

Avicenna's metaphysics of universals

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Abstract

The metaphysical problem of universals, roughly speaking, concerns whether universals exist in the extra-mental world. Avicenna resolves the problem by distinguishing the quiddity from the universal: the quiddity or essence in itself exists in the extramental world, while the universal is only in the mind. Some contemporary scholars maintain that this theory is ambiguous, identifying two alternative interpretations for Avicenna's doctrine: epistemological and ontological. My aim in this essay is to clarify his theory and assess the alternative readings.

Keywords: Quiddity in itself; Universal; Particular; Mental existence; Extramental existence.