

IBN AL-MALĀĦİMĪ'S CRITICISM OF PHILOSOPHERS' VIEWS ON GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF PARTICULARS

Orhan Şener Koloğlu*

Abstract

One of the controversial arguments of Islamic philosophers is that, according to them, God knows particulars as universals. For al-Ghazālī, such an argument means that God does not know particulars, whereupon he accuses philosophers for falling into unbelief (*kuf̄r*). The foregoing accusation by al-Ghazālī makes this argument an ever-green point of debate for Islamic theology (*kalām*) and philosophy. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, the Mu'talizite theologian, is among the criticsers of mentioned philosophical view. Addressing the problem in his *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn fī al-radd ulā al-Falāsifa*, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, however, brings forth an approach different from that of al-Ghazālī. Contrary to al-Ghazālī, he does not interpret the philosophers' view as an argument that God does not know particulars. Indeed, according to Ibn al-Malāḥimī, philosophers already accept that God does not know particulars. Therefore, his main objective is to refute the view that God does not know particulars. For this purpose, Ibn al-Malāḥimī tries to explain that knowledge of particulars does not lead to any change in the self/essence (*dhāt*) of God. There is a unique aspect to the perspective of Ibn al-Malāḥimī. According to him, even though philosophers deny that God knows particulars, their view actually means God does know particulars.

İbnü'l-Melâhimî'nin Felsefecilerin Allah'ın Cüz'iyâta Yönelik Bilgisi Hakkındaki Görüşlerini Eleştirisi

Özet

İslâm felsefecilerinin tepki çeken görüşlerinden biri de Allah'ın cüz'î olguları küllî olarak bildiği şeklindeki görüşleridir. Gazzâlî bu görüşün Allah'ın cüz'î olguları bilmediği anlamına geldiğini söylemiş ve felsefecileri küfre düşmekle itham etmiştir. Özellikle Gazzâlî'nin bu ithamı nedeniyle söz konusu görüş kelâm-felsefe tartışmalarında sürekli gündeme gelmiştir. Felsefecilerin bu görüşünü eleştirenlerden biri de Mutezilî kelâmcı İbnü'l-Melâhimî'dir. *Tuḥfetü'l-mütakellimîn fī'r-redd ale'l-Felâsife* adlı eserinde konuyu derinliğine ele alan İbnü'l-Melâhimî'nin konuya yaklaşımı Gazzâlî'den farklıdır. Gazzâlî'nin aksine o, felsefecilerin bu görüşünü Allah'ın cüz'î olguları bilmediği sonucuna sürüklemeye çalışmaz. Zira, ona göre, felsefeciler zaten Allah'ın cüz'î olguları bilmediğini kabul etmektedir. Bu yüzden onun esas hedefi Allah'ın cüz'î olguları bilmediği düşüncesini reddetmektir. Bu amaçla o, esas itibarıyla cüz'î olguları bilmenin Allah'ın zâtında değişikliğe yol açmayacağını kanıtlamaya çalışır. Mamafih onun yaklaşımındaki orijinal yön, felsefecilerin görüşünün, her ne kadar onlar Allah'ın cüz'î olguları bildiğini inkâr etseler de, Allah'ın cüz'î olguları bildiği anlamına geldiğini ortaya koymaya çalışmasıdır.

Key Words: Ibn al-Malāḥimī, God's knowledge of particulars, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Sînâ

Anahtar Kelimeler: İbnü'l-Melâhimî, Allah'ın cüz'îlere yönelik bilgisi, Gazzâlî, İbn Sînâ

* Prof. Dr., Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi (orhankologlu@hotmail.com).

Ibn Sīnā can be considered as a milestone for establishing philosophy as an intellectual discourse within Islamic thought. Thanks to the efforts of Ibn Sīnā, philosophy became commonplace and more familiar. Islamic philosophical movement is actually an effort to reconcile Neo-Platonist and Aristotelian philosophy with Islamic doctrines. Since Islamic philosophy is based on Ancient Greek thought, this philosophical approach got reaction from Islamic theology (*kalām*), which had undertaken the mission of defending Islam. Accordingly, refutations against philosophy began to appear about five decades after Ibn Sīnā. First-ever example of such theological refutations is *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* ("The Incoherence of the Philosophers") by al-Ghazālī. It is not only the first-ever refutation against philosophy, but also the one of the most known works by al-Ghazālī. In the book, al-Ghazālī criticises philosophers about twenty issues which he considers harmful for Islamic creeds; consequently, he claims the philosophers have led to groundless innovations (*bidʿa*) and erred in seventeen matters; besides, they fall into unbelief with regard to three questions for assuming the eternity (*qidam*) of universe, denying both of the God's knowledge of particulars and the bodily resurrection.¹

The attitude by a scholar as popular and influential as al-Ghazālī determined the most controversial points between theology and philosophy for upcoming periods. One of these problems is the God's knowledge of particulars. This question is analysed, almost simultaneously with al-Ghazālī, by Mu'tazilite theologian Ibn al-Malāḥimī (d. 536 AH/1141 AD)² of Khuwārazm in his refutation of philosophy, with the title *Tuḥfat al-*

¹ See al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* (ed. Maurice Bouyges), Imprimerie Catholique, Beirut 1927, 376: 3-377: 6. For comparison, see id., *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (ed. Jamīl Ṣalībā - Kāmil 'Ayyād; Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1967), 83: 14-84: 14. Al-Ghazālī repeats the same findings herein.

² For further information, see al-Andarabānī, 'Abd al-Salām b. Muḥammad, *Fī sīrat al-Zamakhsharī Jār Allāh* (ed. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Yāfi; in *Revue Academie Arabe de Damas*, 57/3 [1982], pp. 365-382), 368, 379, 382; Martin McDermott - Wilferd Madelung, "Introduction" to Rukn al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Malāḥimī al-Khuwārazmī's *Kitāb al-Mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-dīn* (eds. Martin McDermott - Wilferd Madelung; London: Al-Hoda, 1991), iii-xvi; Wilferd Madelung, "Ibn al-Malāḥimī", *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History* (eds. David Thomas - Alex Mallett; Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2011), III, 440-443; Orhan Şener Koloğlu, *Mutezile'nin Felsefe Eleştirisi: Harezmlî Mutezilî İbnü'l-Melāḥimî'nin Felsefeye Reddiyesi*, Emin Yayınları, Bursa 2010, pp. 51-59; id., "İbnü'l-Melāḥimî," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, Annex-1, 616-619.

mutakallimīn fi al-radd alā al-Falāsifa.³ Written about quarter century after the death of al-Ghazālī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn* is the second refutation against philosophy. Moreover, it is the only Mu'tazilite work of its kind so far. It is more voluminous and systematic than *Tahāfut* by al-Ghazālī. Indeed, unlike al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-Malāḥimī addresses not only assumedly "harmful" issues, but the views of philosophers in almost every subject with regard to theology. Besides, the three points, declared as unbelief by al-Ghazālī, are extensively analysed by Ibn al-Malāḥimī.⁴

In *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn*, the knowledge of God towards particulars is a part of discussions about His attributes. He initially criticises theological view⁵ of philosophers that "God is knowledge, the knower, and the known,"⁶ before discussing His knowledge of particulars. According to philosophers, God knows his self, as well as all existents together with their species and genus. Nevertheless, God's knowledge of existents evidently requires existence of a great quantity of known beings (*malūm*), given the high number of existents. God's knowing the each existent leads to huge quantity of knowledge, which paves the way for multiplicity (*kathra*) in essence of God, a view philosophers vigorously try to avoid. In order to escape such dangerous conclusion – and to preserve the argument that God possesses knowledge about the entirety of existents – the philosophers claim that God knows these existents in a universal manner (على الوجه الكلي). Therefore, God

³ For a general review of the work, see Ḥasan Anṣārī, "Kitāb-i tāza-yi yāb dar naqd-i falsafa: Paydā shudan-i Kitāb-i Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn-i Malāḥimī", *Nashr-i dānish*, 18/3 (Tehran, 2001), 31-32; Madelung, "Ibn al-Malāḥimī's Refutation of the Philosophers", *A Common Rationality: Mu'tazilism in Islam and Judaism* (eds. Camilla Adang, Sabine Schmidtke – David Sklare; Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2007), 331-336; Koloğlu, *Mutezile'nin Felsefe Eleştirisi*, 69-80.

⁴ For a comparison between approaches of two works about the principal problems, see Frank Griffel, "Theology Engages with Avicennan Philosophy: al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* and Ibn al-Malāḥimī's *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn fi l-radd 'alā l-falāsifa*," *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* (ed. Sabine Schmidtke), Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016, pp. 435-455.

⁵ See Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn fi al-radd 'alā al-Falāsifa* (eds. Hassan Ansari – Wilferd Madelung; Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy – Institute of Islamic Studies Free University of Berlin, 2008), 72: 12-78: 21 (Referred hereafter as "*Tuḥfat*").

⁶ Or even "intellect ('aql), intellectual apprehender ('āqil), and intelligible (ma'qūl)"; both groups of concepts signify being free from materiality (لأنهما عبارة عن سلب المادة (مطلقاً). See Ibn Sīnā, Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn b. 'Abd Allāh, *al-Risāla al-'arshīyya fi ḥaqā'iq al-tawḥīd wa ithbāt al-nubuwwa* (ed. Ibrāhīm Hilāl; Cairo: Jāmi'at al-Azhar, 1980), 25: 17-18.

knows the species and facts that constitute existents as a whole, and not one by one.⁷

Indeed, philosophers identify God's knowledge of existents with His knowledge of His essence. According to them, since God knows His essence, He should know His essence as it is. Indeed, His essence is clear/disclosed (*makshūf*) to Himself as it is. Because God's essence is the origin (*yanbū*) of all existence, God knows Himself as the source (*mabda*) of being. God's knowledge of Himself as the source of being means unification or overlapping of His knowledge on His essence and existents. Therefore, God's knowledge of His essence includes His knowledge of existents.⁸ Evidently, since philosophers incorporate knowledge of existents within the scope of knowledge of essence of God, their view prevents the possibility of formation

⁷ See *Tuḥfat*, 78: 22-79: 2. Also see al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 223: 7-9: "إلا أنه يعلم الجزئيات بنوع كلي".

⁸ See *Tuḥfat*, 81: 3-6. For comparison, see Ibn Sīnā, *al-Risāla al-'arshīyya*, 26: 12-13. This problem is pointed in a very succinct manner. Also see Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa al-tanbīhāt* (ed. Suleimān Dunyā; Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Nu'mān, 1992-93), III, 286: 3-4. As for here, the general principle is highlighted by the argument that "particulars can be thought as if they were universal due to necessity of ascribing them to the origin of their species." In other words, their conclusive ascription to origin points out to universal knowledge of the origin about them. Also see Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ta'liqāt* (ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī; Qum: Maktab al-i'lāmī al-Islāmī, 1404 H), 14: 2-6. The following passage is crucial: "وإذا كانت الأشياء كلها واجبة عنده إلى أقصى الوجود فإنه يعرفها كلها إذ كلها من لوازمه ولوازم لوازمه. وإذا علم أنه كلما كان كذا كان كذا أعنى جزئياً وكلما كان كذا كان كذا أعنى جزئياً آخر وتكون هذه الجزئيات مطابقة لهذا الحكم يكون قد عرف الجزئيات على الوجه الكلي الذي لا يتغير". As is seen, Ibn Sīnā initially emphasises that since all things are rendered necessary to the limits by essence of God, God knows all of them; then, he explains how this knowledge encompasses particulars. Therefore, God knows general provisions/principles about particulars. For example, we may say that a general judgment brings along a certain consequence. If the general provision takes place in a different manner, the consequence will also be different. At this stage, Ibn Sīnā does not give a concrete example on the issue, but we may give one in order to clarify the problem: Whoever fulfils religious obligations goes to heaven (attains happiness), or even whoever abandons them goes to hell (falls into evil). Obedience or disobedience to religious liabilities is a general knowledge and is related with particular consequences. For example, if Zayd fulfils his liabilities he will go to heaven and his passage to heaven is a particular consequence. Nevertheless, hereby consequence depends on general provision, in other words, universal knowledge; therefore, universal knowledge of God encompasses the particular incident of whether Zayd will go to heaven or hell. As a result, since all foregoing particulars comply with and are a consequence of universal knowledge of God, God knows everything in a universal unchanging manner.

of too much of knowledge in God, due to huge quantity of existents. Indeed, God does not know the objects by going towards each of them; in a sense, He only knows the essence and thus knows all, since His essence is their origin. In brief, if God's knowledge of essence expresses his knowledge about existents, then His knowledge is universal. Therefore, God knows incidents and facts within existents as a whole, and not one by one, contrary to our knowledge.

In line with the foregoing argumentation, Ibn al-Malāḥimī initially cites the opinions of Ibn Sīnā. According to Ibn Sīnā, it is religiously impermissible that God can contemplate (*yaqīlu*) every single thing one by one, such knowledge means either that the essence of God can be substituted with what He knows, or even that His knowledge is an accident of His essence. Evidently, the foregoing conclusions are impossible with regard to God. Indeed, it is impossible that God bears a status which is not necessary due to His own essence but which arises because of another, since such argument means He is under influence. In other words, such argument claims that God's knowledge occurs within Him afterwards, under influence of elements outside Him.⁹ According to Ibn Sīnā, such knowledge is objectionable also because it requires change. Indeed, the known particulars vary between being existent and non-existent (*ʿadam^{an} wa-wujūd^{an}*) in the course of time. If God knows them, then we are in a position to accept that His knowledge of them varies within the dichotomy of existent and non-existent. Therefore, we would have to conclude that the essence of God is subject to change (*mutaḡhayyir al-dhāt*).¹⁰ In order to avoid such unacceptable conclusions, the only solution is to assert that God knows particulars in a universal manner. Then again, this universal knowledge takes place in such form that God knows His essence as the origin of all beings. By means of knowing His own essence, God knows the origins, consequences, causes, coherence of causes, and effects of causes with regard to existents. Thus, everything within the causality of deterministic structure of universe is known by God through His knowledge of His own essence. Evidently, this is a universal knowledge.¹¹ Solar eclipse is a common example in order to explain how universal knowledge encompasses particulars: An astronomer knows that solar eclipse will take place in a certain place when the sun comes to a certain position and the moon comes to another. The knowledge of astronomer is true, regardless

⁹ See *Tuḡfat*, 86: 15-18. Compare with Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifāʾ/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, I (eds. G. Anawati – Saʿīd Zāyed; Cairo: Wizārat al-thaqāfa, 1960), 358: 14-17.

¹⁰ See *Tuḡfat*, 86: 19-20. Compare with Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifāʾ/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 359: 3-7; id., *al-Ishārāt*, III, 295: 9-296: 2. With this argument, Ibn Sīnā aims at the principle "knowledge is subject to the known" of the Kalām scholars, whom he calls "jadaliyyūn". See *Tuḡfat*, 86: 18-19.

¹¹ See *Tuḡfat*, 86: 20-23. Compare with Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifāʾ/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 359: 15-360: 3.

of whether the eclipse actually happens or not.¹² General and fundamental knowledge of astronomer about eclipse is universal, whereupon it can be applied on each particular case of eclipse. The point is not whether the eclipse actually takes place. The point is that astronomer can give a verdict about individual eclipses (particulars) by means of his universal knowledge. Such competence of astronomer demonstrates how his general (universal) knowledge encompasses particular incidents.¹³

As the foregoing citations¹⁴ reveal, Ibn Sīnā does not assert that God does not know particulars. Instead, he says that even the smallest thing on earth and in heavens is within knowledge of God.¹⁵ In this regard, it is questionable whether Ibn Sīnā ever thinks that God does not know particulars.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Muslim theologians preferred to interpret the

¹² See *Tuḥfat*, 86: 23-87: 2. The example is given in a more detailed manner in *al-Shifā'* and *al-Ta'liqāt*. See Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā' 'al-Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 360: 11-361: 7; id., *al-Ta'liqāt*, 14: 12-15: 28. Ibn Sīnā uses the same example also in *al-Ishārāt* (III, 286: 5-289: 4). Other authors give the same example on how universal knowledge encompasses particulars, probably due to influence of Ibn Sīnā. For instance, see al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa* (ed. Suleimān Dunyā; Cairo: Dār al-ma'ārif 1961), 234: 12-18; id., *Tahāfut*, 224: 1-2; al-Shahrastānī, Abū al-Faḥḥ Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm, *Nihāyat al-iqdām fī 'ilm al-kalām* (ed. Alfred Guillaume; London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 232: 10 (lunar eclipse).

¹³ Also see İlhan Kutluer, *İbn Sīnâ Ontolojisinde Zorunlu Varlık* (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2002), 157-158.

¹⁴ The passages cited from *Tuḥfat* and *al-Shifā'* in a comparative manner can also be followed through the work of al-Shahrastānī. The information provided by al-Shahrastānī almost completely matches with the information in two mentioned books; therefore, al-Shahrastānī definitely made use of *al-Shifā'*. Nonetheless, he ascribes the information to philosophers (*falāsifa*) in general, rather than Ibn Sīnā in person. See al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-iqdām*, 221: 14-223: 13.

¹⁵ For example, see Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā' 'al-Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 359: 13-14: " فلا يعزب عنه شيء ... "شخصي ولا يعزب عنه مثقال ذرة في السموات ولا في الارض". The expression is clearly derived from Qur'ānic verses (Q 10:61 and Q 34:3) which emphasise that God's knowledge covers even the smallest things.

¹⁶ According to some modern studies, attribution of such a thought to Ibn Sīnā is a miscomprehension. For Ibn Sīnā, it is evident that God knows particulars. One may only claim that Ibn Sīnā lacks a clear manifestation regarding how God knows particulars in a universal manner; nevertheless, even such argument cannot be interpreted as God does not know particulars. For example, see Kutluer, *Zorunlu Varlık*, 158-164; Rahim Acar, "Reconsidering Avicenna's Position on God's Knowledge of Particulars", *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam* (eds. Jon McGinnis - David C. Reisman; Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2004), 142-156; id., "Yaratan Bilmezse Kim Bilir? İbn Sīnâ'ya Göre Allah'ın Cüz'ileri Bilmesi",

view of Ibn Sīnā in such manner that God, after all, does not know particulars,¹⁷ even though it is accepted that according to philosophers, God knows particulars in a universal way; this is probably because of lack a clear manifestation regarding how the universal knowledge of particulars actually takes place.¹⁸ For sure, this conviction of the theologians is based on their

İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi, 13 (2005), 1-23. Likewise, Ülken informs that it was al-Fārābī who said "God knows the universal and not the particular"; Ibn Sīnā admits that God knows the particular, but asserts this argument through adaptation to his system. See Hilmi Ziya Ülken, "İbn Sīnā'nın Din Felsefesi", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 4/1-2 (1955), 87.

On the other hand, some other scholars claim that Ibn Sīnā actually thinks God does not know particulars; Ibn Sīnā does say God knows all, but he has used such expressions in order to conceal his true opinions. For example, see Michael E. Marmura, "Some Aspects of Avicenna's Theory of God's Knowledge of Particulars", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 82/3 (1962), 311-312.

¹⁷ For example, see al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 376: 5-6; al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-ıqdām*, 231: 14-232: 9; al-Rāzī, Fakhḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿUmar, *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa al-muta'akhhirīn* (ed. Samīḥ Dughaym; Beirut: Dār al-fikr al-Lubnānī, 1992), 131: 16-17 (as "some philosophers"); id., *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya fī 'ilm al-ilāhiyyāt wa al-ṭabī'iyāt* (ed. Muḥammad al-Mu'taṣim-billāh al-Baghdādī; Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-'Arabī, 1990), II, 498: 10-13; Ibn Taymiyya, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm, *Dar' ta'āruḍ al-'aql wa al-naql (Muwāfaqat ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl li-ṣarīḥ al-ma'qūl)* (ed. M. Rashād Sālim; Riyadh: Wizārat al-ta'līm al-'ālī – Jāmi'at al-Imām Muḥammad b. Su'ūd al-Islāmiyya, 1991), X, 30: 8-18. Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī puts forth a different attitude, opposing Fakhḥ al-Dīn al-Rāzī who accuses philosophers for claiming God does not know particulars. According to al-Ṭūsī, the argument of philosophers, "God knows all the known", cannot be construed as if God does not know particulars. Philosophers argue that God knows all particulars as object of knowledge but not as varying particulars (إنه تعالى يعلم جميع (الجزئيات من حيث هي معقولات لا من حيث هي جزئيات متغيرة)). Al-Ṭūsī adds the abovementioned philosophical view that any knowledge, which depends on time, would require a change in the knower and that, however, God is excluded from such change. See al-Ṭūsī, Naṣīr al-Dīn Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal* (ed. ʿAbd Allāh Nūrānī; Tehran: Institute of Islamic Studies McGill University Tehran Branch, 1980), 295: 23-296: 5.

¹⁸ Indeed, Ibn Sīnā is aware of the difficulty in explaining this. "This is an interesting issue, the reflection of which requires fine intuition (وهذا من العجائب التي يوح تصورها إلى) (الجزئيات من حيث هي معقولات لا من حيث هي جزئيات متغيرة)" he says, putting emphasis on such difficulty. See Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā' al-Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 359: 14.

Ibn Rushd adopts a similar attitude. In his efforts to respond al-Ghazālī, he is aware of the difficulty of the problem and says "all these problems can be understood only by those who have specialised in knowledge" (ولكن هذا كله هو من علم)

refusal of the fundamental philosophical approach that God's knowledge of His essence includes His knowledge of existents. In the eyes of Islamic theologians, knowledge is, in a sense, the consequence of direct relationship between the knower and the known. Therefore, any argument that does not foresee a direct relationship between the knower and the known is considered as if there is consequently no knowledge, no matter how much it is emphasised that the known is known.

The foregoing philosophical view is considered also by Ibn al-Malāḥimī in such way that God does not know particulars. Nevertheless, in the eyes of Ibn al-Malāḥimī, philosophers are those who already claim God does not know particulars.¹⁹ More precisely, such views do not bring along the conclusion that God does not know particulars; or even, it is unnecessary to accuse philosophers, on the basis of this view, for claiming that God does not know particulars. In the eyes of philosophers, God already does not know particulars and their view is an expression of the fact that He does not know particulars. Consequently, Ibn al-Malāḥimī does not treat these views for the conclusion that according to philosophers, God does not know particulars. Instead, he tries to refute the argument that God does not know particulars.

First of all, Ibn al-Malāḥimī objects the separation between the objects of knowledge as universal and particular. In the eyes of Ibn al-Malāḥimī, it is not reasonable to claim God only knows the universals. In fact, God is by himself (*li-dhātihī*) the knower; He knows things not by means of an extra thing which is different from Him. Then, one who knows in such manner should know everything that can be known. There is no reason why God is to know only a certain part of the known. Lack of any reason to allocate His knowledge exclusively on a certain part of the known actually means He does know all. In this regard, Ibn al-Malāḥimī rejects any difference between the known in terms of knowing/knowledge. God either knows nothing or knows all. These are the only reasonable options. It is unreasonable to assert without sufficient grounds that a certain part of the known is knowable while some others are not.²⁰ In short, Ibn al-Malāḥimī disagrees with the argument that God knows universals but not particulars. According to Ibn al-Malāḥimī, there is no difference between the two in terms of knowledge of God, as there is no reason to necessitate such difference.²¹

(الراسخين في العلم). See Ibn Rushd, Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (ed. Suleiman Duniyā; Cairo: Dār al-ma'ārif, 1980), II, 704: 24-705: 1.

¹⁹ See *Tuhfat*, 71: 9.

²⁰ See *Tuhfat*, 87: 6-13.

²¹ In this context, al-Shahrastānī expresses a similar view. He lays emphasis on that it is unnecessary to put God's knowledge to a dual classification of "universal and particular." For him, God's knowledge is beyond the patterns of universal and

Ibn al-Malāḥimī may not see any difference between the two; nevertheless, this does not make the argument of philosophers entirely unfounded. Even if such argument is controversial, philosophers assert that particulars are impossible to know for God since they cause change in His essence. The philosophers, indeed, do have a reason that requires a separation between the universal and the particular. It is change (*taghayyur*).

This is why Ibn al-Malāḥimī undertakes to demonstrate that knowledge of particulars by God will not lead to any change in His essence. Actually, Ibn al-Malāḥimī allocates most of his work to relevant efforts. According to him, once the foregoing truth is manifested, the only obstacle before knowledge of particulars by God will be eliminated, whereupon the philosophical argument will be invalidated.

First of all, Ibn al-Malāḥimī indicates that such claim of change by philosophers arises from their approach on knowledge. According to philosophers, knowledge is formation of the image of the external known within the self of the knower. Thereupon, the known leaves an impression in the essence of knower; then, knowledge of the knower is inevitably passive (*infī āli*; formed upon external influence).²² Theologians, however, reject such a character for knowledge. God's having of knowledge is a necessity put forth by His essence; it is a necessity arising from His essence. The known, on the other hand, is a prerequisite and connection with regard to knowledge.²³ Discussing philosophical argument that "God is the knowledge, the knower, and the known," Ibn al-Malāḥimī's rejection their justification of identity between sense and sensation,²⁴ and his assertion that sensitive understanding

particular. This is why philosophers err, since the beginning of problem by making such a separation. See al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-muṣāra'a* (under the title of *Struggling with the Philosopher: A Refutation of Avicenna's Metaphysics*, ed. and Eng. trs. Wilferd Madelung – Toby Mayer; London – New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 84: 1-8; 91: 9-12.

²² *Tuhfat*, 87: 22-24. Also see al-Bahrānī, Kamāl al-Dīn Mītham b. 'Alī b. Mītham, *Qawā'id al-marām fī 'ilm al-kalām* (ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī; n.p.: Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-'Uzmā al-Mar'ashī al-Najafī, 1985), 86: 19-87: 5. Manifesting this argument of philosophers, al-Bahrānī indicates that this is why they deny God's knowledge.

²³ *Tuhfat*, 88: 1-2: "وليس يجعل متكلمو الإسلام كون الباري عالماً إلا موجِباً عن ذاته ويجعلون المعلوم شرطاً ... أو متعلقاً له".

²⁴ According to al-Ghazālī, the philosophers try to prove the identity of knowledge and the known by means of sensitive understanding. Hereunder, man becomes one who feels (who sees) once the image of visible and sensible object gets into his eyes. More precisely, sensation (eyesight) consists of this impression left by the visible thing in the eyes. In this regard, sense and sensation become identical. The same applies for knowledge. Knowledge consists of influence of the known left in

does not merely consist of the impression of the sensed in the sense and this impression/influence is only a prerequisite of sensing – and, consequently, his making resemblance between sensitive understanding and intelligible knowledge – aims to block the epistemological claim by philosophers that the knower becomes a knower under an external influence.²⁵ In other words, Ibn al-Malāḥimī rejects the argument that an external affects God and makes Him knower. God is already the knower and this being knower takes place, sort of, during the existence of the known. Therefore, with the statement “God knows that a thing will come into existence in the future and it is impossible for Him to know it as existent before it comes to existence; He can know it as existent only when it comes to existence,” one does not claim that such existent causes an influence in Him; instead, God’s essence requires the clarification of knowledge of this existent and relation to it.²⁶

Therefore, Ibn al-Malāḥimī is not convinced that knowledge of particulars by God will lead a change in Him because of the above-mentioned influence. Indeed, God already/always knows them. When particulars come into existence, God’s knowledge of them becomes related with particulars and the knowledge thus comes out. In this regard, Ibn al-Malāḥimī likens the knowledge of God to a potential knowledge. Knowledge of the known by God is similar to other influences arising from His essence. For example, the possibility of emanation of acts from God, or His being one Who sees things and hears sounds are similar situation. The existence of moments when God does not commit any act or there is nothing to hear and see since there is no being other than God in pre-eternity does not hinder His capability of acting, hearing, and seeing the beings; likewise, that existents are yet to come into existence do not prevent God from knowing them. Therefore, God’s knowledge comes out during the existence of the known since such existence is the prerequisite for the character of God as knower; it is similar to how His potency becomes actual upon existence of the possible (*maqdūr*) that is the prerequisite of His being impotent. Evidently, the necessary manifestation of status of being knower on His essence upon appearance of the condition does not mean a change in essence.²⁷

the self; in other words, it is the image in the self. Thereupon, the known is identical with the knower and the knowledge. See al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid*, 226: 21-227: 10.

²⁵ See *Tuḥfat*, 76: 1-15.

²⁶ *Tuḥfat*, 88: 2-5. The final part of the expression reads as follows: “... إن ذاته تعالى توجب ... ”
 “تبينه لذلك الموجود وتعلقه به لا أن ذلك الموجود يؤثر في ذاته

²⁷ *Tuḥfat*, 88: 6-7: “... وإيجاب الذات حكمها عند تجدد شرط لا يعدّ تغييراً للذات”.

In this regard, Ibn al-Malāḥimī emphasises the eternalness of divine knowledge,²⁸ eluding the view “knowledge is subject to the known” of theologians, whom Ibn Sīnā criticises and accuses for making change necessary.

On the other hand, Ibn al-Malāḥimī dwells upon the concept of “change” (*taghayyur*). His objective is to reveal that this expression does not actually have the meaning ascribed by philosophers. For him, the basis of change is that something becomes other than what it is. Therefore, change is what encompasses essence. We can say essence has changed only when it leaves being what it is and becomes something else. However, we don't say someone “changed” even when he gets to know something he didn't know before. This being the case, how can we say “God's essence has changed” when something comes into existence upon the knowledge of God its eventual existence, in other words, when God's knowledge of it becomes apparent?²⁹

Once the change is provided with such foundation, the verdict “has changed” about something is possibly only when its essence changes. Therefore, any change that does not encompass the essence will not be a true change. Consequently, when a theologian says, “God knows something will come into existence; His knowledge of its eventual existence is actually a knowledge that it exists upon coming into existence,” he does not even claim that knowledge has now appeared within Him (a change on the axis of knower and non-knower), let alone any change in His essence. Instead, such theologian informs a change in being of God a knower because of the change of this thing on the axis of existence and nonexistence. God is said “to know that it will come into existence” prior to its existence; then, He is said “to know that it exists” upon its existence. In brief, God is the knower in both cases.³⁰

²⁸ Indeed, Ibn al-Malāḥimī draws attention to the problem as follows: “God's being knower of things is put forth/necessitated eternally by His essence” (لم يزل موجِباً عن ذاته). See *Tuhfat*, 88: 18-19.

²⁹ See *Tuhfat*, 88: 7-12. Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī shares the perspective that change can be valid only if encompasses the whole. According to him, we can say something has changed only when it becomes another thing by means of changes in the whole. See Qāḍī al-Quḍāt 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamadānī, *al-Mughnī fi abwāb al-tawḥīd wa al-'adl*, VI/2: *al-Irāda* (ed. George C. Anawati; Cairo: al-Mu'assasa al-Miṣriyya al-'amma li-al-ta'lif wa al-tarjama wa al-ṭibā'a wa al-nashr, 1962), 107: 7-10.

³⁰ *Tuhfat*, 88: 14-18. The statement reads as follows: “ومن يقول منهم إنه تعالى يعلم أن الأشياء ستوجد وعلمه بأنها ستوجد علم منه تعالى بوجودها في وقت وجودها لا أنه يتجدد كونه عالماً بوجود الشيء عند وجوده (فإنه يقول) إنما يتغير وصفه تعالى في كونه تعالى عالماً لتغير الشيء من العدم إلى الوجود فمن قبل وجوده

Therefore, God always has the knowledge about the eventual existence of something. Such knowledge does not appear in Him at the moment when this thing comes into existence. When the thing comes into existence, His knowledge, initially described as “it will come into existence,” becomes “it exists.” None of these require a change in the essence of God. Indeed, what changes here is the mentioned existent. For instance, a person is said to be on the right or left depending on something near him. He remains unchanged, but his being on the right or left has changed when this thing moves. There is a change here, in the attribute of the person. Nevertheless, the change actually is not within him but in what is near him.³¹

Time is an important factor behind the acceptance that knowledge of particulars requires change. According to philosophers, particulars exist within time; therefore, one has to be within in time so as to know them. Consequently, particulars cannot be known in a direct manner, in other words, as particulars. According to Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Ibn Sīnā indicates that when the comprehended is considered together with time span he exists in, the comprehension of the intellect that comprehends it will also change in line with change of time. For Ibn Sīnā, if the comprehended thing is not dependent on time, its understanding will not be so either and remain a universal understanding. Thereupon, comprehender/intellect will be a universal principle independent of time, and His knowledge will not change upon change of time. Since God is free from temporal changes, His knowledge does not concern the facts that require change.³² In this regard, Ibn Sīnā emphasises that knowledge of particulars cannot be ascribed to God since such knowledge is temporal. Indeed, temporal knowledge necessitates change.

“يُوصَفُ بِأَنَّهُ عَالِمٌ بِأَنَّهُ سَيُوجَدُ فَإِذَا وَجِدَ وَصَفَ عَالِماً بِأَنَّهُ وَجِدَ وَكَوْنَهُ عَالِماً فِي الْحَالِينِ وَاحِدٍ فَالشيء المدرك إذا اعتبر معه زمان الوجود تغير إدراكه بتغير الزمان فأما المدرك الغير الزمان إذا كان إدراكه كلياً لا زمانياً والمدرك قضية كلية لا زمانية لم يتغير علمه بتغير الزمان فلا يتعلق علمه لا أنه يتجدد “ لا أنه يتجدد “ كونه

³¹ *Tuhfat*, 88: 18.

³² See *Tuhfat*, 90: 9-12: “ فالشيء المدرك إذا اعتبر معه زمان الوجود تغير إدراكه بتغير الزمان فأما المدرك الغير الزمان إذا كان إدراكه كلياً لا زمانياً والمدرك قضية كلية لا زمانية لم يتغير علمه بتغير الزمان فلا يتعلق علمه لا أنه يتجدد “ كونه بالكاننات الفاسدات من حيث هي كائنة فاسدة”. Ibn al-Malāḥimī reports that Ibn Sīnā mentions this judgment following the example of solar eclipse. Indeed, just after the example, Ibn Sīnā asserts that the temporal knowledge of solar eclipse is not possible for God since God is not within time or temporal judgments. See Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifāʾ/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, I, 361: 15-362: 3. The phrases of Ibn al-Malāḥimī and Ibn Sīnā are, however, different.

For sure, Ibn al-Malāḥimī focuses on the concept of “change” emphasised by Ibn Sīnā. He asks the intention of expression, “the comprehension of the intellect that comprehends the comprehended will also change in line with time (يتغير إدراكه بتغير الزمان)”. Does this mean the change of essence of the comprehender? In other words, does the change in comprehension towards the comprehended leads to a change in the essence of the comprehender? Or even, what changes here is only his comprehensions, namely, acts. The change here is either a change in the essence of the comprehender as indicated in the first example, or even in his acts as the second option suggests. Here, we may say that the change in question is the change in the essence. However, we should notice that the change in essence can be attained through change in acts. When the comprehended changes, its comprehension by the comprehender changes as well; consequently, such change in his comprehension/understanding causes to a change in his essence. This is what Ibn al-Malāḥimī dismisses. The essence of the doer does not change due to change in his acts. There is no necessary relation between the change in acts and the change in essence. Then, we may say that the change in question is the change in acts. More precisely, philosophers may claim that the knowledge, which is marked in time, leads to a change in the acts of the knower. Ibn al-Malāḥimī has a brief response to this argument: What is the obstacle before the multiplication/differentiation of the acts of doer?³³ Then, according to Ibn al-Malāḥimī, philosophers can never manifest the changes in essence by means of the change caused by temporal knowledge. They can only manifest the changes in acts, which have nothing to do with the essence of God. In fact, such argument only means that His acts are multiplied.³⁴

Having dismissed the change in essence of God due to His knowledge of particulars, Ibn al-Malāḥimī analyses the example of solar eclipse, provided by Ibn Sīnā so as to show how God knows particulars in a universal manner. For Ibn al-Malāḥimī, this example is not useful for philosophers. At least, the

³³ See *Tuhfat*, 90: 12-15.

³⁴ Ibn al-Malāḥimī concentrates on preventing the change in essence, whereupon he does not pay too much attention to the problem of change in acts. Indeed, change in essence is unacceptable also for theologians. This is why he tries to eliminate such an idea of change. On the other hand, theologians have no problem with the change in acts/deeds, in other words, plurality. Nonetheless, according to a philosopher, both changes are of same content. Plurality in acts is not pertain to God just like change in essence doesn't, for plurality of acts leads to multiplicity in essence. As a matter of fact, philosophers have limited the acts of God, asserting that “only one comes out of One.” For sure, Ibn al-Malāḥimī overlooks this philosophical argument as he does not agree that plurality in acts will lead to multiplicity in essence.

example cannot put forth that the particulars are known in a universal manner. We should ask a question at this stage: Should a person, who knows the positions of sun and moon and the following eclipse, know sun and moon and their exact positions at the moment of eclipse, or even should he have a knowledge that reveals general principles such as “the eclipse happens when sun is in this celestial sphere (*falak*) and moon is in that one and if they move in such manner”? The first option means that such knowledge, in the end, is about particulars. The knowledge of sun and moon and their certain positions is about particulars. If we are to choose the second option – which philosophers prefer – we cannot construe that the particulars are known, since the knowledge is not toward particulars and is only about the universal. It is similar to knowing the essence of man. One can have knowledge about what man is; however, such knowledge is not related with an individual.³⁵

In fact, Ibn al-Malāḥimī remarks on what philosophers try to highlight. According to the philosophers, universal knowledge about essence of man includes the knowledge about every single man, or a certain given man. With the foregoing argument, Ibn al-Malāḥimī does not weaken the philosophical argument; rather, he apparently serves for it and strengthens philosophical discourse. Nevertheless, the approach of Ibn al-Malāḥimī about the problem is entirely different from philosophical perspective. Philosopher points out that universal knowledge is applicable on individual particulars or informs about them, while Ibn al-Malāḥimī claims these types of knowledge are different from one another in essence. For him, there are two types of knowledge in question: Universal knowledge which tells what man is, and particular knowledge which tells what a certain man is. These two types of knowledge are different since their objects are different. Evidently, the universal knowledge that tells us what man is can also inform what an individual man is. Nonetheless, once the universal knowledge is functioned for an individual, it becomes particular knowledge. The knower has universal knowledge about what man is, and also particular knowledge about what a certain man is. Philosophical discourse, however, abolishes the difference between two types of knowledge.³⁶ Therefore, their example takes us to two possible conclusions: God knows particulars, or God has exclusively universal knowledge and does not know particulars.³⁷

³⁵ See *Tuhfat*, 89: 17-90: 1.

³⁶ *Tuhfat*, 90: 3: “If such knowledge meant to know the particulars, there would be no difference between universal and particular [knowledge].”

³⁷ For Ibn al-Malāḥimī, another disturbing aspect of the example of solar eclipse is that a particular eclipse (particular incident) can only be known by the astronomer. Philosophers claim that astronomer can know the principles

Philosophers give the explanation that “God contemplates that He is the origin of each existent, the causes of things and their coherence” in order to demonstrate God knows particulars in a universal way. According to Ibn al-Malāḥimī, however, this explanation actually means God knows particulars. If God reasons He is the cause of things, this will have one of the two meanings: God either reasons that He is the cause/origin of a certain thing and certain causes of the certain caused things; or even, He reasons that His essence necessarily brings things into existence, rather than that some causes or His essence necessitate certain things. The first option is an expression that God completely knows particulars. Indeed, according to this argument, God knows that His essence is the origin of the first intellect. Then, He knows that each intellect is the origin of the other intellect which springs from it. And all these problems are within the scope of particulars. As for the second option, it cannot even attain the argument that God is the origin of beings. Indeed, if God knows that His essence is capable of being the origin of all, then He doesn't know that He is the origin. His capacity to be the origin of something does not mean that He is the origin.³⁸

The attitude of Ibn al-Malāḥimī to overcome his oppositions is not unexpected, but leads to interesting consequences. He thinks that philosophers assert God does not know particulars. Basing himself on this thought, Ibn al-Malāḥimī tries to demonstrate how the philosophical view actually means that God knows particulars or how it attains such a conclusion. This argument looks strange in consideration of his foregoing conviction that philosophers actually say God knows particulars. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, in a sense, puts forth the true opinion of philosophers. Nevertheless, let us remember the difference between Ibn al-Malāḥimī and philosophers. The former indicates that particulars are known as they are, while the latter claim that the particulars are known as universals. More precisely, Ibn al-Malāḥimī asserts that philosophers actually say that the particulars are known by God as particulars. At least, philosophical perspective constitutes the basis for such knowledge.

(*universal*) and individual cases (*particular*) of solar eclipse; nevertheless, they argue that God can only know the universal. This means an astronomer is wiser than God. Such discourse is evidently unacceptable. See *Tuḥfat*, 90: 15-18.

An approach in consideration of number of the known may evidently render the position of Ibn al-Malāḥimī more suitable. Nevertheless, philosophers already assert that God knows particulars in a universal manner. Knowledge of particular through direct relation with particular is reasonable for theologians but defective for philosophers. A person with such knowledge is shortcoming. In this regard, main objective of philosopher is to absolve God from shortcomings/deficiencies. Nevertheless, two parties have different perspective, hence different judgments.

³⁸ *Tuḥfat*, 89: 7-14.

As a matter of fact, Ibn al-Malāḥimī quotes philosophers in order to show how philosophers, just like theologians, claim that the particulars are known as particulars. According one of his quotations from an anonymous later philosopher, the philosophers do not dispute about the following issues: God knows existents by means of His essence and not because of existents. A thing has come to existence for He knows it and not vice versa. God knows everything as they are together with their qualities: He knows the cause as cause and the caused as caused. He knows that the universe is possible and changing by essence, that beings come into existence from nothingness, as well as the order in everything. All such knowledge of God is a necessity of His essence.³⁹ Therefore, according to Ibn al-Malāḥimī, if there is no dispute between philosophers about the foregoing issues as the anonymous philosopher points out, they accept that God knows particulars even though they say the opposite.⁴⁰ For sure it is a systematic inconsistency to say initially that God does not know particulars and then to conclude that He does; in fact, this is an opportunity for Ibn al-Malāḥimī to disclose the deficiency of the philosophical system.

³⁹ See *Tuḥfat*, 91: 11-17. The expression, “things exist after nothingness,” makes the identity of this “philosopher” an issue of concern.

⁴⁰ *Tuḥfat*, 91: 18-19.

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