

## An Analysis of Universals in the Fourth Chapter of Ibn Sīnā's Pointers and Remarks (Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt)

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### Abstract

In the fourth chapter of Pointers and Remarks (Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt), Avicenna draws conclusions from the univocality of extension within a certain category, positing the existence of an immaterial entity alongside materialistic extensions. Avicenna's treatment of the relationship between universals and their extensions often resembles the familial bond between fathers and sons (plurality within plurality). However, in the fourth chapter of Pointers and Remarks, he introduces a novel model akin to the relationship between a single father and his sons (unity within plurality). By examining interpretations and comments on Pointers and Remarks, we delve into this conceptual tension. While Avicenna's argument establishes the existence of universals in the external world, it falls short of proving their immaterial nature. His perspective aligns with realism, yet it also echoes Hamedani Man (al-Rajul al-Hamidānī)'s stance on universals—a viewpoint that necessitates reform and reconstruction. Employing a historical approach, we critically assess these ideas to arrive at a more coherent perspective.

**Keywords:** Al-Rajul al-Hamidānī, Quiddity, The Natural Universal (al-Kullī al-Ṭabīʿī), Unity within Plurality, Universals.

### Introduction

In the fourth chapter of Pointers and Remarks, Avicenna endeavors to challenge the materialistic perspective that posits every entity as tangible (Maḥsūs). Drawing from the univocality of extension within a certain category, he postulates the existence of an immaterial entity alongside material extensions. Avicenna typically portrays the relationship between a universal concept and its extensions as plurality within plurality. However, in his writings within the fourth class of Pointers and Remarks, he introduces an alternative model—one akin to the relationship between a father and his sons (unity within plurality). This latter perspective is attributed to al-Rajul al-Hamidānī, although Avicenna vehemently rejects it. Interestingly, Avicenna's stance varies across different works. In "Shifā," "Najāt," and similar texts, he dismisses the idea of unity within plurality. Yet, in "Pointers and Remarks," he argues in favor of precisely this viewpoint. The divergence between Avicenna's position in the fourth chapter of Pointers and Remarks and his other works is evident. Within "Pointers and Remarks," he aligns with Rajul al-Hamidānī's assertion of unity within plurality. Crucially, Quṭb al-Dīn Rāzī's objection to Avicenna's argument plays a pivotal role in this scholarly debate. Bāghnuwī, Khānsārī, and Ḥusaynī

Khātūnābādī contribute to the ongoing discussion. In our subsequent article, we delve into the interpretations and commentaries surrounding Avicenna's argument, aiming to analyze this intriguing conflict.

### Research Findings

Avicenna's argument successfully demonstrates the existence of universals within the tangible world. Quṭb al-Dīn Razī's objection to Avicenna's argument, however, merely challenges the immaterial nature of these universals. Drawing insights from the discussions of Bāghnuwī, Khānsārī, and Ḥusayni Khātūnābādī, we have reached the conclusion that universals can indeed exist in the material world as a harmonious unity amidst diversity.

### Conclusion

After assessing various viewpoints, we have arrived at the conclusion that while Avicenna's argument establishes the existence of universals in the external world, it falls short in proving their immateriality. His perspective aligns with realism, but it also concurs with al-Rajul al-Hamidānī's stance on universals, which necessitates some revisions and reconstructions. In other words, Avicenna's argument encompasses two assertions: the first pertains to the existence of universals in the tangible world, while the second attributes immateriality to these universals. Our assessment suggests that he has successfully demonstrated the former claim, namely the existence of universals.

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**Cite this article:** Najafī, M., & Asadi, M. (2024). An Analysis of Universals in the Fourth Chapter of Ibn Sīnā’s Pointers and Remarks (Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt). *Philosophy and Kalam*, 56 (2), 297-328. (in Persian)

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**Publisher:** University of Tehran Press.

© The Author(s).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jftp.2023.363723.523425>



**Article Type:** Research Paper

**Received:** 10-Sep-2023

**Received in revised form:** 8-Oct-2023

**Accepted:** 12-Dec-2023

**Published online:** 10-Mar-2024