

[T27] Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, vol. 1, 447.22–26

[*knowledge is not just unification of subject with object*]

You have already learned the falsehood of the doctrine of unification (*ittiḥād*) [in general]. What specifically needs to be discussed here is that if, when someone intellectually grasps something, he were unified with it, and if he grasps something else so as to be unified with it [also], then his true reality would become the true reality of the second [intelligible object], in which case he must no longer be intellectually grasping the first intelligible object. Other-

wise one and the same thing would have two different true realities, which is absurd. Therefore, he must no longer be grasping the first when he intellectually grasps the second, but this [too] is absurd.

[T28] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 233.14–235.1

[*skeptical argument against representationalism*]

With these arguments it has been established that perception does not just come down to the impression itself. The truth is rather that it is a relational connective state. For we know self-evidently that we have seen Zayd, given that our visual capacity faculty has a certain relation to him. Anyone who claims that the object seen is not Zayd, who exists extramentally and is not seen at all, and that the object seen is rather his representation (*mithāl*) and image (*shabāḥ*), has put into doubt the most important and powerful items of necessary knowledge. No such remarks should [234] be entertained by any reasonable person, let alone one make it a subject for investigation and detailed discussion.

[T29] Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 235.2–8; 235.17–236.6

[*correspondence problem for representationalist account*]

One should not say that the meaning of [an intelligible object's inhering in the intellect] is the occurrence of a representation in [the intellect]. The difference between a paradigm (*mithl*) and a representation (*mithāl*) is evident: a human painted on a wall is a representation of the physical human, but not a paradigm for him. We say, then, that the representation is similar to the paradigm in one respect, and differs from it in another. The human depicted on the wall resembles the physical human in shape but differs from him from other points of view, and that through which things share in common is distinct from that through which there is distinction. So when we intellectually grasp something, and its representation occurs in our minds, then if that representation is equivalent to the object of knowledge in all respects, then we are back with the same absurdity [namely that the intellect actually becomes its object]. But if it differs in some respects, then the respect in which there is difference cannot be known. Otherwise, the knowledge of this aspect has occurred, without there occurring the representation of that aspect in the mind, which invalidates the basis of their precept. [...]

[*relation suffices, and Platonic Forms are possible relata in the case of objects that are not otherwise present*]

[235.17] *Someone might say*: ignorance means simply that something occurs in the mind without anything corresponding in extramental reality. So if the mental form does not correspond to extramental reality, it is a case of ignorance. But if it does correspond, then there must be an extramental item [with which it corresponds]. So long as there is some item established in the extramental reality, why can't perception just come down to the occurrence of the relational state [236] between the perceiving faculty and that extramentally real existent? Even if the form we intellectually grasp and imagine is not present to us, why can't one say that it is nevertheless existent in itself, either by being self-subsisting as Plato said, or by being inscribed in certain bodies that are hidden from us? This may seem improbable. But in comparison to the inference that, when there is intellection of the heaven, a trace occurs in the mind that is equivalent to the heaven itself, so that a non-perceptual accident is equivalent to the self-subsisting substance in all respects, it is something easy [to accept] and not so improbable.²⁰

[T30] Al-Rāzī, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, 116^r8–16

[*Platonic Forms and mental forms as objects of knowledge*]

In general, we know necessarily that awareness (*shu'ūr*) can be realized only thanks to (*inda*) a specific relation between the subject and object of awareness. And a relation cannot be realized without the relata. Furthermore, a thing may know either itself or something else. If it knows itself, then this knowledge cannot be realized in the absence of the object of knowledge among concrete individuals. Clearly then its existence is sufficient for the realization of that knowledge. As for knowledge of other things, it can know this other thing even while it is not currently in [the knower's] presence (*ḥāl 'adamihī fī l-ḥudūr*). It must, then, have another reality. Those who affirm mental forms have established them as impressions in the mind. But we establish them as self-subsisting paradigms, following what was said by the *imām* Plato. You have already learned everything that follows from these two views. As for the question whether there is something else involved in the realization of that relation

20 On al-Rāzī's position regarding the intellection of non-existent objects see further *Metaphysics and Theology*, chapter "Non-Existence and Mental Existence."

which is called “awareness”—whether it be positive, relational, or negative—this is something for which there is no proof in the investigation of the quiddity of knowledge.

[T31] Al-Rāzī, *Ishāra fī ‘ilm al-kalām*, 136.2–4; 137.4–138.4

[*does knowledge as relation require an existing object of knowledge?*]

It is known that relation can only be realized between existing things. But before it exists, a thing is not existent. So there can occur no relation between the essence of the knower and [the object of knowledge before it exists]. [...]

[*response*]

[137.4] We know the non-existence of a partner for God the exalted, and the non-existence of the co-occurrence of blackness and whiteness. But neither the non-existence of a partner for God the exalted, nor the non-existence of the co-occurrence of blackness and whiteness, has a quiddity and true reality, such that there could be [138] a connection and link between them and the knower. If they are not real, the cause of their perception cannot be the inscription of their forms upon the knower’s self (*dhāt*). For how can the forms of what is not real be inscribed upon the knower’s self? Thus it is established that the occurrence of knowledge does not depend on the occurrence of the object of knowledge, nor on the inscription of its form upon the knower.

[T32] Al-Suhrawardī, *Talwihāt*, 237.6–238.7

[*on knowledge as unity*]

Some people believed that for someone to perceive something is to become that thing (*yaṣīru huwa huwa*). Others believed that for the soul to perceive is for it to unite (*ittiḥād*) with the Active Intellect. But you have learned above that two things become one only through mixture and connection, or through a compositional arrangement, but this is proper to bodies. Furthermore, if we say that C becomes B, then either C remains when B arises—in which case they are numerically distinct—or C perishes, or B does not arise. [On either option] there is no unity [between B and C]. They were confused when they heard it said that water becomes air. This means simply that the *matter* of water became air; that is, [the matter] lost the form of water and took on the form of air, while remaining common [to both]. But nothing like this happens in the soul. Furthermore, if the soul intellectually grasps C, does it remain as it was? In that

case there would be no unity, nor would anything arise. Or does it perish and something else does come to be? In that case, there would be no unity. Or does it change in state? This is not far from the truth, yet it is not unity; rather, [238] it is just like other changes. Now, it is fine to speak of connection (*ittiṣāl*) to the active intellect, but *unification* with it would imply either dividing it, or grasping all sorts of knowledge in one single knowledge, which is evidently false. An eminent later thinker ascribed this view to Porphyry, and [Avicenna] has greatly slandered him in a way unbecoming to the eminence of both.²¹ Yet in *The Procession and Return* and other books, [Avicenna] claimed that the unity between the soul and the intelligible is unproblematic. Then finally, he came to understand its falsehood. But in the beginning [Avicenna] either uncritically accepted (*qallada*) it, which is absolutely inappropriate; or it was the result of his own reflections, in which case he should have slandered himself too!

[T33] Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārīʿ, Ilāhiyyāt*, 484.14–486.17; 487.6–17

[*knowledge by presence without forms*]

Furthermore,²² the soul perceives its body and perceives its own estimation (*wahm*) and imagination. If it perceived these things through a form in itself, these forms being universal, then the soul would move body as a universal and use a universal faculty. It would not have any perception of its own body nor of the faculties of its body. This is incorrect. How can estimation be unaware of itself and also the internal faculties, while not failing to recognize their effects? For on the assumption that [485] estimation does not perceive these faculties, nor does any corporeal faculty perceive itself, but the soul perceives universals only, then the person could not perceive his body, his estimation, or his imagination, which are particularly specified for him. This is not the case. For every person perceives his particular present (*hāḍira*) body and his particular present faculties, and uses a particular faculty. So the person perceives himself not through a form, nor does he perceive his faculties as a certain whole through a form, and he perceives his body as a certain whole, not through a form.

21 For Avicenna's critique of Porphyry see P. Adamson, "Porphyrius Arabus on Nature and Art: 463F Smith in Context," in G. Karamanolis and A. Sheppard (eds), *Studies on Porphyry* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2007), 141–163, at 156–160.

22 For the preceding context see in this volume Self-Knowledge [T25].

In support of the claim that we have perceptions which require no forms beyond the presence (*ḥuḍūr*) of the perceived object itself (*dhāt*): a person feels pain through the severing of connection in one of his organs, and is aware of it. It's not that the severing of the connection gives rise to a different form in this organ, or in anything else. Rather what is perceived is the severing itself. It is the object of sensation, and is in itself pain, not through some "form" that arises from it. This shows that with some objects of perception, just the occurrence of [the thing] itself to the soul suffices for perception; or [it is perceived] through something which has a specific connection of presence (*ta'alluq ḥuḍūrī khāṣṣ*) to the soul.

[*attention argument*]

A point that forces the Peripatetic party to acknowledge this: they admit that sometimes, forms may occur in the visual organ without the person being aware of it, if he is occupied with a thought, or with something brought forth by another sensitive power. The soul must turn its attention to that form. So perception is nothing but the soul's attention (*iltifāt*) towards that which it is seeing with [active] observation. And observation is not through a universal form, but through a particular form. So the soul must have illuminationist knowledge by presence (*'ilm ishrāqī ḥuḍūrī*), not through a form.

[*magnitude argument*]

[486] Whoever denies that that vision occurs through rays is forced to accept either the impressing of an image (*inṭibā' shabaḥī*), or not.

(a) If he is forced to accept the impressing of a simulacrum, he will face problems: how can the form observed from a large magnitude be imprinted upon the cornea, or the like? It's no good to plead that both are infinitely divisible: a hand doesn't cover the width of a mountain, even though both are infinitely divisible in the estimation. It's difficult to reckon the mountain as having the same amount of parts as the hand. But if someone who speaks of the impressing of the simulacrum turns to what some recent [scholars] said, namely that the soul completely perceives a thing's magnitude through inference (*istidlālān*), then this "inference" would see the thing with a complete observation. But observation is not of anything universal: it is of something particular, which has magnitude. And this interlocutor cannot allow that it [sc. a particular with magnitude] is impressed in the soul. So he has acknowledged illuminationist observation, which belongs to the soul in relation to the whole magnitude of a thing, with no need of a form for [perceiving] its complete magnitude. (And bear in mind that this view was earlier refuted anyway.)

(a) Someone who will not be forced to admit the impressing of an image, nor the emission of rays, and in general does not admit that anything enters into [the organ of] vision or the emission of something from it, or that there is a qualitative change due to the organ of sight, will be forced to acknowledge that vision comes down to the opposition (*muqābala*) of the luminous object to the organ of vision. It is through it, and nothing else, that presential illumination happens. Therefore on any of the assumptions made, one must accept illuminationist knowledge by presence, belonging to the soul. [...]

[different types of knowledge]

[487.6] Those who follow the path of the Peripatetics can summarize their whole view by saying that knowledge or intellection is the absence of the hiddenness of something from an essence which is separate from matter. If then it is intellection of something by itself, this is thanks to its not being absent from itself. If it is [intellection] of the necessary concomitants of itself, this is thanks to their not being hidden from it, they being present to it. We have need for a form only in the case of certain things, like the heavens and stars, because they are in themselves hidden from us. So we make their forms present [to us]. If they were present here with us, as are the things already indicated, we would have no need of a form.

Everything the soul perceives must be divided as follows. (a) Universals, [perceived] through the presence of a form impressed in the essence of [the soul]. (b) Particulars, perceived through either the presence of themselves and illumination of the soul, or through the occurrence of [the particulars] in something else that is present to the soul, and for which the soul has illumination. Thus the soul perceives particulars either through their presence to it, or through their presence in something which is present to it, for instance imaginative forms. While this does call for investigation, it can be discovered only by those who are among the proponents of Illumination. The whole view can be summarized as follows: they [sc. the particulars] are not hidden from it [sc. the soul].²³

23 For further passages on al-Suhrawardi's theory of knowledge by presence see chapters "God's Knowledge" and "God's Knowledge of Particulars" in *Metaphysics and Theology*.

[T34] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 76.19–77.3

[*becoming argument*]

The philosophers said: knowledge comes down to the impression of the form of the object of knowledge upon the soul.

They are forced to admit that when someone knows heat or cold, then the form of heat or cold are impressed upon the soul, with the consequence that the knower becomes hot or cold, which is absurd.

[77] *If they say:* it is just the representation (*mithāl*) of heat or cold that is impressed, and not heat and cold themselves. *It may be replied:* if the representation is equivalent in true reality to the paradigm (*mathal*), then the problematic consequence is forced upon them. If not, then [the object of knowledge] is not a model for it, so knowledge is not connected (*mutaʿallaq*) to [its object].

[T35] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 79.4–12

[*knowledge is not a relation*]

It has also been claimed that knowledge is a relational attribute (*ṣifa idāfiyya*) between the knower and the known. This calls for investigation. For if they say that relation is a privation, then the negation of a relation will be positive. From this it follows that negating a relation with respect to pure non-existents would lead to ascribing a positive attribute to the pure non-existent; but this is absurd. But if they say that the relation is existing, then the relation between the earlier and the later must be a positive attribute for both of them, even though one of them is non-existent [e.g. when the earlier exists the later does not yet exist]. And it would follow that the relation of opposition between negation and affirmation would be a positive attribute; but negation is a pure non-existent. Therefore both options lead to absurdity, so knowledge is not a relational attribute.

[T36] Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, vol. 1, 344.9–15

[*against both the impression and relation accounts: knowledge is an attribute*]

Regarding their claim that the knowledge of something means either the impression of its form in the soul of the knower, or the relation between the knower and the object of knowledge, two responses may be given.

First, to deny that these are the only options. Instead, knowledge is an existing attribute (*ṣifa*) that is additional to the essence. It is not the impression itself, nor is it the relation itself which occurs between the essence of the knower and the object of knowledge. Rather, the association and relation is precisely between the *attribute* of knowledge and the object of knowledge. [...] ²⁴

[T37] Al-Āmidī, *Kashf al-tamwīhāt*, 163.12–19

[*response to T22*]

[Al-Rāzī's] argument that when we see Zayd or imagine his form we can judge him to be a human, not a horse, and so on up to the end of his argument, is open to refutation. The referent of "Zayd" is something described as having such-and-such a shape, or such-and-such an attribute. [This] thing, when taken without considering the attributes that yield its individuation, is perceived by the rational soul, whereas the attributes and the shapes that yield its individuation are perceived by the imagination. So when we say "Zayd is a human" we do not mean that the form and shape of Zayd perceived by the imagination is a human, which would lead to the problems he mentioned. Rather we mean that something which is described in such-and-such a way, and is called "Zayd," is a human, not insofar as it is so described²⁵ (otherwise nothing else would be a human), but insofar as it is this thing, and this thing is a universal.²⁶

[T38] Al-Āmidī, *Kashf al-tamwīhāt*, 168.1–4

[*representationalist solution to the becoming argument*]

When [al-Rāzī's] says it is clearly wrong [that the form in the mind is equivalent to the extramental object], this would be so only if [the form in the mind] were similar to [the extramental object] in existence. But to the contrary, on the assumption that it is a representation of the true reality and has intellec-

24 For al-Āmidī's view that knowledge is an attribute, which he develops as a reversal to the traditional Ash'arite view, see T44–T46 in "God's Knowledge of Particulars" in *Metaphysics and Theology*.

25 We correct *fa-mā* to *bi-mā*. Note that the next line belongs to the argument as well, but it is clearly corrupt as *majhūl* make no sense in the context.

26 In contrast to *Ghayāt al-marām*, *Rumuz al-kunūz*, and *Abkār al-afkār*, in *Kashf al-tamwīhāt*, al-Āmidī defends Avicenna's doctrine of knowledge as impression against al-Rāzī's objections.

tual existence, whereas the existence of the true reality in concrete is not so. All the rest of his arguments may be refuted with this point. For we say: [the form in the mind] is the representation of the true reality in all respects, but is not like it in respect of existence.

[T39] Bābā Afḍal, *Madārij al-kamāl*, 50.1–7 [trans. Chittick, mod.]

[*knowledge as identity, without representation*]

The fourth rank is to have the third rank, and be aware that knowledge is perceiving (*yaftan*) something through the self, as belonging to the self. Along with this knowledge, they know too that what is perceived in the self is not a trace of anything apart from the self. For example, what is perceived through the sense of eyesight, namely the color and shape of a thing, would not be that thing's true reality. Let them not suppose that what is perceived through the self is like this, that it is a trace, shape, or mark of something, and not that thing [itself]. Rather, they should know that what is perceived and known is the true reality of the thing in the self. For, were the thing not perceived first, and only then its trace, they could never have known that the trace is the trace of that thing, having not perceived the thing [itself].

[T40] Bābā Afḍal, *Anjām-nāma*, 69.15—19 [trans. Chittick, mod.]

[*knowledge as finding things in oneself*]

Awareness and knowledge are the perception of things in the self. Whatever has no being cannot be perceived. It is possible for a person to know all things. So if a person perceives all things in himself, and if what has no being cannot be perceived, then all things are in the self. Thus the human soul is comprehensive (*āmm*) and encompasses all things which are within it.

[T41] Bābā Afḍal, *Arḍnāma*, 197.14–20

[*connecting knowledge to existence*]

By the term “knowledge” we mean simply the clarity and evidentness of something's existence. By “object of knowledge” we simply mean something clear and evident. By “subject of knowledge” we simply mean the cause and the reason for the clarity and evidentness of a thing. By “clarity and evidence” we intend the completeness of a thing's existence. By “unknown” we mean simply

the hidden and the secret. Something [may] be either evident or secret in the self of a person. By “self” (*khūd*) we mean here the soul (*nafs*): that things may be either manifest or secret in the human soul. Whatever is clear is said to be known and perceived; whatever is secret is said to be unknown and unperceived.

[T42] Bābā Afdal, *Madārij al-kamāl*, 22.5–9

[*knowledge through a trace from the Intellect*]

Hence the self’s awareness, knowing, and perception (*yaftan*) are the existence of the Intellect, while other existents are the things perceived by the Intellect. The Intellect is one—it is not that many things are collectively the Intellect. Rather, the Intellect is the utmost limit of the clarity (*rūshānī*) of existence, and its origin and source. Thus it is said of some human individuals, each of which is called “endowed with intellect,” that such-and-such an individual is prepared for the manifestation of the trace of Intellect, while another is less than the first in preparedness and worthiness.

[T43] Anonymous, *Al-Nukat wa-l-fawā'id*, 154.9–14²⁷

[*against Abū l-Barakāt’s theory of perception*]

Pay no mind to what the Sheikh of the Jews [sc. Abū l-Barakāt] says, namely that the perceiver of these [phenomena] is the soul itself without any organ. For one thing, no particular corporeal form can be impressed upon the soul, only a universal intellectual form, as will shortly be explained to you. Also, we observe a falling raindrop as a line, and a single flame as a circle when it is quickly rotated, but we do not perceive with the senses anything that lacks extramental existence. So it remains that it is internal. Its existence is not in the soul, since [the soul] must be different from [what it perceives], and since no particular form can arise in [the soul]. So it remains only that it exists in some other internal faculty, which is called “common sense.”

27 Taken from W. Kutsch, “Ein neuer Text zur Seelenlehre Avicennas,” in *Avicenna Commemoration Volume* (Calcutta: 1956), 147–178.

[T44] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*, 333.9–19

[*change shows that knowledge is impression*]

When we perceive something either something occurs in the soul, or not. The second is false, since otherwise, our state before the perception would be the same as our state after it, which is known necessarily to be false. That leaves the first option. Now, what occurs [in the soul] is either the form of the perceived object, or not. But the second is absurd, since the occurrence anything other than the form of the perceived object would not be perception of it. That leaves the first option, which is what was sought. [...]

[*immateriality objections to the inherence argument*]

[333.16] We do not claim that perception is the same as the occurrence of a thing's quiddity in something else. Rather, we claim that perception is the occurrence of a thing's quiddity separate from all external attachments, in the essence that is separate from matter. So it is no refutation that a stone may have blackness as an attribute.

[T45] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*, 335.1–8

[*intelligible forms of substances are not accidents in the mind*]

You should know that the intelligible forms of substances are substances. For one may truly say of them that, if they were to exist among concrete individuals, they would not be in a subject. The Imam [al-Rāzī] said they are accidents [when they are objects of thought], since at this point they are existent in a subject; but their being in a subject at this point does not prevent them from being *not* in a subject, if they were to exist among concrete individuals. But this is unconvincing. For an accident is a quiddity that would be in a subject if it were to exist among concrete individuals. And it is not true of [the intelligible forms of substances] that, if they existed among concrete individuals, they would be in a subject. So they are not accidents [even when in the mind]. Among the intelligible forms, it is the accidents of which it may truly be said: they would be in a subject, were they to exist among concrete individuals.

[T46] Al-Abharī, *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*, 334.11–13

[*universal forms may give knowledge of particulars; response to t33*]

We say: [regarding al-Suhrawardī's argument that the soul must perceive a particular body], we do not concede that, when what is impressed in the soul is universal, it is not a perception of some particular body. This would follow only if that which is impressed is not a separate form that corresponds to that particular.

[T47] Al-Abharī, *Muntahā*, 303.22–304.10

[*knowledge of other things vs. self-knowledge*]

The intelligible may be distinct from the subject of intellection. In this case its form must be present (*ḥuḍūr*) in his intellect. For everything intelligible may be distinguished, and everything that may be distinguished is existent, so hence everything intelligible is existent. [304] Its existence is either in extramental reality or in the intellect. But the first is false, since no intelligible form excludes being predicated of many things in extramental reality, whereas everything existing in extramental reality is excluded from being predicated of many. Therefore the intelligible form is existent in the intellect.

[The intelligible] may also be identical to the [subject of intellection] himself, as when soul grasps its own specific self intellectually. But when the soul has a further intellectual grasp of its quiddity insofar as it is what it is, then a universal form occurs in it, which is distinct from its own specific self and different from its intellectual grasp of itself. For in the latter case no other form occurs in it. [...]

[*general account of intellection, which covers self-knowledge*]

[304.8] In general, intellection comes down to the presence of a quiddity that is separate from extraneous attachments in something that is separate from extraneous attachments.²⁸ This is broader (*aʿamm*) than “the presence of a separate quiddity that is distinct from the subject of intellection.”

²⁸ Deleting *fī shayʾ mujarrad*.

[T48] Al-Abharī, *Bayān al-asrār*, 53^r17–53^v8

[*knowledge by presence to explain self-awareness*]

You should know that the perception of something may be through the representation (*tamaththul*) of its form in the perceiver, such as the representation of a universal form in the soul. This is the occurrence (*ḥuṣūl*) of a separate form in something separate, and it cannot happen in the Necessary Existent. [Perception] may also take place by one thing's not being hidden (*‘adam al-ghayba*) from another, while a distinct essence is present (*ḥudūr*) without any representation of its form in [the perceiver], like the soul's perception of its body which is at its disposal. For it perceives it [53^v] continuously as not hidden from it. This does not happen through the occurrence of an individual form in the soul. [The soul] only perceives particulars in a universal way, like our perception of Zayd on the basis of his being tall, black, pious, and knowing, such that these universals are not conjoined in anyone else. Nevertheless, even when these universals are combined, the soul is not prevented from imagining that the same notion (*mafḥūm*) is shared [by something else].²⁹ So [the soul] does not form representations of particulars, but it does move a particular body and is aware of a particular body. But whatever [the soul] has in terms of forms, it will not be prevented from imagining that they are shared. So the perception of these forms is not the perception of the specific body which is at the disposal of the soul. This [kind of] perception comes down to the presence (*ḥudūr*) of something to the self, the latter being separate from matter, and having in it no representation. This is knowledge by presence.³⁰

[T49] Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 156.20–157.12

[*response to the becoming argument*]

As for [al-Rāzī's] rejection of the doctrine that [knowledge] is the making of an impression, on the grounds that this would imply that whoever knows heat becomes hot, this is incorrect. For [the proponents of this view] speak of the impression of a form which is equivalent to heat, and there is a difference between the form of something and the thing itself. For instance human is

29 For the point that any combination of universal properties can in principle belong to more than one particular, see our chapter on Individuation in *Metaphysics and Theology*.

30 Generally, al-Abharī tends to accept the Suhrawardian definition of knowledge by presence in *Muntahā*, *Bayān*, *Talkhīṣ*, *Zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq*, and *Maṭālī'*, but apparently denies it *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* as can be seen from T46.

rational, but his form is not rational. As for his argument that “if it is equivalent in the complete quiddity, the trouble still follows,” the truth is that [the form] is not equivalent [to the thing itself] in the complete quiddity. For what would be equivalent in the complete [157] quiddity is either the quiddity itself, or one of its individual instances, but not its form. Since the quiddity and its form are two different types of things, the form is not the quiddity. [...]

[*response to the inherence argument*]

[157.6] His argument where he responds that, if perception were the same as occurrence, then a stone would be in a position to perceive since things occur to it, is incorrect. For they would say: perception is the same as occurrence in a receiver that satisfies a specific condition. For if we were to say, “being rich is the occurrence of wealth for whoever is in a position to have wealth occur for him,” it would not follow from this that a donkey for whom property has occurred would be rich.

[T50] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 404.3–8

[*whether perception requires attention, not just presence*]

If it is said: by “observation (*mushāhada*)” he just means presence (*ḥudūr*), *then one may reply:* presence does not suffice. Presence to sensation without the soul’s paying attention is not perception. *But the [ultimate] response* is that perception is not just something’s being present to sensation, but is rather that it be present to the perceiver thanks to its presence to sensation. It is not present twice over, though, since it is the soul which is the perceiver, through the intermediary of sensation.

[T51] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 406.1–4; 407.9–408.2

[*objection to the relational account*]

Among them are those who made the relation that occurs between the subject and object of perception to be perception itself, heedlessly adopting this view in light of objections brought forward against perception’s being a form, while overlooking that relation requires the reality of the relata. Thus they are forced to admit that only that which extramentally exists is an object of perception, and that perception can in no way be ignorance, since ignorance is the failure of the mental form to correspond to extramental reality. [...]

[*response to points made by al-Rāzī in T29*]

[407.9] *Response to the first point:* among forms some correspond to extramental reality, these being knowledge, and some do not correspond to extramental reality, these being ignorance. But neither correspondence nor its failure apply to relation, since it cannot have extramental existence. So perception in the sense of relation would be neither knowledge nor ignorance. [408] *Response to the second point:* neither Plato nor any other philosopher believed that self-contradictory absurdities exist in extramental reality. No one can adopt this view.

[T52] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 410.4–7

[*solution to the becoming argument*]

Response: if roundness is particular then it has a position, and its subject of inherence must also have position. So, the part which is its subject of inherence becomes round through it, insofar as it is the subject of its inherence. But from this it does not follow that the perceiver [that is, the soul] whose organ is the subject of inherence becomes round. On the other hand, if roundness is universal, then it has no position so there is no implication that its subject of inherence is round.³¹

[T53] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 413.5–8

[*solution to the double perception problem: the perceiver is the soul*]

Perception is not the occurrence of form in the organ alone. Rather it is its occurrence in the perceiver due to its occurrence in the organ. In light of which perception occurs neither in the common sense, nor at the intersection of the two [optic] nerves, but rather in the soul through the intermediary of both of these instruments, upon the occurrence of form in the two aforementioned [sites] or in something else.

31 For al-Ṭūsī's solutions to the magnitudes argument (*Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 408.4–10) see T73.

[T54] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 2, 413.12–17

[*solution to skeptical problems about knowledge as impression*]

There is no doubt or disagreement that what is seen is Zayd [not only a representation of him]. Vision is the occurrence of his representation (*mithāl*) in the perceiver's organ. The source of this line of argument is a failure to distinguish between the object of perception and perception [itself]. The objections others have brought forth against [Avicenna] run along the same lines: how can perception be a mental form corresponding to that which is in extramental reality, if one can only be aware of this correspondence after being aware of that which is in extramental reality? The answer is that correspondence does not involve awareness of correspondence. The first is a condition [for perception to occur], but the latter isn't.

[T55] Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, vol. 3, 914.6–915.10

[*cases of knowledge without the inhering of a form*]

I say: just as no one endowed with intellect requires, for his perception of himself, any form apart from his own form, through which he is what he is, likewise, for the perception of whatever proceeds from him through himself, he requires no form apart from the form of this which proceeds, through which it is whatever it is.

Suppose in your own case that you intellectually grasp something through a form you have conceived, or made present [to yourself]. It proceeds from you, not absolutely from you as a separate entity, but by sharing in common with something other than you. Still, you do not intellectually grasp that form through something else. Rather, just as you intellectually grasp this thing through [the form], so also you grasp [the form] through itself, without any duplication of forms in you. Instead, all that is sometimes duplicated would be the modes of consideration under which you grasp yourself and that form, by way of composition.

[915] And if this is how things are for you in the case of whatever proceeds from you shared in common with something else, then how do you suppose things are for someone who is endowed with intellect with regard to that which proceeds from him [just] through himself, without anything else being involved? Do not suppose that your being the subject of inherence for that form is a condition for your having an intellectual grasp of it. For you may conceive of yourself

while not being your own subject of inherence. Rather, your being the subject of inherence for that form is simply a condition for the occurrence of that form in you—this being a condition for your intellectual grasp of it—when that form occurs by inhering in you. But if that form occurs to you in some other way, without inhering in you, then the intellection occurs without anything inhering in you.

And clearly the occurrence of something to the one who produces it, such that it occurs in something else, does occur in that which receives it [but not in what produced it]. Therefore, the essential effects which belong to an agent endowed with intellect, through himself, occur to him without anything inhering in him. He intellectually grasps them without their inhering in him.³²

[T56] Al-Ṭūsī, *Fī l-idrāk*, 522.7–523.15

[*types of perception*]

By “perception (*idrāk*)” we understand that which is common to intellection (which is the act of soul in itself), imagination (which is the act [of soul] through its imaginative faculty), and estimation and sense-perception (which are its acts through the estimative and sensitive faculties). What is perceived intellectually—and this is what is meant by the expression “object of knowledge (*ma'lūm*)”—is that which is said to be the act of the soul through itself, not through any organ. Its specific characteristic is that it is universal. In other words, it is one in the soul, not many, even though it is susceptible to multiplicity outside the soul. By contrast the specific characteristic of the object of the senses, and object of the imagination, is to be one and not susceptible to multiplicity, whether in the soul or in extramental reality.

The objects of perception for the senses, estimation, and imagination are the traces (*athār*) and forms (*hayāt*) of things, not the things themselves or their true realities. By contrast the object of *knowledge* is the true reality in itself, and its definition in the soul. For the intellect presents to itself things that are separated from accidents, and accidents separated from their bearers. But the aforementioned faculties [sensation etc.] are not capable of this, since if they separated things from forms and accidents, then these faculties would be

32 On the ways in which al-Ṭūsī accepts knowledge by presence see further the chapter on “God’s Knowledge of Particulars” in *Metaphysics and Theology*.

stripped of their perceptions. It is in the intellect that the true reality of the object exists. That which exists in the soul, and is called the “object of knowledge,” is the thing itself, and its true reality. [...]

[523.5] When something is known in itself, its existence is the same as its being known. If that which is known in itself is sensed or imagined, then its being sensible or imaginary is accidental to it. Therefore, objects of knowledge are only accidentally sensible or imaginary. This rationale applies on the side of the perceiving subject. The perceiving substance is either perceptive in itself, as with the soul that perceives intellectually, or not, as with the perception belonging to the faculties of estimation, imagination, and sense-perception. If something is not perceptive in itself, its cognition is not substantial for it, and if something’s cognition is [not] substantial for it, it does not perceive itself. So the faculties of estimation, imagination, and sense-perception are not self-perceiving. They have an existence which is not the same as their perception. This is the baser and the lower of two types of existence. But if something’s perception is essential and substantial for it, it does perceive itself. It has no existence apart from its perception, for its essence consists in being perceptive, and it is its existence; there is no distinction between its essence and existence, which is perception. This is the noblest kind of existence.

[T57] Al-Ṭūsī, *Risāla fī l-‘ilm*, 86.5–88.20

[*against knowledge as relation*]

[‘Alī ibn Sulaymān al-Baḥrānī] said: a group of theologians (*mutakallimīn*) came to believe that knowledge is neither an entity (*ma’nā*) through which the objects of knowledge are revealed, as the earlier scholars said; nor is it the occurrence of the form of the objects of knowledge in the mind, as the later scholars argued; instead, it is simply the knower’s awareness (*shu‘ūr*) of the object of knowledge, which is a relation between the knower and the object of knowledge. It is neither the entity that implies a connection (*ta’alluq*) to the object of knowledge, nor a form (*ḥay’a*) that implies a relation to the object of knowledge. It is just the relation itself, not that which possesses the relation. This is the view chosen by Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and his followers, and of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī among the new scholars.

What we say on this topic: whoever claims that knowledge is the relation itself cannot avoid saying that, together with this relation he calls “awareness,” there will be mental forms—even if he doesn’t call these forms “items of knowledge.”

So the disagreement concerns simply what should be called “knowledge”: the form that implies the relation, or the relation itself? Or he might say that there are forms for the objects of knowledge here, which occur in the mind, but every one of these forms has a specific association and positive relation. But then he has conceded what the philosophers (*ḥukamāʾ*) wanted to say. The dispute concerns only the term “knowledge,” whether it is applied to the relation itself or to the forms that imply the association. This is a merely verbal question, and it is inappropriate for the theologians to dispute about it.

Likewise one may say to him, taking the viewpoint of the theologians: either you affirm, along with the relation, an entity that entails the relation, but then the dispute merely concerns what [the word “knowledge”] means, as already stated; or he believes that there is no such entity as claimed by the theologians, and affirms no mental forms, in opposition to what the earlier scholars chose to do. He affirms nothing but the knower himself and the object of knowledge itself, and the relation between the two, without affirming anything else.

So let us explain why he is wrong by arguing as follows: this association must be either (a) occurring and existent, or (b) not occurring and not existent. [87] (a) If it occurs, then it can be realized only when both relata are realized. In that case, it follows that this association, namely “knowledge,” can be affirmed only for existent things. So there could be no knowledge of anything non-existent, because it is neither real nor occurring, such that an association could occur to it. It is because of this nice point that the Muʿtazilite masters affirmed real entities (*aʿyān thābita*) for things in non-existence, in order that knowledge could be connected to them, and so that they could be distinguished one from another. If they had spoken of mental existence, then they would not have made the mistakes for which they have been blamed. [In any case], it has thereby been established that association can hold only between real relata, and that sheer non-existence and absolute negation cannot be distinguished; nothing can be connected or associated with them. This should be clear to anyone who ponders it.

(b) If however the association that, according to him, is knowledge, is not real and not occurring, then knowledge and lack of knowledge would be the same. For when someone does not have knowledge about something, the association to it does not occur, but if he does have knowledge of it, still the association is not affirmed. But anything that leads to the equivalence between someone’s knowing and not knowing is absurd. Thus is it established that his

claim, namely that the true reality of knowledge is only a relation, without the addition of anything else, is false. [...]

[88.10] *I say*:³³ there can be no doubt concerning the existence of this relation between the knower and the object of knowledge. To one who says it is knowledge itself, one should say what this eminent scholar has laid down. Now, on the basis of this inquiry, we may set down three items: that through which the self is knowing; the mental forms; and the relation.

But to provide verification, one must [show] either that the forms are known in themselves, or are known through something that stands in for them (*yaqūmu maqāmahā*). [In the latter case] knowledge will be knowledge only when one intellectually grasps the correspondence between that which stands in for [them] and the true object of knowledge. But if one does grasp [this correspondence] intellectually, one has already perceived the object of knowledge itself, which is one of the two things that correspond to each other, along with [the other correspondent, namely] that which stands in for it. [One must also show] that the relation is not something needed for knowledge or perception itself. Rather, it is something the reasonable person finds to be implied by knowledge and perception, after both have been grasped intellectually. And that which is implied by a thing only after [the thing] has already been grasped intellectually is neither that thing itself, nor any of its constituents. Therefore, in reality knowledge is just the first item alone [sc. “that through which the self is knowing”], not taken as related to any object of knowledge. When it is related to the objects of knowledge, though, then what is intended is just the forms, or just the relations, or the first item together with a consideration of the forms and relations. So this is what needs to be verified.

[T58] Al-Kātibi, *Munaṣṣaṣ fī sharḥ al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, 305^v17–24

[*doxography of theories of knowledge*]

The Master [sc. Avicenna] wavered in his position on [knowledge], sometimes making it come down to something privative, and explaining it in terms of separation from matter; sometimes, making it come down to an existing [i.e.

33 Note that the whole previous account and the argument is a quotation from a Shia scholar Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Sulaymān al-Baḥrānī, the teacher of another famous Shia scholar Maytham al-Baḥrānī (d. 1299). Al-Ṭūsī’s argument starts only here.

positive] attribute, namely the form that is impressed in the substance that is the subject of intellection, and corresponding to the quiddity of the object of intellection. For he said in the *Pointers* that the perception of something is the representation of the true reality of the object of perception in the perceiver. But then sometimes, he made [knowledge] come down to a mere relation, or an attribute that has a relation.

Then there was disagreement among those who said [knowledge] comes down to a mere relation. Some of them called this relation “connection (*taʿalluq*),” and introduced a further item that would imply this connection. This is the doctrine of those who deny “modes (*aḥwāl*),” a “mode” being the attribute of an existent that is itself described neither by existence nor by non-existence. Some of them said that knowledge is an existing attribute that yields “being knowledgeable (*al-ʿālimiyya*),” where “being knowledgeable” is a mode of that attribute which has connection to the object of knowledge. So these people introduce three items: firstly knowledge, which is an existing attribute, secondly “being knowledgeable,” which is an attribute that is neither existent nor non-existent and which they called a “mode,” and thirdly the connection related to this “being knowledgeable.”

From among these doctrines, the Imām [sc. al-Rāzī] chose the view that [knowledge] is something relational, as you have learned; and he rejected the previous doctrines of the Master [sc. Avicenna].

[T59] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 166. 8–12

[*perception is getting at a maʿnā*]

Furthermore, there must be in perception some faculty, through which the perceiver gets at (*yaṣilu*) the meaning (*maʿnā*) of the object of perception. Three things are established here: that faculty; the perceiver’s getting at that meaning; the occurrence of this meaning for [the perceiver]. The faculty in question is the sensitive [faculty], in the case of sensory perception, and mental vision (*baṣīra*) in the case of psychological (*naḥsī*) [perception]. Getting at something is perception. The occurrence is the representation of the true reality of the object of perception.

[T60] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 168.1–8

[*response to Abū l-Barakāt's view that the soul, not the organ, is the subject of perception*]

[It is argued that the soul, not the organ of sense-perception, is the subject because] when the soul turns to thinking and devotes itself to it, it does not perceive sensation, even though the object of sensation is still being encountered. [...]

[168.7] [*Response*]: in this case, the soul does not perceive the sensing of the sensitive [faculty], even though it does happen. This is why, when the sensing is stronger, the soul is turned away from thinking to [sensing].

[T61] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 166.1–2

[*against perception as occurrence of the object of knowledge*]

Perception is an attribute of the perceiver. But the fact that the true reality of the object of perception is represented, or the representation of its true reality, is an attribute of [the true reality], not of the perceiver. So how can you define one of them [i.e. the attribute of the perceiver] with reference to the other [i.e. the attribute of the true reality of the perceived object]?

[T62] Al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥāʾif*, 172.4–15

[*perception as connection*]

Having established this, *we say*: we find within our own souls that they have a faculty through which true realities and features can be apprehended. When [that faculty] is connected [to an object of perception], meaning that the soul reaches it, perception happens. For instance, an observer apprehends things through vision, and when [vision] is connected to something, it perceives it. This faculty is mental vision (*baṣīra*), while the apprehending is thought (*fikr*). The first reaching is awareness, and its preservation intellection.

Some of them believed that knowing in the absolute sense is that faculty which comes to have relations and connections to the objects of knowledge, so as to become knowledgeable about those objects of knowledge. The Master [sc. Avicenna] alluded to this also, when he said that knowledge falls under the category of quality (*kayf*) essentially, but under the category of relation acci-

dentally. For instance, in respect of its essence vision falls under the category of quality, but when taken together with the relation to the object of vision³⁴ it belongs to the category of relation. However, you have learned that in fact, this faculty is the principle of knowledge, and knowledge is getting at something (*wuṣūl*), as has been established concerning perception. In which case knowledge belongs among the relations, though its principle is among the qualities.

[T63] Al-Urmawī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 27^r7–13

[*knowledge is a quality with a relation*]

When we know something, we find ourselves as knowing about it in a continuous state (*ḥāla*), which occurred after not yet being there. Whatever is like this is something existent, and it is a quality, because it is neither substance nor any accident other than quality. But this quality is not free from relation. So [knowledge] is a quality with a relation, this being one of the statements made by the Master [sc. Avicenna]. *If anyone says*: knowledge is the occurrence of a form which is separate from matter, for something else which is separate from [matter], then *I say*: this is ruled out by the fact that knowledge is something existing.

[T64] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī l-ḥikma*, 172.3–6

[*when perception happens through representation*]

There is a rule concerning the perception that must take place through the occurrence of the form of the perceived object in the perceiving subject: namely that this perception is not perpetual (*dāʿim*) for the perceiving essence as long as it exists, and that the perceived object is hidden from the perceiver, not “present” to it in the way that a visual object is present to vision, and whatever else goes like this.

34 Reading *al-mubṣar*.

[T65] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī l-ḥikma*, 173.14–17

[*correspondence requirement*]

Thus it has been refuted that the aforementioned perception is due to our being deprived of something. Therefore it is due to the occurrence of something in us. If that something does not correspond to the perceived object, then its being the perception of [that object] would be no more appropriate than its being the perception of anything else. So there must be correspondence (*muṭābaqa*), meaning that a trace (*athar*) in the soul occurs for each object of perception and is related to it, in such a way that the trace that is the perception of *this* is not identical to the trace that is the perception of *that*.

[T66] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī l-ḥikma*, 173.19–174.13

[*against perception as mere relation*]

Thereby it has become clear that perception is not just a relation between subject and object of perception. For [174] the relation will call for the existence of the relata: so if the perceived object is non-existent, there can be no relation to it. But if it is existent in itself or in something that is hidden from us, then there will have to be perception of it before our perception of it, unless it happens to be in itself or in the hidden thing except at the moment of perception, through a disposition that arises from the perceiver's turning attention to faculties or organs. There can be no doubt that this would be a case of making something present (*istiḥḍār*) to [the perceiver] after it was absent: so the perception would be nothing other than the presence of the object of perception. We confirm this by self-introspection (*min anḥusinā bi-l-wijdān*), and it cannot be denied. If there is any room for disagreement, it concerns the making of the impression (*inṭibāʿ*), not sheer presence to the perceiver. But if [the perceived object] exists in us, then the impression has been already realized, never mind sheer presence. So on any assumption, perception is not just the aforementioned relation, even though it does necessarily belong to it. (And if perception [always] called for the existence of the object of perception in extramental reality, then no perception could be ignorance. For ignorance is the failure of mental forms to correspond to extramental true realities.)

[T67] Ibn Kammūna, *al-Jadīd fī l-ḥikma*, 180.1–5

[*perception applies analogically*]

“Perception” applies to its different types analogically (*bi-l-taskkīk*), since it admits of intensity and weakness. Don’t you see that visual perception is stronger than perception by imagination, even though we have detailed perception of the perceived object by imagination, just as we do with vision? For [visual] observation additionally has “unveiling (*inkishāf*),” which is lacking in imagination. This is why imagining the object of love is not the same as seeing it, albeit that imagination varies in strength.

[T68] Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, vol. 3, 380.8–14

[*knowledge by presence through particular and universal forms*]

What is made present to the perceiver is either the perceived object itself, or its form. If it is its form, then whatever is perceived by means of that form will be either particular or universal. If it is particular, then it can be perceived only when that form occurs in the faculties that are present to the thing that has perception, such as soul’s perception of the particular forms that occur in imagination. But if that which is perceived by means of that form is universal, then it can be perceived only through the occurrence of its form in the essence of the perceiver. This form cannot be impressed upon any body or anything corporeal, as you have learned. The object of perception is the present form itself, not anything extraneous to conceptualization. Even though one does say of that which is extraneous to conceptualization that it is “perceived,” this is only by secondary intention.

[T69] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 474.16–476.5

[*mystical interpretation of knowledge as unification*]

The truth is that when they spoke of “unification (*ittiḥād*) with intelligible forms,” or “with the Active Intellect,” they meant the unification that has been indicated by the masters of separation and the Sufi masters. When the soul connects to some of the separate lights, in cases of stealing away from and leaving the body, then due to the power that attaches to it among intellectual delights, spiritual tastings, and intense luminary illuminations, it becomes hidden from itself and from its self-awareness, and the governance of separate intellectual lights overwhelms it, and at that stage it annihilates itself. They called this state

“unification.” [475] When the wayfarer arrives at this stage and his weaker light is swallowed up within the stronger and more powerful light, and it becomes intoxicated with the pleasures of the governing lights (*al-anwār al-qāhira*); and the separate intellectual lights become the places of manifestation (*mazāhir*) for the rational souls that are connected to them, then the soul that is in this state sees nothing but the place of manifestation alone. Hence it may then speak with the tongue of that place of manifestation, so that some of them have said: “I am the Truth” or “praise be to me” or “what is greater than I?” or “within this cloak is nothing but God.”³⁵ [...]

[475.12] As for [unification with] the Active Intellect, [this is needed] because the soul is incapable of perceiving the intelligible forms [by itself], so that the light of the intellect sheds light upon the intelligible forms, and thereby they become separate from matter. And it [sheds light upon] the rational soul, so that it is thereby prepared to perceive those intelligible forms. Such is the intellectual illumination of the soul, the strength of the radiance cast upon it, the annihilation of its light within the light of the Active Intellect, and [the Intellect’s light] overwhelms [its light]. This state is called “unification,” because the weaker light becomes hidden within the stronger light, and no trace of the weaker [light] is left when the light of the Intellect overwhelms it.

As for the soul’s unification with intelligible forms, whenever soul perceives the intelligible form it is turned away from itself and from its self-awareness, and from its perception of its own perception. Now it perceives nothing but that separate spiritual object of intellection, nothing else, as if it were hidden from itself [476] by being preoccupied with that intelligible. Because of the intimacy and the strength of the connection between the subject and object of perception, this perception has been called the “unification of the subject and object of intellection.” This, or something close to this, is what the ancients meant—may God be pleased with them—by the “unification” they mentioned in [the context of discussing] perception. They did not however mean that two things become one in all respects. For no reasonable person could think this, let alone the divine philosophers (*ḥukamāʾ*) who were led by the illuminating lights and true inspirations.

35 Notorious assertions ascribed to mystics like al-Ḥallāj.

[T70] Al-Shahrazūri, *Shajara*, vol. 3, 494.15–19

[*mystical experience is by presence too*]

When the visible object occurs in that which receives vision while there is no veil, then presence by illumination (*ishrāq huḍūri*) for this visible object arises for the soul, so that soul perceives it due to its presence, with no form or representation (*mithāl*) of it in the soul, and not through a universal form, but rather through an observable, particular form. The same goes for imaginative³⁶ forms and forms in dreams, and the forms all the lords of unveiling and tasting see; they do so through presence by illumination.

[T71] Al-Tustarī, *Muḥākamāt*, 44^r14–17

[*doxographical account of Abū l-Barakāt's doctrine*]

Because the author of the *Mu'tabar* [postulated] the necessity for the making of an impression in perception, but affirmed that something large cannot be impressed in something small, he had to say that the perceiver for all objects of perception is the soul, and that it [perceives] without the mediation of organs. Rather those external and internal organs are not intermediates for perception but [only] to specify that one object is perceived rather than another. The perceiver is the soul, without any organ. He claimed that the objects of perception are impressed upon the soul itself, which implies no impressing of something large in something small.

[T72] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 554.5–7

[*ignorance can be explained using the form theory just as well as the relation theory*]

On this assumption, ignorance and knowledge only attach to the judgment concerning correspondence or the lack thereof, not to the forms [in the mind] themselves. So the form [itself] is neither knowledge nor ignorance, because for both there is a condition, namely correspondence or the lack thereof, respectively.

36 Emending *al-ḥāliyya* to *al-khayyāliyya*

[T73] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 555.9–556.1

[*magnitudes argument, with Al-Ṭūsī's solutions and responses*]

We can intellectually grasp the form of the heavens. How can this occur in the brain, given its small size?

It has been responded [by al-Ṭūsī]: because of the possibility that (a1) the form of the heavens may be impressed in the matter of the organ, or (a2) in the perceptual faculty that inheres in the organ. Being large or small does not apply to either of these. (b) Or [one may admit that] whatever is impressed is smaller in magnitude than the heavens, but this does not rule out the occurrence of equivalence, since large humans and small ones are equivalent in respect of the form of humanity.

I say: these possibilities are unconvincing. (a1) In the case of the possibility that the form of the heavens inheres in matter, because they deny that several magnitudes can inhere in one and the same matter. Otherwise it would follow that the matter has both magnitudes, so it would simultaneously be small and large, which is absurd. Besides, how can they make matter the subject of inherence for the form, despite the fact that the organ is a *body*, which is a composition of both matter and form? If one allowed this to exist, then there would be no need for a corporeal form anymore, as matter would be the organ. (a2) As for the possibility that the form inhere in a faculty, this too is unconvincing. For the faculty is an accident; so how can it alone be a subject of inherence? (b) As for the possibility that the form is smaller, yet equivalent in terms of the form taken absolutely, this too is unconvincing. For, [556] just as we intellectually grasp the form of the heavens, so we grasp its magnitude.

[T74] Al-Ḥillī, *Asrār*, 559.14–20

[*human knowledge of substance is an accident*]

There is a kind of knowledge that is a substance, and another kind that is an accident. The former is, for instance, the knowledge the intellects have about themselves, which just is themselves. The latter is, for instance, our acquired knowledge. If one makes mental forms to be cases of knowledge, then if they are taken insofar as they are existent in the mind, they are equivalent to extramental things, so some of them are substances and some accidents. But if one takes them as extramentally existent, then all of them are accidents that inhere in a subject—that is, in the intellect or the mind.

[T75] Al-Ḥillī, *Nihāyat al-marām*, vol. 2, 20.15–19

[*against al-Ṭūsī's solution to the double perception problem*]

The perceiver's organ is not the perceiver. But you have made perception to be the occurrence of the object of perception for the perceiver. How would the perceiver perceive thanks to the form of the perceived object occurring in something else [namely the organ]? Furthermore, if the form of the object of perception occurs for the perceiver as it does to his organ, then there would be two occurrences, so the occurrence of the form in the organ would not be needed. If however there is only the occurrence in the organ, then the perceiver should be nothing other than that in which this form has occurred.

[T76] Al-Ḥillī, *Nihāyat al-marām*, vol. 2, 25.4–7

[*grasping impossible things*]

Again, what is judged to be impossible is not the mental form, but rather that whose form it is. That quiddity has reality neither in the mind nor concretely. For we do not say that this mental form is impossible of existence in extramental reality. Otherwise there would remain no difference between the contingent and the impossible, as explained above. But the quiddity whose form this form is, is that which is judged to be impossible.

[T77] Al-Ḥillī, *Nihāyat al-marām*, vol. 2, 27.4–9

[*reply to al-Ṭūsī's solution to the becoming argument*]

[Al-Ṭūsī] said: heat does not require its subject of inherence to become hot unless that which inheres is in itself [heat], and the subject of inherence is a body lacking the opposite of [heat], and is such as to be acted upon in that way.

[This] is unconvincing. By “the hot” we mean simply that in which heat inheres. So if heat itself inheres [in the subject of inherence], then surely it is hot. If what inheres is the form of [heat], then if [the form] is equivalent to [heat itself] in all respects, then likewise [it will be really hot]. But if it is equivalent to [heat] only in a certain respect, then the true reality of heat will be known only in that respect, not in all respects.

[T78] Al-Ḥillī, *Nihāyat al-marām*, 29.11–30.1

[*knowledge needs to have a realized object*]

Whether intellection is relation between the knower and the object of knowledge, or a real attribute (*ṣifa*) whose true nature implies a relation, or a form in the knower that is equivalent to the object of knowledge, [on any of these options] one must posit something to which knowledge is connected. This [must be] realized in itself, not in the knowledge that needs that which has been posited to be realized. Otherwise there would no longer be any difference between true and false judgements about that which lacks existence in extramental reality. For instance, we say “a companion to God is impossible” and “body is impossible.” Therefore, the object of knowledge—whatever it may be—must be realized in the facts themselves (*naḥs al-amr*), if knowledge is to be connected to it appropriately. Here one should inquire into how one should understand the difference between that which holds in the facts themselves, and that which holds in extramental reality. But we will speak about this further below, God willing.

[*hidden bodies and forms in the intellect could both serve this role*]

The implausible [suggestion] that the perceived form is in a hidden body is out of place [here]. For the verifiers among the ancients believed the [forms] are real in the Active Intellect. What is the difference between the two proposals, apart from the fact that [30] the body, unlike the intellect, has a [spatial] position?

[T79] Al-Ḥillī, *Nihāyat al-marām*, vol. 2, 35.7–16

[*on al-Ṭūsī's critique of the relational account*]

Just as [knowledge defined as] relation would call for two real relata, so does [knowledge defined as] form. For it also has a relational aspect: it is a form of that which has the form; it provides information about it; and is equivalent to it. Equivalence [between the mental form and the object of knowledge] presupposes that they are two different things, and are distinct. But if the quiddity is in the mind, it follows that it will be related to itself. And because whatever is in the mind follows upon that which is in extramental reality, or among the facts themselves, intellection cannot be related to that which follows. So whatever [al-Ṭūsī] tried to force upon [the proponents of defining knowledge as relation] with regard to the two, will equally be forced upon him.

Also, we reject his explanation of ignorance in what has been mentioned. Rather, “ignorance” means the lack of a correspondence between knowledge and the object of knowledge. If you take relation to something in a way that does not correspond [to that thing], it will be ignorance. In the case of the non-existent object of knowledge, there is no need for there to be a difference between two kinds of things, in order that one may ask about its specific properties.

This being established, knowledge, perception, and awareness consist in true forms, which imply a relational state that exists only when two relata exist.