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Individuation of Material Substances in Avicenna's Philosophy

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Lánczky István

Az anyagi szubsztanciák individuációja Avicenna filozófiájában

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1. Introduction

Talking about individuation in the Middle Ages is always risky. For a modern reader, this term sounds quite different than for a Middle Eastern philosopher. At the beginning of the 21. Century, we might attach a great variety of connotations to the expression, first, because of a lengthy history of philosophy behind our back, and second, because individuation, individualization takes on different garments in our modern, -postmodern era. It might appear in psychological, sociological, or physical and philosophical contexts; all these approaches are directed to solve a particular problem that emerges in our life. That is to say; there is much more talk about individuation nowadays than in the Middle Ages.[1]

In our opinion, this state of affairs is due to the different historical setting that guides scientific inquiries. This phenomenon, however, may be best represented by distinguishing between inner and outer contexts. If we turn to philosophy, strictly speaking, under "inner context" I mean the requirements of the philosophical system itself, which serves as a framework, or toolkit that helps to understand, to define and to describe the world. Every philosophical system has implications that influence the treatment of its subjects. For example, in the Aristotelian Peripatetic tradition, individuals were never the proper subject matter of philosophy, due to the well-known Aristotelian tenet that apodeictic demonstration deals only with necessary statements that are always true. Individuals, in turn, are always exposed to change: Socrates may have hair at time[1], but he may lose it at time[2]. To put it simply, Socrates has features that easily come and go, and he may have other, permanent ones. These questions emerged mainly in the essential – accidental debate; but the main problem with that, amongst others, is that any firm statement of any "essential characteristic"[2] would freeze the individual, implying that it would be unchangeable in that respect.[3]

Second, the starting point of scientific investigation depends on the philosophical system. The question is about whether the individual Socrates is considered as a primary being, or as a secondary, derivative one, in the sense that Socrates, inasmuch as an individual depends on some other element that is ontologically prior. In the latter case, there is an open field to talk about individuation because there are elements, and there is a system in which a "mechanism"

[1] All the grammatical and stylistical shortcomings are due to my inattentiveness; this preliminary version is still before proofreading.
[2] That is, what is essential for Socrates, not for his "humanity."
[3] The term frozen individuals are quoted by Arlig, 2009, 140.

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explains individuation. If in a philosophical system, individuals are primary, and universal truths are derivable from them, there is no much room for philosophizing on it.[4]

By the outer context, I mean the external challenges that may affect philosophical discussions. That is to say, in case of such a marginal topic, as individuation, the religio-cultural setting seems to be of crucial importance. Since particulars were not of primary concern for a philosopher or commentator working in the Late Antiquity, they appear, if they appear at all, in marginal questions and problems, usually prompted by particular religio-cultural challenges. With the emergence of Christianity, the central issues of Christian theology started to guide these discussions, on key theological issues like the Trinity, the Eucharist or Christ" divine and human nature.[5] As we will briefly imply, this state of affairs is equally typical for the Islamic cultural milieu.

Nevertheless, it is barely an impossible task to determine and indicate all the cultural circumstances, to understand a philosophical tenet in its original setting, because time has inevitably passed. This dissertation is an attempt to reconstruct this contextual arrangement: as far as my survey will cover it, be it as deficient as it may, I will try to analyze Avicenna's arguments in the framework of his own time and era. This assertion leads us to broaden our methodological considerations.

1.1 Methodology

While dealing with Ancient or Medieval philosophy, scholars cannot avoid considering methodological guidelines. To frame the different methodologies, we follow Gabriele Galluzzo, who distinguished between the historical and the theoretical approach.[6] Although the author seems to lean towards the theoretical side, in his conclusion, he stands on neutral grounds. According to Galluzzo, the main difference between the two approaches is that theoretical consideration starts from the assumption that given philosophical issues, like the problem of individuals are fundamentally identical through the different ages, even though the conceptual frameworks may radically change in different cultural settings.[7] The historical approach, in turn, focuses on the different intermediary steps and cultural influences that affected and formed a certain idea.[8] As the author himself admits, both sides have advantages and shortcomings: historicists fail to account for the reemergence of identical arguments, and they may attribute

[4] On this see Galluzzo, 2012, 310; Galluzzo, 2008, 346.
[5] Gracia, 1994, ix; Gracia, 1984, 123; on the different contexts see Sorabji, 2006, 50–53.
[6] Galluzzo, 2008.
[7] Galluzzo, 2008, 345.
[8] Galluzzo, 2008, 338.

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too great an importance to terminological or systematical changes, saying that it entails a shift in the very problem itself.

On the other hand, scholars following the theoretical approach may be accused of anachronism, by reading contemporary concerns into Ancient or Medieval discussions. I think the different opinions ultimately go back to the basic, burning question that every scholar, who deals with non-contemporary problems, should answer: why is Medieval philosophy important for us? For those who seek to understand philosophical problems in their own right that may be relevant even today, the so-called theoretical approach is the more attractive, but for those who deal with the problem mainly out of historical interest, the other way is the most viable. Others, like John Marenbon, similarly strives to follow a middle way. He underlines the importance of the theoretical approach, as he calls it, the Philosopher's Position that one has to have a deep understanding of the philosophical problems, with their translation into modern, familiar terms. At the same time, he insists that past philosophy must be regarded as *the product of a certain period, at a certain moment both in the history of the subject, but also within a broader intellectual, cultural and political history*.[9] In other words, we agree with those scholars who equally highlight the significance of the historical background of Medieval philosophy. This is what Kurt Flasch similarly underlines saying that Medieval philosophy should be studied in its context, with a special emphasis on its particular set of problems.[10]

To put this debate aside, in this dissertation, we follow a middle way, but with a special emphasis on the contextual approach. That is, we aim to understand Avicenna's theory of individuation in its historical context. Our primary focus is not the question of individuation itself, let us say, as it is formulated now in analytical circles, or as it appeared in Aristotle so that we would take it as our starting point. This approach would be too broad a topic for a dissertation. Rather, we shall concentrate on Avicenna's text, and mainly on his treatment of individuals: that is, we will focus on what his starting point is, and on what is the intention of individuality that he may have had in mind in the different contexts. This approach is more historical than analytical. As a second step, we will strive to identify the different senses of individuation, and its articulations, which is much more reminiscent of the theoretical approach. That is, we will take into consideration the cultural milieu and philosophical techniques that are crucial in explaining Avicenna's philosophy.

[9] Marenbon, 2011, 7.
[10] Flasch, 1989, 14–15.

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However, at the same time, our aim is to focus on the philosophical implications that his tenets entail. We will equally dwell on those texts where Avicenna *expressis verbis* treated individuation.

An excellent example of the theoretical approach is Jorge-Louis Gracia's groundbreaking work on Medieval theories of individuation. He opens his discussion with sketching up a theoretical framework. He enumerates the possible candidates for the intension, extension of individuality, and goes on to the ontological status and principle of individuation, the possible interpretations of the discernibility of individuals, and the function of proper names and indexicals.[11] With this toolkit in the pocket, he goes on to investigate early Medieval thinkers' views.

Individuation is also problematic in its own right. If we follow the theoretical approach, the first difficulty that immediately leaps to mind is that it is not obvious what the term "individual" means. Individuals taken as the Aristotelian primary substances that populate our world, like this person, this glass of water, this computer, do not pose any specific problem. We have an immediate awareness of them, in case of sensible substances at least, via our sense perception. Why would they pose a philosophical problem? It is always in relation to something else, where the need for studying them appears, whether it means distinction or personal identity through a certain period of time. In other words, the glasses through which we look at the problem is of extreme importance.

1.1.1 Theoretical approach

In the theoretical approach, the focus is on individuation and its philosophical articulations. As we will see, differences concerning individuality always go back to the basic question about what the term "individual" means. Scholars, both Medieval and contemporary, who disagree on any aspect of this issue, always differ in what they understand under the term "individual," or "individuation." This is exactly the principal advantage of the theoretical approach, that is to say, to clarify the question itself. As we briefly mentioned, it actually goes back to the supposition that the problem of individuation, philosophically speaking is the same despite its different articulations in the history of philosophy.

Individuation poses only problems if we take them as derived objects, that is if we do not consider them as primitive entities. This dichotomy hinges upon the different perspectives: if we take individuals as primary, there are no simpler elements that would explain their being individual, but if we hold a derivative view of individuation, it means that what we mean by

[11] Gracia, 1984, 21–55.

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individual is a result of a "formula", they are ontologically derived from something else.[12] That is, individuation is at stake only for those thinkers who hold the derivative reading, like in case of Aristotle; most scholars argue that there is a principle of individuation in his teaching. According to some, however, like Edward Regis, it is superfluous to posit: individuals are simply primary.[13]

If we accept the derivative reading of individuation, we can go on to analyze the problem. Scholars writing on medieval accounts of individuation usually tend to consider two main axes: that of sameness and difference and that of kinds and instances.[14] Drawing on the classification of these scholars, first, we must clarify what the term individual means.

1. What makes y an individual?

To answer this question, first we shall ask for the intention of individuality, that is, what we mean by the term individual. If we enumerate all the possible descriptions of individuals, we arrive at different aspects of the same thing.

a. What makes y an individual?
b. What makes y this very individual?
c. What makes y to be one?
d. What makes y to be indivisible?
e. What makes y to be the same through a certain period of time?

(1a) Refers to the principle of individuation. However, first, the meaning of individuality, that is, what is exactly meant by "individual' must be clarified. (1b) Takes another aspect of individuals, which is very Aristotelian in tone that every individual is "a this." The indexical has primarily an epistemic role to play in the identification, but as universalized, it refers to the designation, based on the fact that a material individual may be designated by indication. Since it helps to tell one particular apart from another, it casts some light on another property of individuals. (1c) Asks for unity, based on the fact that every individual is one. To be one among the existents is another property, mostly in a metaphysical-ontological approach. Indivisibility, a concept included in the Greek and Latin technical terms respectively, is another aspect in mereological terms, that asks for the criterion why an individual is an integrated whole. (1e), in

[12] Galluzzo, 2012, 210.
[13] Regis, 1976.
[14] Arlig, 2009, 132; King, 2000.

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turn, asks for personal identity, which is equally a metaphysical consideration. In Avicenna, we might expect to get an answer for (1a), (1b), (1c), and (1e).

If we take into account that individuals belong to a certain kind, then other aspects emerge:

2. If y is an individual of a kind
    a. What makes y belong to that kind?
        i. What makes y distinct from other individuals of that kind?
    b. What makes y distinct from other individuals of another kind?

If we take the individual subsumed under a kind, we may ask (2a) the reason why does it belong to a certain kind. This approach is reminiscent of the famous Porphyrian Eisagoge which clarifies the role of the *quinque voces*: which aspects of the thing do they represent. However, this question has epistemological and ontological implications alike.

If an individual belongs to a certain kind, another problem comes to the fore (2ai): what does it differentiate from the other instantiations of that kind? This is also a Porphyrian question, asking for the reason why individuals that do not differ from each other in virtue of a *differentia specifica*, on what ground may they be said to be different? This problem is a classical one in the Middle Ages, mainly due to Porphyry's influence on logical discussions. (2b) Relates also to difference, but here to the specific differences between things. Needless to say, this also belongs to this logical tradition. It is principally (2a) and (2ai), which is addressed in Medieval philosophy.

However, if we accept that there are kinds and instances, the question may be posited otherwise: if we start from the kind, accepting that it enjoys some sort of existence, we might look at it from a different angle, namely starting from the kind itself. In other words, it does not mean individuation but particularization, where, starting from a kind, we may ask what makes it instantiated in an instance:

3. If y is a kind, what makes y instantiated in/as an individual?
    a. If y is an instantiated kind, what makes it differ from another instantiated kind?
    b. If y is an instantiated kind, what makes it be one?
    c. If y is an instantiated kind, what makes it be multiple?
    d. If y is an instantiated kind, what makes it indivisible?
    e. If y is an instantiated kind, what makes it be the same through a certain period of time?

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Questions belonging to (3) take "kind" as their first predicate. To reformulate the question along these lines, it reflects the extension of individuality. For a Platonist, this approach means something else than for a moderate realist, like Avicenna. These questions mirror an ontological turn, depending on the ontological status of the "kind." It is true that in a sense, questions belonging to (1) are similar to those belonging to (3). However, they are not completely identical. The individual is an instantiated kind, but for a moderate realist, the instantiated kind is not necessarily that very individual: if it is taken as a part, though an essential part of the individual, it is not the whole individual. If it is considered as taken from the individual, or as a designated part of the individual, they are not completely the same. These questions bring us closer to individuation: the answer depends on the ontological status of the kind, which may change depending on the philosophers' particular views. That is, it is here where the historical approach must complete the theoretical one: to understand the question philosophically, we shall take into account the author's particular cultural setting. In Avicenna's case, we can expect answers to all these questions.

In other words, so as to understand a Medieval philosopher, we shall mix these approaches, and we shall take them as completing each other, which strives to be similar to Robert Wisnovsky's contextualist approach: This latter requires that Arabic philosophy should be investigated on its own terms, not through the glasses of Greek or Western philosophy.[15] Nevertheless, we will briefly indicate in the footnote, which questions correspond to Avicenna's solutions.

1.2 Secondary literature

Avicenna's theory of individuation has attracted remarkable scholarly attention, but not as much as it may have deserved. Usually, all the authors agree that for Avicenna, the matter is the principle of individuation.

Among the early accounts, Amelie-Marie Goichon's chapter is the most influential. The author follows the logical-metaphysical distinction in her discussion, after summarizing Avicenna's concept of the individual, goes on to the hylomorphic reading. She compares it to Aquinas' view, who, in turn, has much to thank Avicenna as far as his theory of individuation is concerned.[16] Amelie-Marie Goichon proposes a twofold reading of the principle of individuation in Avicenna since both form and matter play a certain role, but the definitive

[15] Wisnovsky, 2003, 17.
[16] See for example, Klinger, 1964, 16–27; Anawati, 1974, 457–458; Galluzzo 2012; Roland-Gosselin, 1948, 106–117; Pickavé, 2012, 339–365.

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principle is matter, due to its *incommunicabilitas*.[17] The author elaborates on the mutual individuation of form and matter by underlining the role of preparation in the process of becoming.[18] Amelie-Marie Goichon's solutions are principally right. There is, however, much more to add about individuation, if one takes into consideration Avicenna's other works that were published after the II. World War. Martin Pickavé, in a recent article, examines individuation of the Latin Avicenna, and its influence among the Scholastic philosophers. The author shows that they understood Avicenna as holding an accidental reading of individuation, even though the picture is more complicated than that: matter is the principle of individuation, not the accidents – these latter instead help to identify an individual.[19]

Another article of great importance that deals extensively with Avicenna's account of individuation is written by Allen Bäck.[20] In his later article, he summarizes Ibn Sīnā's and Ibn Rushd's views. He also highlights the material reading of individuation, but he also underlines the role of existence, to be more precise, the role of "material existence" in individuation. He takes existence to be both a criterion of distinction and identity.[21] The author equally stresses the role of matter in individuation, sometimes included in his account of "material existence," and sometimes along the lines of the classical "Peripatetic" interpretation that matter, as being receptive of contingent feature is the source of individuation. Allen Bäck has deep insight into the problem, but his account of existence as the principle of individuation needs to be reconsidered.

Deborah Black also offers a general account of individuation in a short chapter.[22] She relies on the most important passages of the *Shifā'*, and highlights that Avicenna attributes individuation to a variety of factors. Basically, I can agree with her remarks. Nevertheless, the topic deserves a much more detailed study.

Similarly, Muhammad Kamal highlights existence as the ground for individuality. The author follows the existence-essence approach and argues for existential individuation.[23] However, the most obvious problem with the existential individuation is that we hardly find any passage in the Avicennian corpus that would admit it in such a direct manner; even though certain passages

[17] Goichon, 1999, 479.
[18] Goichon, 1999, 460–481.
[19] Pickavé, 2012, 346–237.
[20] The author has two articles on the topic, of which I could consult only the later one. The former one is this: Ibn Sina on the Individuation of Perceptible Substance," Proceedings of the PMR Conference, Vol. 14 (1989).
[21] Bäck, 1994, 45; 50.
[22] Black, 2012, 258–261.
[23] Kamal, 2014.

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are implying the coextensivity of the particular existence and individuation. As we mentioned earlier, this position will be re-examined later.

There are other, scattered passages related to individuation. Jon McGinnis equally stresses that matter is the principle of individuation and draws a parallel to the Arabic Alexander corpus,[24] while Abraham D. Stone highlighted the role of spatial features. [25] We can agree with this point; what we want to accomplish is to elucidate and complete it in considering the role of spatial position in Avicenna's philosophy.

However, one aspect of individuation has received a much broader scholarly attention: this is the individuation of human souls. According to some distinguished scholars, this is one of the most controversial points in Avicenna's philosophy.[26] The articles of primary importance are that of M. E. Marmura, and Thérèse-Anne Druart: they draw attention to the intermediary position of the rational human soul: it is immortal and immaterial, and yet, it is individuated through its attachment to the body. Especially its survival as an individual entity raises problems.[27] More recent articles examine self-awareness as a possible candidate for its individuation.[28] These papers rely mostly on Avicenna's later works, like the *Ta'līqāt*, which extensively writes on self-awareness and its relation to existence: it proposes a reasonable solution that corroborates the existential reading of individuation. Debora Black is more cautious,[29] but Jari Kaukua argues that it is self-awareness that renders immaterial existence individual.[30] Although the individuation of the human soul is not our concern here, this position supports the idea that existence individuates.

To sum up: the most important articles highlight four main tenets regarding Avicenna's theory of individuation:

1- The matter is the principle of individuation – indeed, this is what Avicenna himself seems to admit several times
2- Accidental individuation in the sense that accidents individuate the quiddity. That is to say, starting from the threefold division of quiddities, it is accidents that render the quiddity in itself a particular quiddity, existing *in re*.

[24] McGinnis, 2006, 58.
[25] Stone, 2001, 108–111; Allen Bäck also made a hint about it, in Bäck, 1994, 58; Kaukua, 2015, 54.
[26] Adamson, 2004, 74.
[27] Marmura, 2008, Druart, 2000.
[28] Kaukua, 2015, 43–60, Black, 2008, 73–76.
[29] Black, 2012.
[30] Kaukua, 2015, 55; 60.

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3- The role of spatio-temporal accidents in individuation
4- Some scholars argue in favor of existential individuation, namely that it is existence that individuates.

Since scholars do not entirely agree on these points we will follow a new approach to make a "fair judgment" among them. As a first step, our approach follows the historicist's method, whereas we will try to sketch up the cultural background against which the philosophical-theological solutions were formulated. Second, with this background information in mind, we try to understand the broader picture, the set of problems at a larger scale, to try to look at the problems through Avicennian glasses. We are well aware that this task is almost a *hubris* which is nearly impossible to accomplish, but we try to do our best, even though we will never arrive at the same spot where Avicenna was due to the spatio-temporal distance. Thus, the examination of the outer context will be deficient, because the complete treatment is beyond our ability and tracing the whole picture is too broad a topic for a doctoral dissertation. Still, we are going to give some insights into it, even though we risk that our survey will be incomplete. However, this is the first step towards such a goal.

What we aim to add to the recent scholarship is the study of Avicenna's later works with a special emphasis on the *Mubāḥathāt*, which contains collected paragraphs on individuation. We will complete it with the *Taʿlīqāt*, although this latter is a bit spurious. Regardless, we will compare it to the "authentic" Avicenna. In our view, even though it may have been written up by his pupils, we take it as a result of the discussions with the master.

1.2.1 Transliteration

The transliteration follows the guidelines established by the Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies. As to the footnotes, in case of Avicenna's works, we refer only to beginning of the title omitting the definite article.[31]

[31] Only with one exception, where two titles would look very similar: we refer to the *al-Samāʿ al-Ṭabīʿī* as „*Samā*'" and to the *al-Samāʾ wa-l-ʿĀlam* as *al-Samāʾ wa-l-ʿĀlam*.

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2 The Greek tradition

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, our aim is to briefly summarize the late-antique philosophical framework, in which the problem of individuals appeared. This philosophical legacy provided tools and patterns that shaped and guided discussions on individuals. Since Arabic philosophy is the lawful heir of the Greek philosophical legacy, one cannot understand it without the basics.

Although even Plato has much to say about individuals,[32] our starting point should be Aristotle due to his enormous role in the formation of Arabic philosophy. Its philosophical curriculum indeed started with the Organon,[33] thus, as we shall see, his logical teaching – although, thanks to the commentary tradition, in a rather Neoplatonized form – served as the very base of every philosophical discussion. The Neoplatonic legacy is unquestionably present in virtue of the trend that Robert Wisnovsky calls the "greater harmony" – that is the objective of commentators to harmonize Plato with Aristotle.[34]

As we mentioned earlier, individuals were not considered the proper object of demonstrative science. For Aristotle, apodeictic science has only universals as their subject. In other words, sensible individuals have no definition and no demonstration. As the Stagirite admits, sensible individuals have matter, whose nature is such that it may both exist and not exist, that is, individuals of this sort are corruptible. Since demonstrative science is of necessary truths and definition comes only as a result of a scientific process, possible existents, like material individuals cannot be grasped by definition, unless by opinion (*δόξα*).[35] Since the demonstration consists only of universals, its conclusion must be universal. There is no demonstration and therefore no definition of perishable things, unless incidentally, because nothing is true of them universally, but only temporarily and in a certain way. In other words, they are apparently not eternal. They change.[36]

2.1.1 Terminological outlook

The English term *individual* has the Latin *individuum* as its origin, which derives from the Greek *ἄτομον*. It already appears in the writings of the Atomists, as the indivisible particle.[37] In

[32] McCabe, 1994.
[33] D'Ancona, 2005, 13–18.
[34] Wisnovsky, 2003, 15.
[35] Aristotle, *Met.* (Z 15), 1039b27–1040a7; *Met*. (a 1), 993b27–31
[36] Aristotle, *Post. An.* (I.8), 75b21–26.
[37] Peters, 1967, 28–29.

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Aristotle, it usually occurs in its "classical" meaning that became the generally accepted technical term due to the influence of Porphyry's *Eisagoge* and the *Organon*.[38]

As a gloss to *ἄτομον*, the *ἓν ἀριθμῷ* (one in number) also appears in the *Categories*, just like the *καθ᾽ ἕκαστον*: in one passage in the Metaphysics, Aristotle asserts that these two terms do not differ at all. [39] The latter is contrasted to *καθόλου* (universal), which can be predicated of many by nature, whereas *καθ᾽ ἕκαστον* cannot. [40] Another term that similarly may denote individuals is *κατὰ μέρος* (particular) that sometimes appears as a synonym for *καθ᾽ ἕκαστον*, like in the *Physics* I.5 that sense perception is of *κατὰ μέρος*, whereas definition (*λόγος*) is of *καθόλου*.[41] However, in a logical context, it might mean the particular premiss that holds of something, or not of something or nothing.[42] In the commentators, the term *μερικὰ* often appears as well.[43]

Aristotle does not refrain from using *τόδε τι*, (this something here) [44] being a sort of indexical: this highlights another approach to individuals, namely that every material individual is a designatable object.

2.2 Individuals in the logical approach: the second imposition

Aristotle in the *Categories* divides existents into four types: those that can be predicated of a subject but are not in a subject, like "human" (secondary substances); those that cannot be predicated of a subject and are in a subject, like a certain knowledge of grammar (accidents). On the other hand, there are those that are in a subject and can be predicated of a subject, like the universal accidents, knowledge; and finally, there are those that cannot be predicated of a subject, and are not in a subject: the primary substances, namely, the individuals. [45]

Primary substances, that is, individuals are the ultimate subject of which something else might be predicated, while they cannot be predicated of any subject.[46] As Richard Sorabji holds, an individual, like Socrates is not a real predicate because it cannot be predicated of anything else by definition – because itself does not have a definition – unless by name.[47] It is only an

[38] Frede, 1987, 50–51. The author extensively deals with the formation of the term.
[39] Aristotle, *Met*. (B4), 999b33: τὸ ἀριθμῷ ἓν ἢ τὸ καθ᾽ ἕκαστον λέγειν διαφέρει οὐθέν
[40] Aristotle, *De Int.,* 7, 17a40
[41] Aristotle, *Phys.*, I.5 189a8.
[42] Aristotle, *Pr. An.*, 24a20.
[43] See for example Ammonius, *In Isag*., 63, 11.
[44] See Aristotle, *Met*. (VII.3), 1029a27, that *τόδε τι* and *χωριστὸν* apply best to substances; *Cat*. 3b10 that every substance seems to mean a „this".
[45] Aristotle, *Cat.,* 1a20–1b14.
[46] Aristotle, *Cat.,* 3a 36-38.
[47] Aristotle, *Cat*., 2a 19–21; R. Sorabji, 2005, 168–169.

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accidental predication like *that white thing is approaching*, or *that big thing is a tree*.[48] In this case, as Aristotle would put it, the very fact that it is a tree is not because its being big, because its being big is only an accident in the subject, which is otherwise a tree. A tree is not big in itself, that is, due to its definition, it is only an accidental feature in it.

This idea is in accord with the *locus classicus* of the *De Interpretatione*, where Aristotle contrasts the universal to the particular: the universal is that which – by nature – can be predicated of many, whereas the individual is that which cannot.[49] Some scholars, like Mignucci, interpreted Aristotle's theory of particular predication in such a way that individuals can be predicated only accidentally, and that although the proposition X is Socrates may be grammatically correct, it does not express an ontological structure.[50]

2.2.1 Individual as the sixth predicate

It is a long way until we arrive at the idea of the sixth predicate from Aristotle's accidental predication. Since it would fall out of the scope of this chapter, our aim cannot be but to summarize the main points of interest shortly.[51] Nevertheless, we shall start with the basic ontological framework, which, being part of a larger project to harmonize the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato, rests on the threefold division of the "common" (*κοινόν*) that appeared already in Alexander's teaching, and was accepted by the majority of Neoplatonic commentators.[52]

Although the roots of this trend may be traced back to the early Platonists,[53] the most prominent thinker, who exercised a lasting influence on the later philosophical tradition, was Porphyry. For him, the form may be allocated or unallocated, the former being the form in the sensible particular, and the latter being the universal in mind.[54] In later Neoplatonic commentators, the idea appears as a threefold division of forms: *ante rem/multitudinem, in re/multitudine* and *post rem/multitudinem* forms.[55] This conceptual framework was generally accepted by the commentators, despite the slight differences between them.

[48] Aristotle, *An. Post.*, I. 22, 83 a 2–4.
[49] Aristotle, *De Int*., 17a 39–17b1.
[50] Quoted by Chiaradonna, 2000, 313, n.25.
[51] On Alexander Aphrodisias see Sharples, 2005; Tweedale, 1984, Chiaradonna, 2013. Adamson, 2013.
[52] Alexander, *Scripta minora*, 7, 28.
[53] Karamanolis, 2006, 5.
[54]Adamson, 2013, 331.
[55] For general survey see De Libera, 1996, 103–108. Helmig, 2008, 33–35. For individual thinkers see Ammonius, *In Isag.*, 41, 10–42, 26; 68,25–69,3; Simplicius, *In Cat.* 82, 35–83, 16; Elias, *In Isag*. 48, 15–30; David, *In Isag.*, 120, 8–14.

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To represent this distinction, the commentators were likely to use the metaphor of the wax and the seal ring. After having been stamped by the seal, say, of Achilles, different pieces of wax equally bear its print. The form of Achilles in the seal corresponds to the *ante multitudinem* form; those stamped in the wax to the *in multitudine*. The figure that comes to be in the mind matches with the universal.

This approach of bridging the gap between the Platonic Ideas and the Aristotelian substances put the discussion about universals into a particular framework. As such, it affected and indeed, shaped how they approached individuals. Universals enjoyed a special mode of existence – existing only in the mind, as being abstracted from sensible things: they represented the natures/forms existing in the sensible particulars. This framework gave a unique status to universals that paved the way to the elaboration of universality.

On the other hand, among the many consequences of this system, people adhering to it implicitly ascribed themselves to a derivative explanation of individuation – even if it was anachronistic to put it this way.

As Gerson Lloyd has pointed out, the theory of the second imposition may be traced back to Porphyry's teaching: "human" is predicated of Socrates, "species' is predicated of human, then, species should be predicated of Socrates, which is plainly false. Porphyry replies that it is true that human is predicated of Socrates as of a subject, but species is predicated of human as of a predicate. Thus it is said of the term (*κατα τοὔνομα*); it does not signify its substance in the what is it?, rather, it must be distinguished from individuals, but it is among the predicates that are said in common: whereas Socrates is said individually, species is said according to commonality, because it is said in common of many things.[56] Thus, species may be said only accidentally of the subject human, because it does not tell us anything about the human substance; it does not signify any of its substantial parts. Instead, it tells us something about the term "human" that it may be predicated of many in the "what is it."

The idea that universality is an accident appears as early as Alexander of Aphrodisias.[57] This solution, roughly speaking, became integrated into the Neoplatonic commentary tradition. One may find it in Dexippus, Ammonius, [58] or in Elias. Dexippus follows Porphyry in that he divides the predicates: some predicates refer to the substance essentially, those which complete the

[56] Lloyd, 1998, 43; Porphyrius, *in Cat.*, 80, 32–81, 22.
[57] Alexander, *Scripta Minora*, (Xia), 21, 21–24. For the Arabic translation see Ruland, 1979.
[58] Schmidt, 1966, 280-281; Ammonius, *in Cat.*, 31, 10–12.

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substance *(συμπληρωτικὸν ἦν τῆς οὐσίας*), and some others refer to the common relations of the term (*ἐνδεικτικὸν τῆς τοῦ ὀνόματος κατὰ κοινὴν σχέσιν θέσεως*).[59] Genus, species and the like fall into the latter category.[60]

Elias calls the *post multitudinem* universals relational (*σχετικὸν*), as opposed to the Porphyrian allocated one (*ἐγκατατεταγμένον*), which signify the relations of the universal to the particulars. In other words, it reflects similarity (genus, species), or disparity (difference). [61]

Universals, like human or animal, if predicated of particulars, indicate a common property, shared by many; and in this case, a substantial property of the subject. Articulated in this way, the statements "Socrates is human," and "Plato is human" mean that humanity, as conceived in the mind, has a relation to these individuals because they are indeed humans, which is the allocated mode of the existence of their nature. What Elias stresses is that the *quinque voces* in relation to particulars, represent what is similar (being animal and human) or what is different between them (being rational, being neighing).

Porphyry's *Eisagoge* and its tradition shows a significant step forward compared to Aristotle. As we saw above, the Stagirite had quite a negative way of describing particulars, as opposed to universals: individuals and those one in number are not in a subject and they are not even said of a subject.[62] As we underlined above, for Aristotle, such a predication may be only conceived in an accidental sense. Porphyry, on the other hand, allows individual predicates:

> For of predicates, some are said of only one item—namely, individuals (for example, Socrates and "this' and "that"), and some of several items—namely, genera and species and differences and properties and accidents (those which hold commonly not properly of something).[63]

As opposed to the *quinque voces*, proper names and indexicals may be said of only one item. In like manner, as Porphyry defines the genus, species, he goes on to describe individuals as well. In other words, he tries to define in what sense proper names and indexicals may be called individuals:

> Socrates is said to be an individual, and so are *this* white thing, and *this* person approaching, and the son of Sophroniscus (should Socrates be his only son). Such items are called individuals because each is constituted of proper features the assemblage of which will never be found the same in anything else—the proper features

[59] Dexippus, *In Cat.*, 26, 29–30.
[60] Porphyrius, *Isagoge*, 5, 6–11: the reading that genus and species reflect relations of terms (signifying notions), already appears in the *Tabula Prophyriana*.
[61] Elias, *In Isag*., 177, 9–11. In this sense, universals may be predicated in the how is it, not in the what is it. This latter approach applies to the allocated natures. Thus, these approaches reflect two considerations.
[62] Aristotle, *Cat*., 1b 2–7.
[63] Poprhyrius, *Isagoge*, 2, 18–20. Tr. by Barnes, 2003, 4.

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> of Socrates will never be found in any other of the particulars. On the other hand, the proper features of man (I mean, of the common man) will be found the same in several items—or rather, in all particular men in so far as they are men.[64]

This passage had a long-lasting influence on later discussions on individuals, up to the Middle-Ages. However, it raises as many questions as it answers. The main problem is that it is not entirely clear, whether it implies a logical or a metaphysical approach to individuals. Porphyry makes use of the verb *συνέστηκεν* (it was constituted) which may equally imply an ontological structure. However, in this sense individuals would be constituted by proper features, that is, accidents, which is not a tenable position in an Aristotelian framework: in this case, a primary substance, like Socrates would depend on accidental features.

Modern scholars are divided in offering a solution: Jonathan Barnes leans to the interpretation that this passage is about the term individual: that it is not Socrates as a concrete thing, but the predicate of Socrates is at stake here.[65] However, the wording equally may be taken as referring to the object Socrates, if we look at the second phrase saying that each is constituted (*συνέστηκεν*).'

Thus, others offered a twofold approach, which includes ontological reading as well. According to Riccardo Chiaradonna, since it is evident throughout the Eisagoge that Porphyry is faithful to the essential-accidental dichotomy, that is, he accepts that it is the species that essentially defines a substance, and accidents are only contingent features in it, anachronistically speaking, it cannot be maintained that Porphyry would be a bundle-theorist in this sense. Thus, the assemblage of properties defines the substance insofar as it is this substance, not insofar as it is a substance. [66] A. C. Lloyd offers a similar solution: the bundle of properties constitutes the individual qua individual, not qua substance. In other words, accidents have no role in Socrates' being a substance "human," because, taken by its definition, it is due to animality and rationality, but it indeed contributes to Socrates' being Socrates.[67] Julie Brumberg-Chaumont follows this line of argument: she adds that these properties are accidental to the substance, but they are not so for the individual: as features in the category of property, they are necessary, convertible, but not defining elements, without which the subject cannot exist. [68]

[64] Poprhyrius, *Isagoge*, 7, 19, 27. Tr. by Barnes, 2003, 8.
[65] Barnes, 2003, 150–151.
[66] Chiaradonna, 2000, 330–331.
[67] Lloyd, 1998, 46.
[68] Brumberg-Chaumont, 2014, 77.

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Be that as it may, there is an extremely interesting passage from David, the Late-antique Alexandrian commentator that gives us an insight into later discussions on the topic.

> The Peripatetics attack Porphyry, saying that he is mistaken in two ways while insisting that the individual is constituted by accidents (*ἐκ συμβεβηκότων συμπληροῦται*). First, Aristotle, in the Categories calls individuals the most eminent, noblest, and "most whole" substances. If Porphyry says that individuals are constituted by accidents, he falls into a great error, because substantial [things] are constituted by substantial [elements], not by accidentals. In contrast, the self-subsistents constitute those that are not self-subsistent. However, according to Porphyry, not-self-subsistents constitute self-subsistents, I mean, accidents constitute the substance.
>
> Second, accidents as parts constitute Socrates insofar as Socrates is a whole, and accidents are the parts; if the parts are taken off, the whole does not subsist. We find it so that accidents come and go without the destruction of the subject; because if the accidents are taken off, the whole is not taken off, I mean, Socrates. For this, the Platonists defend themselves, saying that he does not say that it is constituted by the accidents, but it is recognizable [by the accidents]. For this, the Peripatetics say that he does not say "recognized" but "constituted" because it signifies the subject. For this, the Platonists say that if he said "constituted," it would not be wrong, because he does not say that properties are accidents, but [they are] the peculiarity of the mixture (*ἰδιοτροπία τῆς κράσεως*). The peculiarity of the mixture is the substance of each, like the heat and cold. Against this, the Peripatetics argue well that these are accidents: if Socrates were hotter than Plato, he would be no different from him by this, no matter whether it comes to be or ceases away.
>
> How do you defend yourselves, o Peripatetics? They say that it is not impossible for the accidents to constitute the substance, because for something they may be accidents, and for something else substances. Because the heat in the fire is said to be accident and substance. (For the body of the fire it is said to be an accident, and for the fire substance, because the substance of fire is heat.) As we say, the cold in the water is accident and substance: it is an accident for the body of water, and substance for the water. In a like manner, Socrates' baldness is an accident and substance. It is an accident for Socrates, insofar as human, and it is substance, insofar as it constitutes Socrates. Baldness is his substance, and it is an accident [at the same time], because it may be generated in others as well. It is no wonder if it is said to be a substance, because every accident strives to participate in the substance, not to have no share in the better substance. [69]

As this passage suggests, some commentators tended to understand the Porphyrian description as implying an ontological structure. The Peripatetic critics insist that Porphyry erred in two ways: it cannot be maintained on Aristotelian grounds that accidents would complete a substance. Second, the problem may be reformulated in mereological terms that parts of a substance must be substances, not accidents.[70] If, Socrates is a substance, and the accidents, like baldness and the protruded-belly, are parts of the substance, the removal of them would entail the removal of the whole, Socrates, which is not the case.

[69] David, *In Isag*., 168, 19–169, 17.
[70] Benevich, 2017, 240–246.

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To resolve this problem, the so-called Platonists suggest a solution which is practically a change of perspective: the theory of proper characteristics is not meant to explain the ontological structure of an individual, but it works on the epistemic level. In this sense, accidents serve only to identify individuals. The text uses the expression *γινώσκεσθαι ἀπὸ τῶν συμβεβηκότων* suggesting that accidents are meant to set one individual apart from another so that they be recognizable – following the Porphyrian dictum that the assemblage of proper characteristics cannot be the same in anything else. Thus, this epistemic approach implies that the bundle of accidents distinguishes the notion of Socrates from the notion of someone else.

However, the argument does not stop here. The Platonists offer another solution. Since Porphyry does not equate properties (*ἰδιοτήτες*) with accidents, they take it as meaning the peculiarity of the mixture (*ἰδιοτροπία*), which is, the substance of each item, like the hot or cold. In other words, the mixture of each individual, actually, its proximate matter being constituted of the four qualities, like hot–cold–wet–dry, is peculiar to each one of them.

This tenet stands similarly on shaky grounds, because, these elements that count for the peculiarity are also accidents. It is about what Porphyry's famous solution offers that a thing may be substance for something, and accident in something else. However, the simile seems not entirely suitable: as usual, they bring up simple substances, like fire, or water. In their explanation, heat is not only an accident in the body of fire but constitutes the substance of fire as well. Since its removal would entail the removal of the fire itself – implying that it is an essential element, insofar as there is no fire without heat whatsoever: as soon as heat left the fire, the fire ceases to be as well.[71] However, as David reports it, baldness does not seem to play this role for Socrates, because perhaps, Socrates was not always bald. It is a pure accidental feature.

At the same time, the solution he reports runs parallel with contemporary ones: they try to distinguish between the substance of Socrates, insofar as Socrates is human, and Socrates, insofar as Socrates is individual. For the human Socrates, baldness is accidental since baldness may come and go without exercising any effect on humanity. For Socrates, it is a substance, because it constitutes Socrates, taken as this particular individual.

This point seems to be a plausible solution for those thinkers who accept Porphyry's double theory that a thing may be accident and substance at the same time but raises many questions.

[71] David, *in Isag*., 12, 29–31. (The essential in David's interpretation).

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First, if baldness is substantial Socrates, then the hairy Socrates would be another individual, different in number, which is not the case.

Second, following this train of thought, if all the accidents that may be predicated of Socrates are substantial, how could one deal with the fact that many of these accidents easily come and go? In other words, the individual is constantly in flux.[72]

This theory does not have an answer to these objections. However, our goal was to point out that people in the Late-antiquity were well aware of the difficulty that Porphyry's theory raises.

Before we turn to the different commentaries that touched upon this passage, we shall take a short look on another aspect of this problem, namely on what is Porphyry's theory on individuals? As we saw above shortly, individuals have no definition in Aristotle's system.

David is well aware of this tenet: he thinks that Porphyry indeed defines individuals (*ὁρίζεται τοίνυν τὰ ἄτομα ὅυτως*),[73] but at the same time he makes clear that what he defines is not an individual like Socrates, but the "general individual" (*τὸ ἁπλῶς ἄτομον*)[74] that applies to all the individuals.

As we saw above, the assemblage of proper characteristics can hardly be taken as the definition of Socrates. From the other way around, individuals may only be grasped by description, as it became the customary teaching among the commentators.

2.2.2 Description[75]

As most of the Neoplatonic commentators, Elias admits that description does not signify the nature, but only what comes upon it.[76] Thus, the description is taken from the accidents that may be separated from the subject without its destruction: like Socrates may exist (*ὑποστῆναι*) apart from being Athenian, bald, having a protruded belly, snub-nosed and black.[77] It means that all the attributes are contingent for Socrates, even the inseparable ones, like Athenian or the son of Sophroniscos.[78]

It was a customary commonplace among the commentators to call the description a sketch, or a colorless draft, as opposed to the definition, which represents the whole picture in its

[72] Elias, *in Cat.* 177, 30–31.
[73] David *in Isag*., 167, 22.
[74] David, *in Isag*., 167, 25–26.
[75] It was Michael Chase who took into account the role of description. Chase, 2011.
[76] Elias, *in Isag*., 4, 13–14; 4, 24–25.
[77] Elias, *in Isag*., 4, 21–23; David, *in Isag*., 12, 20–26; 13, 31–32: For David, description is taken from essential and accidental elements as well, being a „mixed definition."
[78] Elias, *in Isag*., 80, 15–16.

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entirety.[79] Thus, it is clear that the description cannot signify the essence of Socrates. As Ammonius puts it,

> *the description signifies the substance by the bunch of accidents, to which [the substance] underlies; it brings us to the notion of the substance, to which the accidents adhere.*[80]

In Ammonius' words, the description only reminds of the substance. In other words, it helps to identify the given particular substance, even if it does not signify its particular nature. Simplicius instead, highlights that the description gives the proper character of the substance.[81]

This identifying role turns up also in Elias' account: not only descriptions but definitions have an identifying role, insofar as their parts, the terms they consist of, excludes their opposites. Thus, if I say that Socrates is Athenian, it excludes the strangers, the son of Sophroniscus excludes the other citizens, the philosopher excludes the pupils, and so on.[82] In other words, the enumerated elements narrow the scope of description, until it becomes narrow enough to single out its object. That is to say, commentators, like Ammonius and Elias, tacitly attribute to description an identifying role, rather than a defining role.

2.2.3 "Bundle of properties"

Anachronistically speaking, the Porphyrian "bundle theory" is not only problematic in its intention, whether it may be understood in an ontological or epistemic sense, but the sentence itself is a bit ambiguous as well. It states that the bundle of proper characteristics may never be the same in anything else. Modern scholars have already observed the difficulty that will be explicitly reformulated by Avicenna as well: what is the criterion that the bundle of characteristics cannot be shared? In other words, what is the reason why an individual is unshareable, in such a way that it is not incidentally so?[83]

In the secondary literature, Riccardo Chiaradonna also highlighted that two bundles might be identical theoretically. If we explain the difference of the two bundles by their inherence in their substances respectively, we are at the opposite side, because the bundle of characteristics is meant to individuate the individual, of which they consist. Michael Chase insists that to identify an individual, one does not need to enumerate all the properties, because a certain percentage of it would do as well.[84] Since description has an epistemic role too, according to the

[79] Elias, *in Isag*., 4, 25–27; Ammonius, *in Isag*., 55, 2–7.
[80] Ammonius, *in Isag*., 56, 15–17.
[81] Simplicius, *in Cat*., 29, 18–19. Quoted by Chase, 2011, 20.
[82] Elias, *in Isag*., 22–24. The whole discussion runs in the context of the description of genus in the *Eisagoge*.
[83] Sorabji, 2005, 166; Chiaradonna, 2000, 311; Chase, 2011, 30–31.
[84] Chase, 2011, 30.

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commentators, it is the necessary precondition of definition in the imagination as a stage in the process of abstraction. If we start from sense perception and the data gathered in our memory, some characteristics indeed seem sufficient to identify an individual.

Now, let us see what the commentators have to say about the question: Ammonius follows Porphyry, not questioning the unshareability of the bundle reading.[85] He adds the category of time to the typical characteristics, which appear in the commentator tradition, too: Socrates is bald, philosopher, snub-nosed, has a protruded belly, and he is generated in that time – this collection of characteristics falls only upon him.[86]

However, it was Elias, the successor of Olympiodorus in Alexandria, who challenged this view:

> As for the proper characteristics of Socrates, like the Athenian, the son of Sophroniscus, the philosopher, the protruded-belly, the snub-nosed and bald, they cannot be together in anything else. However, if you say that they can be in another as well, why would that be impossible? Perhaps they will not stand at the same place; because one among the accidents cannot be in Socrates and another so that two would stand at the same place at the same time, so as not to penetrate one body the other.[87]

Elias, examining the "bundle-view," draws attention to two properties, time and place that must be unique for an individual. The author himself refers to the theory about the impossibility of interpenetration that two bodies cannot occupy the same place at the same time. Besides that it seems an *a priori* evidence, it is an Aristotelian doctrine, elaborated upon later by Themistius, who emphasized the dimensions and extension as its criterion.

David rejects Elias' position. His critic sounds as follows:

> Some say that form among the accidents the place completes (συμπληροῖ) most the individual. Since all the others are common, the baldness, the well-grown, and sound-minded, only the place is peculiar to the individual; since two cannot stand at the same place, because a body would interpenetrate the other body; thus, the place completes Socrates. These people say it wrong: which place do they mean, the universal or the particular? If the universal, their statement seems false (because Socrates does not differ from Alkibiades, due to his being in place; since the universal place is common). If they mean the particular, their statement similarly will be false. Because the place in the Lyceum is not of Socrates only, because Plato may stand at that place since the place in the theater always belongs to those who arrive there earlier. Thus, this [place] is not proper for Socrates. Thus, the place does not complete Socrates more than the other accidents.[88]

[85] Ammonius, *in Isag*., 90, 2–3.
[86] Ammonius, *in Isag*., 90, 6–23.
[87] Elias, *in Isag*., 76, 4–11.
[88] David, *in Isag*., 168, 1–15.

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David refutes Elias position, but in his reasoning, he relies on an argument that Olympiodorus seems to take from Themistius: The former, in his commentary on the Categories, in the context of "to be in the subject" talks about the different readings of "to be in something." Among those, we find the "to be in place," and its different senses. Themistius, via Olympiodorus, refutes that Socrates would be in place as in an accident in a similar way: both the universal and particular place would not fit into this theory.[89] The aporia, whether Socrates is an accident in place since he is in place without being its part, may be traced back to as early as Porphyry's time.[90]

However, David uses a *diaireisis* that if it is place, it is either universal or particular, and both options lead to impossible consequences. However, he does not take into account the reference to time, as Elias did. Thus, his target is not a spatio-temporal, but only a spatial reading. Second, his wording implies that he takes his adversaries saying that place would complete (*συμπληροῖ*) Socrates, implying that place would be an essential part of him (*συμπληρωτικὸν*).[91] This is not what Elias has said.

That the universal place is not essential for Socrates, is obvious. David highlights that even the particular place would not play this role, because he understands it as a particular place, delimited by the material world, not the Aristotelian, well-known formula, that place is the surrounding surface of the body. David simply misses mentioning the temporal relation, too, which makes this position highly offendable.

Thus, David's objections do not really fit Elias' position. Elsewhere, Elias seems to faithful to the Aristotelian tradition regarding substantial and accidental elements. What is more, what we read in the *Commentary on the Categories* attributed to him, is very telling: he comments upon the very same passage:

> For this, we say: how do you understand place? If the individual [place], Socrates may be separated from it, if the universal, it is not entirely in him. If they say retreating that we say neither the individually defined, nor the universally [taken place], but the particular, indefinite place, Socrates is wholly in a certain place, we say that the last difference of the description does not fit that he cannot subsist without it [the place]. Because Socrates, being a substance, does not owe its existence in place to an accident, but the place has its existence in the substance.[92]

[89] Olympiodorus, *in Cat*., 48, 13–19.
[90] Sorabji, 2012, 109–110.
[91] Benevich, 2017, 244.
[92] Elias, *in Cat*., 8–13.

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In short, Elias simply denies that place would be essential for Socrates; however, this discussion is in a different context: whether Socrates is an accident. Since to be an accident means that it cannot subsist apart from the substance, and it is not part of it; the first statement does not stand on firm grounds. If Socrates would be an accident, he could not exist apart from place; although it happens to be so in the material world, place has not an explanatory role in its particular existence, in his being Socrates: Socrates in place is not like baldness in Socrates. It is the other way around.

In other words, if this commentary is written by Elias, we may say that he did not think that place and time were essential for Socrates in the sense that they would explain his being Socrates. The only possibility left is to take Elias as implying that the "bundle" meant to differentiate Socrates from other individuals; as such, the spatio-temporal reading seems to fulfill this goal.

2.3 The metaphysical approach

In the metaphysical context, our aim is but to briefly summarize the set of problems, in which the problem of individuation came to the fore. We will turn our attention primarily to those texts that may have arrived some way into the Arabic-Islamic cultural milieu. In other words, we will highlight "the trends" that may have influenced the Eastern philosophers. We cannot dwell on the philosophical implications of these positions. Instead, we restrict ourselves to a mere enumeration of readings that – being part of the philosophical tradition – may have reached the Arabic speaking world.

Since Arabic philosophy is the heir of the Late-antique commentary tradition, before we turn to the commentators, we shall start with Aristotle. There is the well-known dichotomy within the Aristotelian substance theory, insofar as his treatment of substance in the *Categories* differs from the one elaborated in the middle books of the *Metaphysics*. In the former, he approached substances via predication, and the different properties of predicates, as we saw above. In contrast, in the *Metaphysics,* he turns to substances in a different context: what is a substance, is it matter, form, or the compound of matter and form.

Thus, the hylomorphic reading is a result of a different approach. To put it rather simply, Aristotle was always credited with the view that matter is the principle of individuation.

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Numerous contemporary scholars accepted this reading, [93] but others, like Charlton, highlighted the role form plays in individuation. [94]

Our main contention is that what we might say about individuation, depends mainly on the context, or more precisely, on the questions in which it occurred. Thus, we shall follow the traditional interpretation that for Aristotle matter is the principle of individuation; but we will focus on the different accounts on the intension of the term individuation: the distinction between individuals, or as the cause of multiplicity, or the principle of individuation that explains the individuality of an individual.

2.3.1 Material reading of individuation

In Aristotle's *Metaphysics,* many passages suggest that matter is the principle of individuation.[95] This approach analyses individuals in a hylomorphic way, that is, individuality may be derived from one of the ontological principles, form or matter. Although the technical term „principle of individuation" may hardly be found in the Late Antiquity, the most famous passages that underline the role of matter in individuation, are the following:

1. 1016 b 32–3 (Averroes, 544): things are one in number whose matter is one, in species whose form is one
2. 1035 b 27–31 (Averroes, 904) "man" and "horse" and what applies to individuals in this way, but universally, are not substance but a composite of this formula and this matter was taken universally; an individual is composed of the last matter, Socrates for example, and similarly in other cases.
3. 1074 a 33–35 (Averroes, 1283) Those things which are many in number have matter (for one and the same formula is of many, for example, "man," whereas Socrates is one)
4. 1034 a 3–5 (Averroes, 866) When the whole has been created, such a form in this flesh and these bones, this is Callias or Socrates; and they are different on account of their matter (for it is different), but the same in species (for the species is indivisible).

From these passages that may be considered as *loci classici* for individuation, two main approaches emerge: matter in (4) as the principle of distinction, and as in (1) and (3), as the principle of numerical unity, or multiplicity. (2) Represents the traditional interpretation of

[93] Lloyd, 1970, 519–529.
[94] Charlton, 1972, 239–249. Regis, on the other hand insists that it is neither form, nor matter that explains individuality. In his reading the individual is individual in itself in Aristotle, suggesting a primitive individuation. Regis, 1976, 158.
[95] For the passages see Regis, 1976, 158.

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individuation because it explains how Socrates is composed – i.e., from the proximate matter or this matter – which implies a superadded element to matter. Passage (4) talks about the element on account of which Callias differs from Socrates, that is, matter means the principle of distinction; form or species, (*εἶδος*) is the same. Thus, the difference may be explained by something else, namely, matter. This latter reading, as the matter is the principle of multiplicity takes another intension of individuality, namely numerical unity, based on the assumption that the individual is one in number.

Matter as the principle of distinction

Although it is a bit anachronistic to draw distinctions between the different intentions of individuation, the first reading is that matter counts for the difference between individuals. Individual humans, like Callias and Socrates, are identical insofar as they are humans, that is, in species, but insofar as they are taken as individuals, they are different. This is what Alexander reiterates in his commentary on the Metaphysics on Z 8, echoing passage (1), taken from book Delta that those are others in number, whose matter is other.[96]

A similar reading appears in his commentary on the Book Lambda, corresponding to our quotation (3), in the context of the oneness of the cosmos, where Aristotle implicitly asserts that matter is the principle of multiplicity (*ἀλλ᾽ ὅσα ἀριθμῷ πολλά, ὕλην ἔχει*).[97] Alexander Aphrodiseus, commenting on this passage, insists that the difference (*διαφορὰ*) between individuals is due to matter:

> Those that are identical in species, but different in number, have this due to matter; because the individual humans have the difference from each other due to matter, but the species, in virtue of which they are humans or horses, have no difference. [98]

This sentence articulates that well-known Aristotelian tenet, the individuals beneath *the ultima species* have no difference by a *differentia specifica*, but their difference to each other is due to accidents – the principle of which is matter. However, in this context too, the matter is the principle of difference, that is, it does not explain, why Socrates is Socrates, or why Socrates stays the same through a certain period of time, but it means the reason in virtue of which Socrates differs from Kallias.

[96] Alexander*, in Met*., 497, 37–40.
[97] Aristotle, *Met* (L 8), 1074, 33–34.
[98] Alexander, *in Met*.,709, 12–15.

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This idea appears also in the Arabic Alexander, namely in the *Mabādi' al-kull*, where the same argument for the unity of the cosmos occurs. He contends that those that agree in species can only acquire difference (*khilāf*) through matter.[99]

In a similar vein, in his treatise *Fī al-'Ināya*, (On Providence) preserved only in Arabic, he insists that differences (*fuṣūl*) between individuals are due to the accidents of the underlying matter.[100] Thus, this reading of matter in individuation appears explicitly in the Arabic Alexander as well.

Matter as the principle of multiplicity

The idea that matter is the principle of multiplicity may be read out from the Metaphysics Delta 6; insofar as those things are numerically one whose matter is one. Socrates and Callias are. Thus, things numerically one, having matter. However, it would imply that all numerically one existent would be material; which would lead to absurd consequences. This is what Alexander notes in his commentary, saying that Aristotle must have understood matter here in such a way that it means the more general substrate, because even the line and the point are numerically one, being devoid of matter.[101]

On the other hand, Themistius, in his commentary on the *Metaphysics Lambda*, available only in Arabic and Hebrew, reads out from Aristotle that matter is the principle of multiplicity:

> The cause of the multiplicity of things whose form is one and are many in number is the matter and the element.[102] [The Hebrew version adds:] Indeed, all the individuals have one unique definition, and the difference between Socrates and Plato comes from matter.[103]

Thus, Themistius explicitly infers from Aristotle's implicit hint that matter is the cause of multiplicity in the well-known argument that the first mover one, since it has no matter, and it is not like material individuals falling under the same species: they are one in form but are many in number, and their manifoldness is due to matter. Second, Themistius, as it is evident from the longer, Hebrew version of his commentary, seems to allude to the other aspect of the matter, namely, as the principle of distinction between individuals. It seems that he did not distinguish between the two roles matter would play, but it easily could be that he took them to be one and the same question.

[99] Arisṭū, 26; Genequand, 2001, 88–89 (Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos).
[100] Alexander, *Fī 'ināya,* (Thillet), 21, 10–13; (Ruland), 89, 13–94, 4.
[101] Alexander, *in Met*., 369, 5–9. Tr. by Dooley, 2014, 41.
[102] Arisṭū, 19.
[103] Themistius, *Paraphrase*, 104.

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As in the context of the oneness of the cosmos, matter as the principle of multiplicity appears in case of the unique instantiations. As Peter Adamson pointed out, Plotinus, Porphyry, and Simplicius all emphasized the role of matter in the unique instantiations, like the Sun and the Moon: although they have one formula, definition, their being one is due to several external reasons, which go back to matter.[104]

Matter in the threefold division

As we saw above, the threefold distinction between forms appears already in the treatises of the Late-antique commentators, being a part of a larger project to harmonize the philosophy of Aristotle and Plato.

Earlier, in Alexander's theory of *κοινόν* – the common element – matter seems to play again a role to differentiate. In one of his later discussions, in the *To which Definitions Refer* (*Τίνων εἰσὶν οἱ ὁρισμοί*), he enumerates several arguments that individuals have no definition: instead, definitions refer to the common element in individuals. Alexander offers a twofold approach, that is to take the "rational, mortal animal" along with the material conditions and differences that are others in other individuals and that makes/actualizes Socrates and Callias. Alternatively, one might consider it without these conditions, not that it is not in the individual humans, but that it is the nature that may be the same in all of them, in other words, that happen to be common for them. In this sense, it is common, and this is to which definitions refer.[105] This text has received considerable scholarly attention,[106] however, what concerns us here is that here Alexander explicitly says that the quiddity, the rational mortal animal taken with the material states and differences is that produces the individual Socrates (*τὸ γὰρ ζῷον λογικὸν θνητόν, εἰ μὲν λαμβάνοιτο μετὰ τῶν ὑλικῶν περιστάσεών τε καὶ διαφορῶν (...) ποιεῖ τὸν Σωκράτη καὶ τὸν Καλλίαν*). It is not entirely clear from this passage, whether he places it on the epistemic, or ontological level; that is, whether material conditions are necessary for an individual to be distinguished from others, or, whether material conditions are necessary for a form to be an individual form?

In other words, as Sharples has pointed out, for Alexander, Socrates' form holds the features that Socrates shares with men in general, and it is matter, and material accidents that bear Socrates' peculiarities.[107] In this approach, where commentators talk in terms of similarity and

[104] Adamson, 2013, 340.
[105] Alexander, *Scripta minora*, 7, 32–8, 5.
[106] Sharples, 2005; Tweedale, 1984.
[107] Sharples, 1985, 124.

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peculiarity, the epistemic consideration seems to be prevailing: what is at stake here is how to set an individual apart from others, be it universal or another individual, rather than to explain what explains Socrates' being Socrates.

Following this tradition, later Neoplatonic commentators accepted a threefold division of common elements. As it seems, this threefold division offers not only an epistemological but an ontological framework too. Forms are to be divided into those before multiplicity, in multiplicity, and after multiplicity. The first category refers to the eternal forms, corresponding to the Platonic Ideas, thought by the Demiurge who creates them in the material particulars.[108] The commentators likely refer to the simile of the signet ring and its seal in the wax: the shape of the ring is the form "before multiplicity", the shape of the seal in the wax corresponds to the "in multiplicity", and the out notion of it in the mind is the "after multiplicity" form.

According to this reading, forms in multiplicity, so to say the enmattered forms are inseparable from matter, which suggests that they are individuated by matter, which plays the individuating role because these forms are being inseparable from the matter.[109] Since we know of these tenets in the logical commentaries, we cannot expect a fully elaborated theory. As Ammonius puts it, the Demiurge creates the enmattered ones by looking at the "before multiplicity forms' as at archetypes.[110]

That is to say, we have very scarce information regarding the becoming of individuals, but in a passage (Ps.)-Elias makes a hint of it, although in a very curious fashion. It serves only as a simile to highlight that something can be both more universal than its subject and proper to it, in two different considerations:

> Because we see that the matter lacking form precedes the substance, first it becomes enformed somehow, being quantified taking on the dimensions. Then it is created, then it makes the ensouled body, after that the animal; then, after all this then human and finally Socrates, and then it becomes finished. All those that are before Socrates by the *differentiae specificae* that differentiate it from others, whereas Socrates differs from other people by a proper peculiarity, in which the particular form of certain human flows in, not accepting any other difference by nature anymore, thus, it keeps to be indivisible.[111]

This passage is very interesting for several reasons. First, as far as matter is concerned, it is first endowed with dimensions and becomes quantified to be adapted to accept a certain form. The author follows the *Tabula Poprhyriana* from above as if it meant an ontological and temporal sequence. To be a human, first, the matter must be quantified by the dimensions, then, receiving

[108] Elias, *in Isag.*, 24–29; Ammonius, *in Isag.,*41, 20–41; Simplicius *in Cat.,* 82, 35–83, 16.
[109] Elias, *in Isag.,* 48, 25–28.
[110] Ammonius, *in Isag*., 41, 20–23; 42, 16–19;
[111] Elias, *in Cat*., 154, 33–155, 4.

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the specific differences one after the other, it becomes a body, then, an animal, and human. In other words, it seems to imply that it is a temporal sequence: notice the usage of *εἶτα* throughout the passage.

The author notes that it is the specific differences that set it apart from all the other things, in a very Porphyrian tone. On the other hand, individuals falling under the same species, differ from each other in virtue of something else, a peculiar quality (*τινὶ ἰδιοτροπίᾳ*). This term equally appears in David's commentary on the Eisagoge, as we saw above, implying the peculiarity of the mixture. Here, it plays the same role. On the other hand, this peculiar quality of matter seems to be the receptacle that receives the form, which flows – emanates? – in it from above, by the creative act of the Demiurge.

This passage seems to complete David's Commentary on the Eisagoge since it provides a sort of an ontological explanation to what some of the commentators may have meant by the peculiar quality. It can be understood as the mixture that becomes apt to receive a certain form. However, this reading raises more questions than answers, it seems to be the archetype of what we find in the Arabic, Peripatetic tradition.

Now, what is exactly this peculiarity of the mixture? Our text is somewhat obscure: it does not explain whether the differences above represent actual stages in the process of generation. The first case would lead to absurd consequences, because the animal, without any further characteristic, would be an actual existent, which is hardly possible. Instead, this picture seems to represent an *a posteriori* analysis that shows how we get from the most general (prime matter) to the specific (peculiarity that serves as the receptacle for a form).

This theory recalls the Platonic receptacle that offers several possibilities to be interpreted; it is not entirely clear whether it is a place, extension, or matter.[112] Plotinus also highlights that differences between individuals come from matter, like snub-nosedness. Apart from matter place and *λόγος* differentiates them. [113] However, this interpretation belongs to our previous chapter that matter is the principle of distinction.

To sum up: matter as the principle of individuation is the traditional interpretation of Aristotle. Instead of engaging in the philosophical problems it entails, we saw above that already the Late-Antique thinkers differentiated the problem. Matter plays a role in distinction, sometimes it is

[112] Plato, *Tim*. 48e4.
[112] Silverman, 1992, 87; Id. 2002, 219.
[113] Plotinus, *Ennead* V.9, 12. 4–11. In case of Plotinus and individuation see Aubry, 2008, 271–289; Nikulin, 2005, 275–305; Lloyd, 1955–6, 62.

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taken as the principle of multiplicity, and it equally appears in the threefold division of common things, as the constitutive element of material individuals. This is a rather simple sketch, which aims to show that the Neoplatonic commentary tradition had already contained elements that reappeared or were reshaped in the Arabic philosophical tradition. Now let us turn to the other candidate for individuating in the Aristotelian hylomorphic approach, the form.

2.3.2 Form as the principle of individuation

Several scholars endorsed the other reading of Aristotle that the principle of individuation is form, rather than matter.[114]

Scholars usually agree that Socrates' form is individualized and as such, is responsible for Socrates' being Socrates. Since in the hylomorphic context matter stands for potentiality, whereas form actualizes it, it seems to play a crucial role in the individual's being an actual, determined existent. This seems to be the common understanding of form in the Peripatetic tradition. In other words, so long as the form is there, it actualizes matter, and they both constitute the individual so that both form and matter are necessary conditions of the individual.

However, the composite expression *individualized form* suggests that it contains something else apart from being a form alone. The principle of its being individualized is the question itself. The usual answer is that a particular, designated form is individualized by matter (*a form in this flesh and these bones*),[115] which leads us back to the classical – material reading of individuation.

Aristotle usually writes in a tone suggesting that whereas forms are the same, matter, and material accidents differentiate between individuals. However, as we mentioned it above, this is about the distinction. What the material reading of individuation does not explain, is another aspect that is true of every individual: that it is a designated thing, which is the same until it is that designated thing. Since matter is a potentiality, every change that occurs to a certain sensible substance is due to the material potentiality. For example, Socrates's cells are getting wholly changed through a certain period of time: still, Socrates is the same. That is Socrates being the same cannot be explained by its changing material features.[116]

That is, the form may explain another aspect of individuals that matter cannot: what is the criterion of Socrates' being the same individual? This solution may be read out from the logical

[114] Charlton, 1976, 246–247.
[115] Aristotle, *Met*., 1034 a 3–5
[116] Although Charlton takes matter as the principle of identity in Aristotle, see Charlton, 1976, 248.

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commentaries, where the distinction is made between the essential and accidental features. Accidents and properties do not constitute the substance. Thus, the substance does not depend on them ontologically; and in consequence, their removal does not entail the end of the substance itself. The examples given by the commentators are often taken from individuals: Socrates would be still Socrates, even if he would not be Athenian, bald, and so on.[117]

In a logical setting, the question goes back to the distinction between essential and accidental features: usually the former meant those the removal of which entails the removal of the subject, whereas the latter is not. According to Porphyry, differences may be common, proper or most proper: into the common differences fall the separable accidents in virtue of which something differs from something else, or from itself: like Socrates differs from Plato by his accidental features, whereas he may differ from himself at different times: as a child he is different from himself as a man. The proper difference is due to inseparable accidents, like the scar, or snub-nosedness, which is peculiar to a certain individual. The most proper difference is caused by the *differentia specifica*, in virtue of which two things substantially differ from each other.[118] While the latter produces the "other," the former two produce the "otherwise," that is the accidental difference. As Ammonius puts it, these two are accidental and separable: even the proper difference – baldness for Socrates – is separable from him in the mind – because he may be conceived as having hair because this would not make him another, just otherwise.[119]

The essential–accidental dichotomy suggests that only essential features build up the substance. As we saw above in the chapter on logic, this seems to be in contradiction with Porphyry's "bundle-reading" according to which individuals consist of the bundle of proper characteristics.

This interpretation suggests that the form – human – counts for Socrates' being the same through a certain amount of time. Where, again Socrates, as a substance (a human being) will be the same so that it is not dependent on its accidents. These examples imply that humanity, which is signified by the essential features, constitutes the thing, and it is Socrates' form, this form in this matter that serves as the underlying substrate of its accidents – be it baldness, or quickly separable accidents, like sitting or standing.

As far as the question about identity is considered, we shall analyze the problem in the following way:

[117] Elias, *in Isag.,* 4, 21–25; Ammonius, *in Isag.,* 92, 17–18.
[118] Porphyrius, *Isagoge*, 8, 19.
[119] Ammonius*, in Isag.,* 94, 10–95, 5.

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1. The form of the individual is responsible for individual identity, while matter plays no role in it. To translate it into the epistemic level: in terms of predication, we mean that only essential features count, because their removal of the subject is impossible without the destruction of the subject.
2. Both form and matter are responsible for individual identity
    a. All the predicable features constitute the individual, following Porphyry's "bundle-theory."
    b. Form and some material features are responsible for individual identity; that is, there are at least some proper features that explain the identity of an individual.
3. Only matter is responsible for identity

The third point is easily refutable, since matter, and material conditions easily change, not to mention the process of growth. (1) seems to be endorsed by Aristotle, Alexander, and others, like Methodius, excluding the interruptions of matter.[120] (2a) represents a strict-ontological reading of the "bundle-theory" that may easily be excluded as being responsible for identity: it means that individuals are frozen: whenever an accident changes, the identity changes with it. (2b) Is a more complicated case because it somehow overlaps with (1), where we postulated the individual form, which has something superadded to form itself, something that the predicate "individual" covers. If it is the only relation to a certain piece of matter, then it is already a material accident, but the scholars above, to my best knowledge, never admitted it this way. However, this reading of the "individual form" may equally fall into this category. Otherwise, if form bears other individual features, which may be read out from Aristotle as well,[121] then, on the epistemic level, it can be represented as the essential features – human (rational mortal animal) plus some distinctive characteristics, whatever they may be. This reading would mean that Socrates has a describable set of features that "defines' his Socrateity. However, no one seems to have engaged in this sort of discussion, that is, to understand Socrates' Socrateity.[122] On the other hand, this reading would also freeze the individual; because in this sense, Socrates would be an unchangeable individual in his core, which entails a deterministic world-view that Socrates is essentially describable.

Nevertheless, in the Aristotelian tradition form may be taken as counting for the identity-criterion. This understanding is clearly attested in the growth argument that stirred debate across

[120] Sorabji, 2006, 66; 78.
[121] Sharples, 1985, 120.
[122] Not even Boethius, who indeed speaks about *Platonitas*. (Boethius, *in De Int*. 137.)

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the different philosophical schools, including the Stoics.[123] That is to say, what happens during growth, whether any change in the material constitution in the individual would entail a change in its very being so that the individual today would be numerically different from the individual yesterday. Several metaphysical puzzles occurred in Antiquity, like the one about Theseus' ship, which asks whether the Theseus' ship is still the same if all the planks were replaced by others.[124] For the Stoics, it was the *ἰδίως ποῖον*, the peculiar quality that served both as the principle of identity and uniqueness.[125] It was Eric Lewis who suggested that this corresponds to the soul, at least in living beings.[126]

As to the growing argument, in the traditional Aristotelian interpretation, it is the form that grows, and stays the same, whereas matter is the one that is changing.[127] Aristotle distinguishes between uniform and non-uniform parts, whereas the latter grows in virtue of the growth of the uniform parts, comparing form to vessel, and matter to water: the vessel stays the same during the process of evacuation and repletion, whereas water comes and goes.[128]

The question about permanence has stirred a long debate in the Antiquity, as it is attested in Alexander of Aphrodisias' extant writings, where he turns against the Stoics.[129] Although in the *Questio* I.5 Alexander of Aphrodisias seems to endorse Aristotle's view that only form persists,[130] as Inna Kupreeva has shown, the other – preserved mostly in Arabic – fragments, and quotations of Alexander seem to imply that some matter equally persists;[131] otherwise this thesis would endanger the immanence of form in matter. To put it simply, if the matter was substituted entirely at some point, a new form should have been generated for it. Similarly, Philoponus seems to hold that growth is by gradual replacement.[132]

Some of Alexander of Aphrodisias' thoughts have been preserved only in Arabic fragments. Namely, his commentary on the *De Generatione et Corruptione* I.5 may have been the source

[123] Sorabji, 2008, 83–85; Sedley, 1982; Lewis, 1995.
[124] Sedley, 1982, 258. Chrysippus is also addressed the growing argument and his answer lead to the Dion-Theon puzzle: if they are identical ecxept that Theon misses one leg; and if Dion's leg is amputated they will be identical, but no two things can share the same substrate, thus, Theon „shrinks' into Dion. On the different interpretations see Sorabji, 2008, 83–84; Sedley, 1982, 259. This latter has modern formulations like Tibbles the cat, see Burke, 1996.
[125] Sedley, 1982, 260–261.
[126] Lewis, 1995, 107–108.
[127] Aristote, *De la géneration et la corruption*, 321b26–28.
[128] Aristote, *De la géneration et la corruption*, 321b24–25. On the whole issue see Kupreeva, 2004, 313–314; Sorabji, 2005, 187–188.
[129] Kupreeva, 2004, 298–312.
[130] Alexander, *Questio*, 13, 9–10.
[131] Kupreeva, 2004, 317–319; Gannagé, 1998.
[132] Kupreeva, 2004, 321–322.

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of Philoponus' commentary on the *De Generatione et Corruptione* and Averroes' *Middle Commentary* on the same book.[133] Equally, Alexander's *Questio* I.5 has also been preserved in an Arabic paraphrase. This text indeed follows the Greek in that form resembles quality, while the matter is like the quantity that changes during the process of growth, while form – quality staying the same. Here, the Arabic text uses the term *thābit*, which runs parallel with the Greek μένει.[134]

The Arabic text ends with asserting that it is form that stays the same, whereas matter is subject to change.

This a clear indication that the notion that form is responsible for persistence, or identity has reached the Arabic speaking world, and accordingly, the issue will reappear in Avicenna and Averroes alike.

2.3.3 Individuals in the Neoplatonica Arabica

As it is well-known, the Arabic philosophical tradition is closely intertwined Neoplatonic elements. The two main Neoplatonic sources, the *Ūthulūjiyā Arisṭāṭālīs,* and the *Liber de Causis* are the most important representatives of this influence. To my best knowledge, these works do not address the question of individuation *expressis verbis*. Therefore we omit the investigation of their contents. Secondly, as we will see, Avicenna expresses his ideas mainly in an Aristotelian framework, following Aristotle's logical and metaphysical works.[135]

It is beyond doubt that the *Ūthulūjiyā* influenced Avicenna's teaching, [136] but it does not seem to shape his thoughts on individuation. The *Liber de Causis*, in turn, equally left its traces on the Avicennian corpus,[137] and among others, contains material that seems to foreshadow his famous tenet about God's knowledge of particulars on a universal way, which is a sub-question of individuation. [138] At the same time, the *Liber de Causis* offers some passages about unity (*waḥdāniyya*): the first existent is the Real One, whereas all the other existents acquire their

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[133] Kupreeva, 2004, 314.

[134] Ruland, 1981, 14. (Alexander, *Nushū*'):

وان الهيولى تشبه الكمية والصورة تشبه الكيفية وكمية الشيء تنتقل وتتبدل ولا تثبت على حالها الأول، وأما كيفية ⟨الشيء⟩ التى هى صورته، ⟨فهى⟩ ثابتة باقية على حالها الأول.

Alexander, *Questio* (I.5), 13, 19–21: καὶ τοῦ μὲν ποσοῦ ὡς ὕλης ὑποκειμένου, τοῦ δὲ εἴδους τὴν τοῦ ποιοῦ χώραν ἔχοντος, τὸ μὲν ποσὸν οὐ μένει ταὐτόν, τὸ δὲ ποιὸν τὸ ὡς εἶδος τοῦ αὐξομένου μένει. ἐπεὶ τοίνυν τὸ ποιόν, ὃ καὶ εἶδός ἐστι, μένει, τὸ δὲ ποσὸν οὐ μένει.

[135] Thus, we restrict ourselves to some preliminary remarks. A fuller analysis of this topic might be the object of further research.

[136] See Adamson, 2004; D'Ancona 2002.

[137] See Bertolacci, 2006, 458–460.

[138] See my forthcoming article: Lánczky, 2018.

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unity from It.[139] This idea prefigures al-Kindī's and Avicenna's solution to the accidental reading of unity.

2.4 Conclusion

In sum, we directed our focus to those texts in the Late-antique commentary tradition that may have served as the philosophical curriculum in the Arabic philosophy. In this regard, Aristotle seems much more important than Plato or Plotinus; because if we look at Avicenna's works, he relies much more on these texts than that of the Neoplatonists, even if the *Theology of Aristotle* and the *Liber de Causis* were not unknown to him. Note that his *opus magnum*, the *Kitāb al-Shifā'* starts with the *Organon* (Aristotle), and then Mathematical sciences (Euclid, Ptolemy), physics (Aristotle), and finally Metaphysics (Aristotle).

As we highlighted above in a rather introductory way, among the late-antique commentators, there were two main approaches to individuals, logical and metaphysical. In the first, Porphyry's *Eisagoge* and Aristotle's *Categories* and *On Interpretation* seem to be the main axes around which discussions on individuality were concentrated. As we saw, some of the commentators foreshadow solutions that will reappear later in the Arabic tradition.

The second axis is metaphysics, where individuation was not treated directly. However, the commentators, to put it rather simply, ascribed themselves to a material reading of individuation, where the matter is the principle of distinction between individuals, and in some places, is the cause of the multiplication of the species that require matter. In the hylomorphic approach, form counts for what we might nowadays call identity. This sharp picture may be read out from Aristotle, and this is what seems to be a conventional interpretation among the commentators.

[139] *Aflāṭūniyya*, 31-33; Thillet-Oudamiah, 2001–2002, 337.

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3 Avicenna

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Avicenna – his life and works

ʿAlī Ibn Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbdullah Ibn Sīnā, or in the Latinized form Avicenna, was born around 980 in Afshana, in modern-day Uzbekistan.[140] Based on his Autobiography, he is regarded as a kind of an autodidact philosopher, whose genius became apparent from a very young age.

During his lifetime, which was full of adventures, he met many scholars. He has a correspondence with al-Bīrūnī (d. 1048), the polymath of his time, who became his close associate. He also exchanged views with Abū al-Qāsim al-Kirmānī,[141] as was scornful against al-Miskawayhi (d. 1030) also.[142] Avicenna spent the second half of his life mainly in what corresponds nowadays to Central Iran, moving between Rayy, Hamadhān, and Iṣfahān. When engaged in the services of Majd al-Dawla in Rayy, around 1015, he may have met the Muʿtazilī theologians there, like Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025) and his circle, including Abū Rāshid al-Nīsābūrī.[143] Needless to say, he was well acquainted with the Muʿtazilī doctrine in general, as we shall see later.

3.1.2 Works and spurious works in Avicenna

As far as the sources are concerned, we will rely on Avicenna's authentic works, including the *al-Mabda' wa-l-Maʿād, Kitāb al-Najāt, Kitāb al-Shifā', Kitāb al-Hidāya, al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, and the *Dānishnāma-yi ʿAlā'ī*. However, concerning individuation, we will draw on the later, spurious works, like the *Kitāb al-Taʿlīqāt* and the *Kitāb al-Mubāḥathāt*.

The *Kitāb al-Taʿlīqāt* is quite a controversial treatise when it comes to its authorship.[144] The manuscript tradition attributes it to Avicenna. However, a concise work under the same title is also attributed to al-Fārābī; which, in turn, is wholly incorporated into the former. A decisive answer to the question about its authorship is still a *desideratum* – if it is possible at all. Damien Janos convincingly suggested that the material on the celestial realm is quite at odds with al-Fārābī's views found in his authentic works, thus, al-Fārābī as the primary author is unlikely. On the other hand, it is still a harder task to decide whether it consists of Avicenna's own notes, or it is written up by one of his pupils. However, according to Dimitri Gutas, the *Kitāb al-Taʿlīqāt* may have arisen as a result of live discussion and teaching between Avicenna and

[140] On his life see Afnan, 1958, 57–83; Gutas, 2014, 10–20.
[141] Gohlman, 1974, 76–79.
[142] Afnan, 1959, 53.
[143] Gohlman, 1974, 48–51, McGinnis, 2010, 15.
[144] Gutas, 2014, 160–164; Michot, 1982, 231-232; Janos, 2012, 388–389.

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primarily Ibn Zayla.[145] As Jules Janssens puts it, we have not enough evidence to attribute it to Avicenna himself, but in his view, we cannot exclude this possibility.[146]

Many passages seem to be commentaries on authentic Avicennian passages; some are direct translations from the *Dānishnāma-yi ʿAlā'ī*.[147] We are unfortunately not in a position to make a decisive judgment about the nature of the work, which, nevertheless, is very complex: it contains parts probably written by Avicenna himself, and other sections composed by his pupils. Therefore, we will call this material the *Ta'līqāt*-material. Be that as it may, while dealing with it, we will always strive to compare it to the authentic "Avicennian" teaching.

We are in a much better position concerning the *Kitāb al-Mubāḥathāt*, which underwent a thorough philological study by David Reisman. It is a collection of letters, correspondences between Avicenna and Bahmanyār, and Abū al-Qāsim al-Kirmānī on the one hand, and between Avicenna and Ibn Zayla on the other.[148]

3.1.3 The problem of individuals in the Islamicate world: Christian theology

Individuation was not in the center of philosophical interests in the Aristotelian–Neoplatonic tradition. As Jorge Gracia made it clear in his ground-breaking monograph, in the Christian environment, it was the doctrine of Trinity that prompted most discussions on individuals. Nevertheless, other theological debates on the Eucharist or the nature of angels appeared in different epochs over and over.[149]

As one might expect, this is equally true of the Islamic world. Again, taken the fact that philosophers in the Islamicate world accepted the Neoplatonized Aristotelian tradition, in a like manner, individuals were not in the center of philosophical debates. Thus, discussions about individuation were driven by outer factors, challenges of religious background that forced the philosophers to deal with these particular problems.

Furthermore, Eastern Christianity had a lot to say about the same questions that provoked long-lasting debates in the West: Trinity and Christology are indeed in the very center of the sectarian controversies.[150] These discussions may be divided into two categories: the debates among the Christians themselves, and the debates between Christians and Muslims.[151] As far as individuation is concerned, it appeared in several sub-questions: the differentiation of the

[145] Gutas, 2014, 163.
[146] Janssens, 2012, 222.
[147] *Ta'līqāt*, (M), (27).
[148] Gutas, 2014, 159–160; Reisman, 2002.
[149] Gracia, 1984, 123.
[150] I am very grateful for Professor Miklós Maróth for his valuable suggestions in this question.
[151] Thomas, 2002, 48–52.

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Divine persons or in the different aspects of Christology. The Trinitarian debates, however, are so complex that it lies beyond the scope of our introduction, we restrict ourselves only to mentioning some general trends. One of the questions was about the Divine persons, whether theologians held them to be individual *stricto sensu* or to be some other entity. This is practically the problem where theologians must have formed a well-defined understanding of individuals. Generally speaking, most of the Theologians, regardless of their sectarian affiliation, did not take the Divine Persons to be individuals (*ashkhāṣ*). Some of them thought that they are indeed individuals; like the Melkite Theodore Abū Qurra, or the Jacobite Abū Rā'iṭa al-Tikrītī.[152] Nevertheless, perhaps for the sake of argument, this is the tenet that Abū Isḥāq al-Kindī attributes to the Christian sects in general.[153] For Abū Rā'iṭa, terms like "substance" (*jawhar*), essence (*dhāt*) and individual (*shakhṣ*) explain different aspects of the given thing. Insofar as it is a substance, it is one, insofar as it is an essence, it is existent, and insofar as it is individual, it has a single subsistence (*infirād qiwāmihi*), being a unique essence, which is not accidental.[154] He proposes a theory according to which the divine persons are "others" only on a conceptual level, not in their quiddity and existence.[155] Others, like the Jacobite Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, did not understand the Trinity as consisting of three individuals; rather, the persons represent the different aspects of the same individual. He often draws a parallel with Zayd, the physician, or Zayd, the geometrician.[156] Along this parallel, it is the properties that distinguish between the different realities in the Godhead.

The second main set of problems concerns Christ's nature, the incarnation. The Council of Chalcedon (451) affirmed that in the one Person of Christ, there were united the divine nature, consubstantial with the Father, and the human nature, consubstantial with human beings through his mother, the Mother of God.[157] The three main Eastern churches, the Jacobite, Nestorian, and Melkite disagreed on the mode of "uniting" (*ittiḥād*): as Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī puts it, the Nestorians held that in the Messiah there are two substances, the divine Logos and the human, as some of them held, united by the will.[158] He, being a Monophysite Jacobite, insists that the Messiah is only one substance, that is, one in the subject, but two in definitions.[159] The Melkites thought that it is the universal human that has been born in Christ, not a particular

[152] Benevich, 2012, 157–158.
[153] Périer, 1920–1921, 4.
[154] Abū Rā'iṭa, *Schriften*, 108, 17–109, 6.
[155] Abū Rā'iṭa, *Schriften*, 108, 11–17; 110, 1–2.
[156] Platti, 1994, 182.
[157] Louth, 2015, 139.
[158] Platti, 1983, 64*.
[159] Platti, 1983, 6*–7*.

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human being. This tenet provoked a set of arguments *pro* and *contra*, which addressed the particularization of a universal concept.[160]

However, it would lead too far away to explore all that they said about these topics, especially because we are focusing on Avicenna, who – to my best knowledge – did not treat questions related to Christian theology, like Trinity or Christology. Even if he was acquainted with the teaching of some of the Baghdad Peripatetics, whom once he called "booby Christians,"[161] he was more interested in their work as commentators, than as theologians. In the case of Avicenna, the importance of Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī achieved growing scholarly attention in recent years,[162] and we know of how Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Ṭayyib's work provoked his curiosity.[163] Besides, we will provide further data corroborating that he seemed eager to engage in discussions regarding philosophical texts and their commentaries: one example of this is the very term individual – which was held to be an equivocal by Ibn ʿAdī and Ibn al-Ṭayyib, a position, against which Avicenna clearly took a side. But this is rather semantic, than a theological problem.

That is to say, Avicenna's critic was directed towards pure philosophical tenets, not towards theological problems when it came to Christian philosophers. It seems to be so, even though the Trinitarian problems were treated in Islamic rational theology for apologetic reasons.[164] It is in this context, where, for example, individuality (*shakhṣiyya*) as an abstract term appears in Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār's *al-Mughnī*, saying that some Christians insist that God, who is the three persons is the same (*yattafiqu*) in substantiality (*jawhariyya*) but is different (*yakhtalifu*) in the personhood and individuality (*qunūmiyya* and *shakhṣiyya*).[165] However, these discussions do not seem to have influenced Avicenna's teaching: we are not aware of any paragraph that would have been devoted to this problem about personhood or individuality in this context, nor to their refutation.

3.1.4 Avicenna and the *kalām*

Nevertheless, in recent years, a growing number of articles has directed scholarly attention to the relationship between Avicenna and the *kalām*. Muslim rational theology and philosophy have a rather curious dependence. First of all, the methods they follow are quite different:

[160] al-Warrāq-Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Ittiḥād*, 140; 144; 147.
[161] *Mubāḥathāt*, 372 [1159].
[162] Rashed, 2004, Benevich, 2017.
[163] Gutas, 2014, 59–60; 62–64.
[164] Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, V, 81; 83; 103; 115; 131; 146; al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 86; 92.
[165] Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, V, 103, 14–16.

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whereas the former is based on dialectics, the latter strives to rely on apodeictic arguments. As it is well known, *kalām* was principally influenced by philosophy, not only at the early formative era but even in the post-Avicennan period, due to the influence of al-Ghazālī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Likewise, philosophy was similarly influenced by *kalām* to a certain degree, even if the comparison is rather tentative. Although the methodologies were different, there were overlapping topics, instigated by the cultural and religious milieu, namely, the theological questions *stricto sensu*, like divine unity (*tawḥīd*), origination, and the afterlife that the scholars of both sciences equally had to address. Besides, there are the so-called auxiliary and subtle problems in theological discussions, like the one about the atoms, bodies, and space, which were similarly treated in the Peripatetic philosophical tradition, although in an Aristotelian garment. In all these fields, Avicenna was aware of the current *kalām* opinion: he has a lengthy refutation of atomism in his physical writings; or, just to mention the most important ones, a separate treatise on the (non-)existence of the void.[166]

Accordingly, scholars working in the history of ideas tended to highlight these points:[167] Michael E. Marmura, in an article of basic relevance in the field, picked up three topics, that is, origination (*ḥudūth*), matter and bodily resurrection.[168] A reply to this contribution was made by Abdessamad Belhaj,[169] whereas Ömer Mahir Alper focused on the existence of God as a point of interdependence between Avicenna and the *Mutakallimūn*.[170] Alper also drew attention to the particularization argument (*takhṣīṣ*): according to Ibn Taymiyya, Avicenna borrowed the argument from the *mutakallimūn*. Although the author accepts this, he stresses that Avicenna used it for different ends.[171]

In the following, we will highlight two topics, which somehow touches upon certain readings falling under "individuation." Although theologians in the pre-Avicennian period seemed not interested in individuation in the philosophical sense, unless as a refutation of Christian dogmas. Nevertheless, their specific problems led them towards something similar, like the concepts of similarity and otherness, or the particularization argument.

By pointing to these rather isolated questions, we aim to show that the theological circles had solutions to questions that equally appeared in philosophical discussions. And, what is most

[166] *Rasā'il Ibn Sīnā*, II., 155–159.
[167] Among the earlier contributions see Gardet, 1951;
[168] Marmura, 2004, 97–130.
[169] Belhaj, 2013, 285–292.
[170] Alper, 2004.
[171] Alper, 2004, 140–141.

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striking is that their answers were not entirely dissimilar. These considerations are intended only as introductory remarks, rather than being conclusive results: this field of study is still open for further research.

Origination (*ḥudūth*) and the particularization argument

As Alper has shown, in the particularization argument, Avicenna's arguments mirror theological ones. What we aim to add to his results is the role of extension (*taḥayyuz*) in origination. Although the Mu'tazilī theory is quite different from Avicenna's philosophical solution, there are certain moves, arguments that seem to be strikingly similar.[172]

According to Herbert A. Davidson, the particularization argument

> is the notion that when an object has a given characteristic but could conceivably have a different one, something must serve to particularize it, that is, to select the particular characteristic it does have from among all those that it might have.[173]

In general, theologians used this argument to show the necessity of the Creator: since things could be endowed by other characteristics, something must explain their being as they are: it cries out for a reason, which is the necessitation of the Creator.[174]

The idea appears as a commonly held view among the Christian theologians, and later on, it became an integral part of *kalām* discussions as well, both Mutazilite and Asharite. [175] For al-Bāqillānī, writing implies a writer, and the different forms in the world imply the existence of the architect (*ṣāniʿ*) because a given thing having a given shape easily could have had a different shape if it is considered in itself. Thus, something must explain its having that shape and not the other.[176]

As for the Mu'tazilite Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, he makes it clear in the *Kitāb al-Mughnī* that the composition of bodies is not a sufficient reason to prove the existence of God. Here, our main source is the *Šarḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*. [177] As Daniel Gimaret has shown, this work is mistakenly attributed to Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār: it is probably the commentary on ʿAbd al-Jabbār's *al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*, attributed to Mānkdīm (d. 425/1025), who studied under him in Rayy.[178] Be that as

[172] Alper, 2004; Lánczky, 2016; Marmura, 2005, 101–105. M. E. Marmura examines Avicenna's critics of the theologians argument for origination as it is found in the *Kitāb Najāt*.
[173] Davidson, 1968, 299.
[174] On the Greek and possible Christian roots of the argument see my 2016.
[175] Lánczky, 2016.
[176] al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 23, 3–24,5. ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī* VI, 168
[177] ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ Uṣūl Khamsa*, 90. Because the first books of the *Mughnī*, where this question was probably addressed, is missing.
[178] Gimaret, 1979, 57–60; Heemskerk, 2007.

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it may, Mānkdīm also is among the contemporaries of Avicenna, who, just after the chapter we shall consider, adds that this is the preferred view of Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār among the variety of other tenets held by the *mutakallimūn*.[179]

The argument revolves around the composition of bodies and the role of spatial extension in the process of origination. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the physical teaching of the *kalām* is based – to put it simply – on an atomistic world view. For the Baṣran Muʿtazilī school, to which ʿAbd al-Jabbār and his followers in Rayy principally belonged, held that the atom *per definitionem* occupies space, that is, it is extended.[180] In consequence, it measures space and prevents interpenetration.[181]

The main goal is to prove that bodies and accidents are all generated, and therefore, they need a creator. The first step Mānkdīm (and ʿAbd al-Jabbār) takes is that bodies have a certain *maʿnā*, namely, composition, separation, motion, and rest. The second step is to prove that these properties – the so-called *akwān* – are all generated, and the final stage is to prove that bodies cannot exist without them. The first postulate that bodies need akwān goes as follows:

> The body became composite in a state, whereas its (atoms) could have remained separated. The state and condition are one and the same. Thus, a thing (*amr*), and a factor (*mukhaṣṣiṣ*) are necessary for particularizing its essence and its place in which it became composite. Otherwise, it could not have happened this way, rather (*awlā*) than another way. This thing is nothing else than the existence of a *maʿnā*.[182]

The text indicates that whatever exists in some way, must necessarily be so – in the sense that its having that property must have a reason. This reason is a *maʿnā*, a particularizing factor. ʿAbd al-Jabbār connects this issue to potentiality. The accidents that a substance may have, act as if they had equal potentialities; those, whose contraries are equally possible, because none of the accidents inclines to the more or, the less. Thus, something must particularize and necessitate it.

Later we learn that if a body could potentially have two opposite properties, for example, be white or black, one of them moves from the state of possibility to the state of necessity, while the other becomes impossible. This transition must have a reason, and this is due to the *mukhaṣṣiṣ*, or to a *maʿnā* in the body.

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[179] ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ Uṣūl Khamsa*, 98.
[180] Dhanani, 1994, 55. However, the relation of atom and extension in theological circles is a much broader topic. On this see Dhanani, 1994, 55–62.
[181] Dhanani, 1994, 61.
[182] ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ Uṣūl Khamsa*, 96.

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There is another indispensable element in this argument: that the state and condition of the body is one and the same. So, the author names two basic elements for the body to be able to receive accidents: extension and existence. Thus, the spatial extension seems to be a necessary condition in its being: its role becomes clearer later when ʿAbd al-Jabbār proves that bodies cannot exist without the *akwān*, i.e., without composition, separation, motion and rest. Actually, this is the key in the argument, because this is what entails that bodies are generated. In other words: if x is a body, it must have one of these *akwān*; it must be either composite, separated, in motion or at rest.

His argument reads as follows: the body must be extended (*mutaḥayyiz*) while existing, but it cannot be extended without being *kā'in* (generated). As a result, it cannot be generated without having a *kawn*.

As we have learned, composition, separation, motion, and rest, that is, the *akwān* and spatial extension, mutually presuppose each other. The author shows that a body cannot be extended either as a result of a *maʿnā* or an action. The only possibility left is that they are extended by themselves.

- If extension were a *maʿnā*, just like whiteness, this *maʿnā*-extension could not reside in the body (*ḥulūl*), since its condition is the extension itself: because it is an extension that allots its place. Without being allotted, it is not actually distinguished from any other similar entity; thus, the spatial extension is a necessary condition for its being.
- If extension were to become as a result of an agent, that agent could generate a body without extension too – it could make it black, instead of being extended, which is impossible. [183]

Thus, every single body has an extension due to itself. Furthermore, two of the *akwān* as well – composition and separation – presuppose spatial extension: to be separated from each other, the two things must be distinct from each other spatially.

Thus, spatial extension plays a key role in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's argumentation: this is to show that bodies cannot be without accidents, be it *akwān*, or *maʿnā*, nor can they precede them. Thus, bodies must be extended by themselves during their existence. Since it has been proven that bodies and *akwān* cannot exist separately, and *akwān* – being a sort of accident – are created, bodies must be created too. In the end, they need a creator.

[183] ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ Uṣūl Khamsa*, 112.

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In this argumentation, bodies are essentially extended, because if not, they would not be differentiated from each other. Thus, what ultimately explains the difference between bodies is their spatial extension. [184]

In his *al-Majmūʿ al-muḥīṭ bi-l-taklīf*, a work composed by Ibn Mattawayh, ʿAbd al-Jabbār offers another argument for showing the creation of bodies: if a body was eternal, its extension would be eternal as well, and there would be no reason why it would be orientated in that particular direction. Since it is obvious that bodies can move, their orientations from each other may change. Therefore, it cannot be an eternal specification, because in this case, every single body should be either in one particular direction or in every direction.[185] This is *another reductio ad impossibile*: if the spatial extension were eternal, nothing could distinguish them from each other. They would point to no particular direction, only everywhere or nowhere. Thus, in his system, spatial positioning is in the focus again; consequently, it is indispensable for a body to exist, and therefore, it is indispensable for it to receive different accidents.

This whole issue relies on the interpenetration argument: two substance-atoms cannot occupy the same place, because of their extensions. This is what most of the *Mutakallimūn* accepted without question.

To sum up: in the views attributed to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, a proof for the existence of God was based on the accidents: every accident is generated; thus, their composites are generated as well. Therefore, they need a Creator. In showing this, the theologians turned to the particularization argument: something must explain a thing's having a certain feature, which is a *maʿnā*. On the other hand, spatial extension, included in the definition of the atom, must always characterize it, if it exists. As we have seen, the extension is a *per se* feature, because its determinate location cannot depend on a secondary feature, rather, it is a precondition. This understanding paves the way to spatial differentiation.

Subtle points in *kalām* on individuals

As we mentioned above, *kalām* has a dialectic method in its arguments, which implies that one would not expect a strict, carefully elaborated philosophical system. Since dialectical arguments

[184] Dhanani, 1994, 62. According to Alnoor Dhanani, the theory that extension and atom presuppose each other may have been founded by Abū Hāšim al-Jubbāʾī. There is no platform to go into more details about this issue, however, this point provoked a staunch debate over the relation between extension and the indivisible atom. See Dhanani, 1994, 62–71.
[185] Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ*, 71.

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rely not only on apodeictic, or certain premises but on widely accepted ones as well, well-polished teaching on any topic could be hardly expected.

Nevertheless, there are basic tenets that at least partly address problems, which somehow run parallel to philosophical arguments. In the following, I would like to highlight one pair of terms that seems to have relevance here, namely, the *tamāthul* – similarity, and *taghāyur* – otherness. It indeed appears in different contexts, where the exact understanding of to be another or to be similar was at stake.

Interestingly enough, just like the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and Christology, the *tawḥīd*, God's oneness also excited debates about the nature of divine essence in the Muslim rational theology. For example, Quran 42:11 reads that God has no similar thing (*laysa ka-mithilihi shay'*).[186] What is quite striking is that *mutakallimūn*, both some Asharites and Muʿtazilites adduced the spatio-temporal criterion to differentiate between things.

In a similar context, where it appears is the relationship of God's essence and his attributes, or God and his deeds.[187] Al-Bāqillānī insists that God and his attributes are no others – because this would violate God's oneness. In passim, he elaborates on what he may understand by "other": "because the definition of two others is that one of them might be separated from the other in space and time. But this is inconceivable in case of God and his attributes."[188] This, however, contradicts to other passages from the scripture, like the one about his sitting on the throne: the author insists that God's sitting is not like (*mithl*) that of the creatures – he is devoid of any spatial dimension because it would entail a change in him.[189]

In the case of atoms and bodies, the question has equally arisen. As later Ibn Fūrak makes it clear, even al-Ashʿarī adduced, among others,[190] the spatio-temporal criterion to distinguish things from each other:

> (...) the meaning of otherness is that it is not impossible for something to be separated from the other in a way, either in existence or non-existence, or its separation from the other in place, because the separation in time means that one exists in time, and the other in another time. [191]

[186] Quran 42, 11
[187] Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt*, 268, 19–20.
[188] al-Bāqillānī, *Inṣāf*, 34.
[189] al-Bāqillānī, *Inṣāf*, 36.
[190] Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 265–270. As it appears from Ibn Fūrak" notes, al-Ashʿarī's views were quite dialectal in a way: they depended very much ont he context. Among others, he insisted that things differ in themselves (268, 3–4), but in case of otherwise similar objects he adduced specific criteria, like existence, non-existence, and spatio-temporal differentation.
[191] Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 267,23–268, 2.

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This idea enumerates criteria that two "others" must possess. Later on, however, he reports a short addition about God's creating two identical atoms, whose accidents are similar to that of the other, and in consequence, whose descriptions are completely identical. But still, they are "others": nevertheless, the author did not refer to the spatial difference here. Rather, he mentions that al-Ashʿarī denied the *dictum* of the jurisprudents that if a thing is similar to another thing in every aspect, then they are both identical.[192] Paradoxically, this tenet is not that far from the Leibnizian identity of indiscernibles; nevertheless, it may have meant something entirely else in Islamic law (*fiqh*) than in philosophy, as applied to cases and judgments.

Be that as it may, even though the contextual examination of these tenets lies behind the scope of this paper, what is important for us is that in Asharite circles the question of differentiation actually appeared – including the spatio-temporal reading.

In Muʿtazilite circles the situation is similar. Avicenna's contemporary, Abū Rashīd al-Nīsābūrī reports in his famous work on the differences between the Basra and Baghdad Mutazilite schools that the spatio-temporal differentiation actually was known in Muʿtazilite circles as well. Abū Rashīd al-Nīsābūrī was originally the follower of the Muʿtazilī school of Baghdād, where Abū al-Qāsim (al-Balkhī) al-Kaʿbī belonged, and then frequented the lectures of Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025), after whose death became the head of the Baṣran Muʿtazilī school in Rayy.[193] He recounts extensively Abū Qāsim (al-Balkhī) al-Kaʿbī's views (d. 319/931) on this issue, who also insists that God has no body, simply because a body has a similar body.[194]

In a lengthy and rather complex discussion, Abū Rashīd connects similarity and otherness to sense-perception because it is via the perception that we judge about two substances whether they are similar or not. Thus, he raises the issue to an epistemic level. In the end, he concludes that it is an extension (*taḥayyuz*) that counts for the difference between bodies. [195] He enumerates three candidates counting for difference (*ikhtilāf*) of atoms because atoms possess these three features at their being perceived: it is either existence, extension, or being in a direction. He quickly eliminates existence, because it is common to all substances, and if this were the case, then black and white would be perceived in virtue of the same property. Existence is one in them; thus, it cannot count for their difference. Since different things have different

[192] Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 268,14–18.
[193] Frank, 2007, 31–32.

[194] al-Nīsābūrī, *Masā'il*, 29.
[195] al-Nīsābūrī, *Masā'il*, 29–30.

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features, our knowledge of their difference depends on the knowledge of that different feature, not existence.

Therefore, existence cannot cause their perception. Neither can „the being in a direction." This is what a quick thought-experiment shows: suppose we see an object in a certain position, and while we close our eyes, someone moves it to a minimal distance. If we look at it again, it may happen that we hardly notice the change. Thus, Abū Rashīd concludes, being in a direction cannot count for the distinction either. He explicitly makes it clear that it is an extension in virtue of which it is distinguished from others.[196]

Thus, the only possibility left is that extension counts for distinction. However, in a counter-argument, an opponent answers that extension is also shared by the substances; therefore, it rather seems to stand for similarity. Indeed, every substance is extended, and as such, they are similar insofar as substances. [197] However, extension distinguishes substances either from non-substances and substances alike, because if we know the extension of something but nothing else, we know that it is distinct from others, even if it has other different features.[198] It is like when we see something, a silhouette from a distance: we know that it is extended; therefore we know that it is other than other objects. Ultimately this goes back to the assertion that two atoms cannot share the same extension. A similar view was also held by the Baghdādī Abū Qāsim al-Kaʿbī, but for him atoms were unextended. In his view, extension and being in a direction were only relative features.[199] As Abū Rashīd admits, Abū al-Qāsim also highlighted the role of spatio-temporal features in differentiation:

> Abū al-Qāsim mentioned that two similar objects inevitably share all the features, [if they are similar], except for time and place.[200]

Even if it is taken out of context, this short insight into this argument well represents the state of affairs in the theological circles of Avicenna's time. The problem was not a new one; as we saw it was on the table from al-Ashʿarī's time.

Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, as Ibn al-Mattawayh reports, held that two different things must differ in virtue of (at least one) property that one has, and the other does not. The knowledge of difference is built on sense-perception, and this is how distinction (*tamyīz*) happens: if two

[196] al-Nīsābūrī, *Masā'il*, 30.
[197] al-Nīsābūrī, *Masā'il*, 33.
[198] al-Nīsābūrī, *Masā'il*, 34–35.
[199] Abbās, 1994, 153.
[200] al-Nīsābūrī, *Masā'il*, 36.

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things share the same properties, there is no distinction between them because one of them must possess something that the other does not. [201] This idea comes up in connection to God's difference from all the other things, or whether God's existence is similar to the other being's existence.[202] In this framework, in a dialectical approach, the extension appears again as the sign of otherness.[203]

In other words, as we saw, the spatio-temporal reading of differentiation has found its way into the Mu'tazilī *kalām* discussions too: and even though the opinions differed pretty often, the question has actually arisen in Islamic theological debates too.

This evidence is sufficient to show that there are at least some theological discussions, where something like individuation, to be more precise, a sub-question of individuation has been raised. Of course, differentiation (*tamyīz, ikhtilāf*), otherness (*taghāyur*) and similarity (*tamāthul*) represented a great variety of views, depending on the contexts on the one hand, and on the cosmological and physical views on the other. What we must bear in mind while studying Avicenna's philosophy, is that these questions have been circulating in the scientific milieu of his time.

3.1.5 Arabic philosophy

One cannot understand Avicenna's system without taking into account the Arabic philosophical tradition. Nevertheless, this approach would lead too far away, because every single philosopher before Avicenna would deserve an independent study, which cannot be the scope of this dissertation. Therefore, our inquiry into their views cannot be but deficient: we consciously restrict ourselves to presenting their views *in passim*. Thus, al-Fārābī and the Baghdad Peripatetics will appear throughout the thesis. Needless to say that Avicenna has very much to thank al-Fārābī,[204] but he usually took side against the later members of the Baghdād school. In the following, we shall provide further evidence to underpin this thesis.

3.1.6 Different terms denoting individuals and individuation in Avicenna

Since individuals were not the proper subject of apodeictic science in the Greek philosophical tradition, we cannot expect to find independent treatises on the topic. Similarly, as in the Late-Antique philosophy, it appears in contexts: either in inner contexts, where the discussion is driven by a set of problems arising from what the philosophical system requires, or in outer

[201] Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ*, 153, 1–6.
[202] Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ*, 135, 23–136, 27.
[203] Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ*, 137, 25.
[204] See his Autobiography, in Gutas, 2014, 10–19.

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context, where a particular theological, cultural challenge must be answered. Taken the fact that our problem appears in different garments, the problem will be addressed in different lights, sometimes by different toolkits. This case is similar to Derek Parfit's famous metaphor "climbing the same mountain on different sides."[205] The first step to approach this kind of diversity starts with a terminological quest.

It seems to be of crucial importance to enumerate and properly understand the terms that signify individuals or individuation. Not only because the semantic aspects of the technical terms tell us something about the understanding of individuals, which is interesting in its own right, but also because clarifying their proper meaning is inevitable for any philosophical study.

3.1.6.1 Terms denoting individuals

Shakhṣ: the most common term for individuals in Arabic philosophy is *shakhṣ*, which is the technical term *stricto sensu*. It has no concrete Greek correspondent, nevertheless, in some places, it seems to stand for ἄτομον.[206] The Arabic term derives from the root sh – kh – ṣ, which means to gaze or to stare at something. Khalīl Ibn Aḥmad (d. 175/791), the author of one of the earliest encyclopedias, gives the following interpretation: al-shakhṣ: the blackness of the human if you see it from a distance, and if you see the body of anything, you saw its shakhṣ."[207] Thus, even as early as the eighth century, it meant something like a designated spot, which has body, or height.[208] In this sense, this term encompasses what the Greek *τόδε τι* implies – something here and now.

ʿAyn (*fī al-aʿyān*): another term for individuals is *ʿayn*, a classic example of equivocal words since it has a great variety of meanings. Earlier, in Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs paraphrase of the *Categories,* it is applied to the substance ("*ʿayn* is the name of every named substance").[209]

In Avicenna, it usually means the "same" in *status constructus*, but at the same time in plural form (*fī al-aʿyān*) frequently stands for particulars existing in the outer reality, as a counterpart of "in the mind" (*fī al-ʿaql*, *fī al-dhihn*, *fī al-nafs*).[210] In the plural, it already appears in the *Kitāb al-ʿayn* as meaning people of a certain tribe or family.[211] Its derivatives, both in the second and fifth stems mean a sort of particularization, as we shortly will see. On the other hand, rarely

[205] Parfit, 2011, 419.
[206] Furfūriyūs, *Īsaghūjī*, 1070, 15; 1071, 19; 21. Porphyrius, *Eisagoge*, 7, 19; 20; 21.
[207] Khalīl, *Kitāb ʿayn*, IV/165.
[208] Here I disagree with Zonta (2014–15), 555.
[209] Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Īsaghūjī*, 11.
[210] For example, *Ilāhiyyāt*, 26, 4; 31, 12; 142, 3; 159, 12; 364, 10.
[211] Khalīl, *Kitāb ʿayn*, III/245.

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it stands for individuals,[212] and in the *Ta'līqāt*, the singular *ayn al-shay'* is presented as a synonym of *huwiyya*, *waḥda,* and *tashakhkhuṣ*.[213]

Juz'ī: the term *juz'ī* is a derivative of the Arabic *juz'* (part), being the correspondent of the Greek *μερικόν*. In logical writings, as a counterpart of *kullī* (universal), it means the quantification of the sentence, but it equally stands for individuals as well.[214]

Fard: although it usually comes as a pair of *zawj* (even), meaning odd, in one place at least it is applied to God, as a unique existent.[215] Its derivatives, like *mufrad* also means singular, as an adjective.[216]

3.1.6.2 Terms denoting individuation

Tashakhkhuṣ-individuation: as we will see, in Avicenna's later works, where he *expressis verbis* addresses "individuation" he uses the term *tashakhkhuṣ*. Theoretically speaking, he closely follows the logical understanding of individuality, meaning unshareability. In a like manner, in the metaphysical context, the term *tashakhkhuṣ* refers to individuation, but the individuation of quiddity, like humanity. This approach takes quiddity as its starting point, and the individual as a result: this is a derivative reading of individuation, be it in the mind, or the "outer" reality. In other words, it revolves around Avicenna's moderate realism, by taking quiddities as bricks: which feature (that corresponds to a quiddity) does cause uniqueness or unshareability for a certain individual?

Mabda' al-tashakhkhuṣ-principle of individuation: on the other hand, Avicenna actually talks about the principle of individuation (*mabda' al-tashakhkhuṣ*) – as far as we know – being among the very first thinkers in this regard.[217] For Avicenna, the principle (*mabda'*) is that which must exist simultaneously with the thing, whose principle it is, without being prior or posterior.[218] Form and matter are parts of the concrete existence, and they come to be in the individual essence (*dhāt*).[219] In other words, form and matter are in the subsistence of a given thing.[220]

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[212] *Najāt*, 17.
[213] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 145, (M) 431 [784]. For other instances see ibid. (B) 144, (M) 431 [782].
[214] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 196, 4 (*juz'ī mufrad*); 355, 4.
[215] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 373, 9.
[216] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 196, 4.
[217] Popper, 1953, 97
[218] *Samā'*, 17, 16. Tr. by McGinnis, *Physics*, 18. Aristotle, *Met*. (V/1), 1013a15–24.
[219] *Samā'*, 13, 14–15.
[220] *Samā'*, 15, 6.

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Actually, Avicenna equates the four Aristotelian causes with the principles. Form and matter are internal, whereas the efficient and final causes are external principles of a physical thing.[221] Avicenna connects this issue to the quiddity-existence distinction: while the former two are causes of the essence, the latter two are that of existence.[222] These causes have a curious interdependence: the final cause is later than all the other causes in the individual, whereas it is prior to them in "thingness" (*shay'iyya*).[223]

In the *Najāt* he writes that principle is anything that already has completed existence in itself (whether from itself or from another) and from which the existence of another thing occurs and by which it subsists.[224] Both accounts take the principle to be an inherent element in the thing whose principle it is. Form and matter are parts of the effect, whereas the final and efficient causes are not.

Ta'ayyun-existential individuation: the term *ta'ayyun* resembles *tashakhkhuṣ* in the sense that it is the fifth stem of a term meaning individual, which, in this case, is *'ayn*. As we noted earlier, Avicenna frequently uses it as a synonym for individuals, but he also applies its second stem and its derivatives in a participial form: *mu'ayyin – mu'ayyan*. It appears in logic, denoting the indeterminate subject (*mawḍū' ghayr mu'ayyan*), but it equally occurs in the Physics and the Metaphysics, signifying a kind of determination: like a determined measure,[225] or determined matter.[226]

However, in the fifth stem, *ta'ayyun* and its derivatives refer to the existence, meaning a "singled out" existence: God is determined in itself (*muta'ayyin bi-al-dhāt*), while all the other existents are determined by something else, namely, by their cause.[227]

Thus, God, the First Principle is determined in itself, its *ta'ayyun* does not depend on anything else, while the *ta'ayyun* of all the other created things do. This is, again, practically another way to understand things in the world, but this time, it is in the framework of Avicenna's modal ontology: God is the ultimate cause, everything that comes to be, has a cause. This method may be called the metaphysical-existential approach, since it revolves around existents qua existents, explaining individuals' existence by its own means.

[221] McGinnis, 2010, 53–58.
[222] *Ishārāt*, 266.
[223] *Najāt*, 518–519. On Avicenna's causality see Wisnovsky, 2003; McGinnis, 2010, 58–59.
[224] *Najāt*, 518, 8–10. Quoted by McGinnis, 2010, 55–56.
[225] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 78, 8.
[226] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 176, 10.
[227] *Ishārāt*, 270–271.

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Takhaṣṣuṣ-specialization: this term seems to have a technical meaning in the spurious *Ta'līqāt*.[228] As we shall see, this specialization is due to specializing, particular causes. Thus, the term appears where individuals are taken as effects of certain causes, in other words, where the individual's specificity is approached in terms of causality. This indicates that in this framework, individuals are considered as existents; and it is existence that becomes specialized.[229] The term also plays a role in explaining the particular motions of the celestial spheres, as we will see.[230]

However, in a participial form, it appears to be the synonym for *mutashakhkhiṣ*.[231] Anyways, the role of the term in the process of individuation and particularization will be explored later.

Thabāt-identity or persistence: the third main reading of individuation is persistence (*thabāt*), that is, what counts for the thing's being the same through a certain period of time. This question appears again in a different context: first in case of the personal identity of humans, as far as their fate in the afterlife is concerned. Since Avicenna holds that the human rational soul is separable from the body after life ends, and is immortal as an individual, something must explain the permanence of its individuality. In other words, a certain soul is the very same individual, even if it is devoid of its body.[232]

These issues are addressed in Avicenna's later, rather spurious works, like the *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt* and the *Kitāb al-Mubāḥathāt*. In a similar vein, the temporal identity of material substances is getting also addressed: what is the criterion of being the thing the same, if seemingly its material conditions are constantly changing?

3.1.7 Different kinds of individuals in Avicenna's universe

Our next introductory remark is about the extension of individuals. What are individuals in Avicenna's system? Starting from the most basic, primary concepts, there are three candidates: thing, existent, and necessary.[233] Taking Avicenna's threefold division of quiddities, whatever is a thing is not an individual in itself: it may be individual as an existent *in re*, or a universal, as an existent in the mind. However, even mental existents are particulars, even if the concept is universal by reference: the universal human that is in my mind is different from the universal

[228] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 14, (M) 5–6 [1]; 24-25, (M) 34–36 [14].
[229] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 64, (M) 162 [236]; (B) 106, (M) 298–299 [520]; (B) 107, (M) 303 [530]; (B) 110, (M) 310 [558]; (B) 179, (M) 540 [955]; (B) 183, (M) 551 [968]; (B) 187, (M) 566 [993].
[230] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 106, (M) 298–299 [520]; (B) 163–166, (M) 490–496 [899–909].
[231] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 126–127, (M) 371–372 [658–659]; (B) 138, (M) 408–409 [725–728]; (B) 163, (M) 490 [899].
[232] See Adamson, 2004; Druart, 2000; Kaukua, 2015.
[233] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 29, 1–2.

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human that is in yours.[234] From this rather concise summary, two consequences follow: the derivative reading of individuation[235] and that existence plays a role in the extension of individuation. It is a sort of scholarly consensus that "everything that exists is an individual," appears already in the Peripatetic tradition.[236] This seems to even so in case of Avicenna and the Arabic Peripatetic tradition.

What is more, again in his later works, he talks about individuation regarding the different sort of existents: God, the intellects, and the sublunar existents.[237] Since we restrict our focus to the sensible substances, we shall briefly mention the other sorts of individuals that fall beyond the scope of this dissertation.

The question about the individuality of God is a curious one. It is no wonder that against the Islamic theological background, where the *tawḥīḍ* of God is of central importance, God's unity and absolute simplicity is highly emphasized. Thus, because God exists and God is one, He seems to be an individual too. However, Avicenna sometimes stresses that God is not a substance, and, to my best knowledge, he does not describe Him as *shakhṣ*, only as *fard*.[238] As such, God has no quiddity other than his existence.[239] In this sense, this approach sheds more light on the relation between individuation, existence, and quiddity.

Since supralunar existents are unique instantiations of their species, their individuation differs from that of the sublunar existents, those that are multiplied under one species. Avicenna usually insists that the former kind is individuated by a concomitant feature (*lāzim*) whereas the latter by accidents, where individuation seems to mean distinction.[240] The following thesis deals principally with this latter kind of individuals.

Soul: for Avicenna, there are four kinds of substances: form, matter, intellect, and soul. The rational soul, which is an immaterial and immortal substance, does not cease to exist after the separation from the body, continues to exist as an individual. This poses a serious problem in Avicenna's system, first, because an immaterial existent must be particularized somehow in

[234] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 211, 8–15.
[235] Galluzzo, 2012, 310.
[236] Gracia, 1984, 32–33.
[237] *Mubāḥathāt*, 341 [1067]; *Ta'līqāt* (B) 98, (M) 274 [465].
[238] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 373, 9.
[239] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 346, 11–12.
[240] *Mubāḥathāt*, 341 [1067]; *Ta'līqāt* (B) 98, (M) 274 [465].

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relation to the matter, and second, because this particular entity must stay so even after the separation from matter.[241]

Mental existents: since quiddities may exist in the mind as well, as mental existents, they enjoy a certain sort of existence. Since they lack matter, their individuation as existents requires a different approach. However, in a similar manner as in the case of God, this problem sheds more light on the nature of individuation.

3.1.8 Individuation in context

In the introduction, we have distinguished between inner and outer contexts. The inner context is shaped by the given philosophical system: basic principles and tenets necessarily affect the treatment of subtle or secondary questions, like individuation. This is in every part throughout a philosophical system, where "individual," "uniqueness," or the like needs to be explained. In Avicenna's case, as we shall see, it is particularization that extends to numerous areas in his philosophy: individuals in logic, individuals as form-matter compounds, individuals as individuated quiddities, individuals, as particularized existents; or the question about the multiplicity of existents in general, motion, time. In some case, individuation appears only as a premise in a complex argument; where a certain understanding of individuation is taken for granted, like in the case of the generation of the spheres, where Avicenna shows that the outer celestial body cannot be the cause of the inner celestial body.

However, in the case of Avicenna, we have some evidence that he treated individuation as a topic on its own right. In his later works, like in the *Mubāḥathāt* and *Ta'līqāt*, he frequently readdresses the issue. As David Reisman noted, in the *Mubāḥathāt,* there is a reference by Avicenna himself to a section on the individual,[242] from the lost *al-Budhūr*.[243] Although these passages still do not form an independent treatise, they are scarce passages or thoughts. This text, along with the still spurious *Ta'līqāt,* will be considered as well. These passages offer new, still unstudied evidence on Avicenna's view on individuation. Thus, this will be the rough structure of the following dissertation.

[241] On this see Druart, 2000; Adamson, 2004, 74; Marmura, 2008.
[242] Or individuation, see Reisman, 2002, 255, n. 134.
[243] Reisman, 2002, 256.

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3.2 Logic

When it comes to the classification of knowledge (*'ilm*), Avicenna clearly follows al-Fārābī.[244] A thing might be known from two aspects:

- either as a concept formed in the mind (*taṣawwur*), which means that this concept has its own name, while its meaning is being represented in the mind;
- or as an assent (*taṣdīq*), where we attach truth-value to the concepts by binding them together in sentences, like „every whiteness is an accident." If its intentional content corresponds to the state of affairs, that is, corresponds to the way it exists, we label it as true.[245]

These two sorts of knowledge correspond the definition and description on the one hand, and the syllogisms and demonstration on the other.[246] The definable and describable concepts are the bricks from which propositions and syllogisms are to be built.

Why is it important for individuation? Because whenever we know something, be it a universal truth, or a particular concept, we bring it into our mind. Every knowledge is a mental representation either of something external or of something internal. As such, these mental contents have a concrete relation to reality, and this is what the threefold consideration of quiddities represents.

3.2.1 Avicenna's mental concepts

The very base of Avicenna's philosophy is his well-known threefold division of quiddities, which serves as a framework to label his whole philosophical system.

In a famous passage in the *Madkhal* of the *Shifā'*, his statement reads as follows:

> The quiddities of the things can be [either] in the individual instances of the things, [or] in conceptualization. [The quiddity] has three considerations: consideration of the quiddity inasmuch as it is that quiddity, without being related to any of the two existences, and what is attached to it, inasmuch as it is like that. It has a consideration inasmuch as it is in the individual instances, in this case, that kind of attributes is attached to it, which are peculiar to this kind of existence. It has [another] consideration inasmuch as it is in conceptualization, in this case, that kind of attributes are attached to it, which are peculiar to that existence,

[244] al-Fārābī, *Burhān*, 19.
[245] *Madkhal*, 17, 7–12; see Maróth, 1994, 77.
[246] *Burhān*, 51, 1–2. Actually, this is what became later the general structure of logical works; however, this division appears already in Avicenna's later works, like in the *Manṭiq al-mashriqiyyīn*.

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> such as to be a subject, to be a predicate, universality and particularity in predication, essentiality, and accidentality in predication, and others, as you will learn.[247]

The quiddity (*māhiyya*) in this context refers to the whatness of the thing, using Avicenna's favorite examples, like animality, humanity, or horseness. These quiddities exist in the individuals, on the one hand, so to say, as particularized in the very thing: humanity is in every human, but not as one humanity in number, but as different humanities, particularized in the individuals. On the other hand, humanity may exist in the mind, as a mental concept.

This approach bridges the gap between our mental contents and their referents.[248] What we usually have in mind as universals, really exist in the outer reality, but not as universals. Just like these common terms, their composite corresponds to their counterpart in the outer existence. If we analyze a concept into a composite of several quiddities, like "white human', this concept applies to all thing that is white and human. As Avicenna himself asserts, if we want to think and know something, we need to bring it into the mind, that is, into conceptualization. However, as existing in the mind, the quiddity enjoys mental existence: it acquires accidents proper to that sort existence; in other words, our mental concepts are characterized by mental properties. That is, logical, and sometimes grammatical features, that represent either the interrelation of the concepts (if we think on Elias' technical term "relational" σχέτικος common items) or grammatical concepts, if we linguistically analyze a statement: the quiddity "human" may be subject or predicate. That is to say, quiddities in the mind, as mental existents, have an internal system that necessarily affects our logical thinking. This leads to another problem, namely the relation between language and philosophy.

Avicenna criticizes those who maintain that the subject matter of logic is expressions, insofar as they signify concepts.[249] He argues instead that if it were possible to learn logic by pure thinking, – so that the concepts would be immediately perceived – there would be no need for expressions.[250] Or, if we would know a trick by which we could let others know what is in our souls, then we would be able to dispense with expressions. However, take the fact that we use language to communicate, it endows our mental contents with special properties; thus, in some parts, logic must deal with expressions.[251]

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[247] *Madkhal*, 15, 1–7.
[248] I borrowed this expression from McGinnis, 2007, 170.
[249] *Madkhal*, 23, 5–6. On the famous debate between al-Sīrāfī and Mattā Ibn Yūnus, see Adamson and Key, 2015.
[250] *Madkhal*, 22, 14–17.
[251] *Madkhal*, 22, 19–23, 3.

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It is an interesting question to which extent does language affect our thinking, taken the fact that when we think, formalize a statement, we do it in a language. Avicenna accepts the Fārābian idea about the universal grammar that some universal aspects of language, like having a subject and a predicate in a sentence, are the same for all languages.[252] Accordingly, Avicenna's major concern is about the logical accidents that classify and organize our thinking.[253]

As it appears, Avicenna rejects the common belief, that the subject matter of logic is only expressions, insofar as they signify meanings.[254] He makes clear instead, that expressions are not of great interest to a logician, because they are used only for the sake of communication. As such, expressions are necessary because their states correspond to the states of mental concepts.[255] Al-Fārābī uses an analogy between logic and grammar, in the sense that what grammar is for the language, is logic for the right thinking.[256]

This is a clear indication that Avicenna focuses mostly on the concepts in the mind. Thus, those things which are in the mind are either borrowed from outer reality through the process of abstraction or are things attached to these, inasmuch as they are in the mind, not corresponding to anything in the outer reality. Actually, the subject matter of logic consists of the investigation of the latter[257] such as universality, particularity in predication, genus, species – the quinque voces – namely, the second intentions.

3.2.2 The status of the quinque voces – genus as an accident

The idea, that genus is an accident is already to be found in the Greek philosophy. As far as I am aware, the earliest example of this idea was held by Alexander of Aphrodisias. In his *Questiones* I.11, he already distinguishes between the quiddity and universality – in the sense that universals exist only while being thought.[258]

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[252] Adamson - Key, 2015, 85.

[253] *ʾIbāra*, 26, 8–12. As for the question whether the specifics of several languages, like Arabic, would affect thinking, be it as interesting as it may be, it is almost impossible to answer in Avicenna. Even in case of special linguistic phenomena, like the *maṣdar*, Avicenna is at pains to interpret it in terms of the Aristotelian subject-predicate / substance-accident distinction: the several meanings of the *maṣdar* are all accidents in the substance, because they signify accidental relations in the substance to what happens to them or comes from them. Like "hitting" is an accident in Zayd, if he hits someone - denoting an activity of his.)

[254] See for example Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī from the Baghdad school: for him, the subject matter of logic is expressions that signify universal things, while its scope is the composition of the expressions that corresponds to how the signified things are. (*Maqālāt Yaḥyā Ibn ʾAdī Falsafiyya*, 421, 4–7; 422,9; 423, 14–15.)

[255] *Madkhal*, 22–23.

[256] al-Fārābī, *Manṭiqiyyāt*, (Dānishpazhūh) 11; (ʿAjam) 55–56. Quoted by Street, 2004, 537.

[257] *Madkhal*, 23.

[258] See, Galluzzo, 2008, 339; Tweedale, 1984; Sharples, 2005. Chiaradonna, 2013, 320. It would be beyond the scope of this chapter to engage in discussing the consistency of Alexander's view, but it is worth to notice, that the idea was not a new one in Avicenna's time. Moreover, the same idea appears - according my knowledge - in another context too: it could be found probably in Alexander's lost commentary to the *Categories*, regarding

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Al-Fārābī, following the footsteps of this tradition, had already developed the theory further. In the Book of the Letters, he also addresses the question of the secondary intelligibles. [259] Al-Fārābī adds, that these are concepts (*maʿānī*), being also intelligible things, but, in contrast to other intelligibles, are not images of the sensibles; they exist only in the mind. As such, they can be predicated of each other, each one being a universal concept in itself. [260]

3.2.3 Avicenna's logical genus

Avicenna equally has a clear-cut view about the status of mental accidents that adhere to concepts in the mind. In the *Madkhal* of the *Shifā'*, he reiterates the threefold distinction of quiddities that can be either natural (*ṭabīʿī'*), intelligible (*ʿaqlī*), or logical (*manṭiqī*), or echoing Late-antique tradition that may be labeled as before multiplicity, in multiplicity and after multiplicity.[261]

As for the „logical genus," it is simply the intention/meaning (*mafhūm*) of the *genus* that it may be said of many [things], that differ in species to the question what it is? This notion does not signify anything, say an animal or the like.[262] It is only a mental concept that means a certain relation.[263] In a like manner, broader concepts like „general" (*ʿāmm*) has a clear meaning in the mind having relations to many things, namely that a general concept applies to many instances.[264]

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predicability of the genus. Actually, we have a fragmented passage in ancient Armenian, which quotes Alexander, translated by Ernst Günther Schmidt into German. [258] The author quotes some parallels from the late-antique commentators, as from Ammonius and Dexippus. According to the former, in commenting on Aristotle's *Categories* 1b10 (*ὁταν ἕτερον καθ ἑτέρου κατηγορῆται*) one could raise the following objection: if someone predicates genus of animal, and animal of man, then he should conclude, that genus would be also predicated of man. But, according to Ammonius, this is not the case, because Aristotle means those predicates which can be said essentially, and really, not those, which are predicated only accidentally, or relatively. See, Ammonii, *in Cat.*, 30,25–31,12.

[259] al-Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, 64: "Also, these intelligibles, which come to be in the soul from the sensible existents, if they are in the soul, have accidents attached to it, inasmuch as they are in the soul, by which some of them become genus, some species (…)"

[260] According to Al-Fārābī's pupil, Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī, universals occupy a clear ontological status – they have logical existence – i.e. they are only in the mind, as opposed to natural existence, which means the existence in outer reality, and divine existence, which is restricted to concepts in themselves.Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 154.Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī drops a hint about the logical existents. Every universal concept is composed of the notion of something plus universality. He proves this by drawing a parallel with the accident "writing": *Because "writer" is a name, which points to Zayd for example, by means of "writing", which exists in him, and is derived from its name. It is clear, that our utterance universal is from this kind* (the second among names. And this is because it is derived from the name universality). On this topic see Rashed 2004, Adamson 2007.

[261] *Madkhal*, 65, 4–6. The before, after and in multiplicity is already to be found in the commentators, like in Ammonius, *in Isag*., 41, 17–20.

[262] *Madkhal*, 66, 11–12.

[263] *Madkhal*, 66, 18.

[264] *Madkhal*, 66, 5.

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These mental properties have a hierarchy, according to generality and specificity. Taking the *Tabula Pophyriana*, it is based on the subordination of logical technical terms. However, these technical terms are accidental to the quiddity in itself. As to their status, Avicenna's answer runs parallel to an ambiguity that goes back to the Antique philosophy that clearly shows their accidentality: the problem occurred as early as Alexander of Aphrodisias' time. The fallacious syllogism sounds as follows: genus might be predicated of animal, animal, in turn of human, which gives an apparently false conclusion that human is a genus.[265] Ammonius formulates this fallacious syllogism as follows:[266]

The animal is a genus

The human is animal

The human is a genus

As Ammonius points out, the genus is predicated of the animal only accidentally and by relation, and whatever is predicated accidentally is not necessarily predicated of the subject of the conclusion.[267]

Avicenna reiterates the same syllogism.[268] In solving this difficulty, accordingly, he distinguished between two sorts of predication. First, genus may be said of its species, insofar as it is a genus (that is, it is considered as a logical genus), and second, genus may be said of the species of its subject in which it inheres as an accident. Here, genus is considered as a natural genus, i.e., as a quiddity that may be genus if conceived in the mind).[269]

As for the logical genus, it gives its name and definition to its species – like *summum genus*, or *genus proximum*: in this case, "genus in itself" is inevitably more general than its species. This plan works strictly on the mental level: the genus is predicated essentially of its subject, i.e., it gives its name and definition to its subject.

On the other hand, as Avicenna stresses, if the genus is said of animality, this is not an "essential" predication (*ḥaml 'alā*), since the nature of animality is not a genus in itself: it is not true that every animal is a genus. This statement is true only of a specific sort of animals, namely, universal animals that exist in the mind. In this case, the subject is not the animal in

[265] Schmidt, 1966, 280–281; Dexippus also brings up the same aporia in Dexippus, *in Cat*., 26, 13–16.
[266] Ammonius, *in Isag*. 31, 2–12.
[267] Ammonius, *in Isag*. 31, 10–12.
[268] *Maqūlāt*, 38, 17–18.
[269] *Madkhal*, 67, 15–68, 1.

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itself, but the animal is taken in a certain consideration, that is on the condition of abstraction (*bi-sharṭ al-tajrīd*), insofar as it is possible for it to be predicated of others, that is, it is possible for it to refer to many.[270] This consideration is more specific than its consideration in itself since it might be accompanied by a condition that it is abstracted from the accidents.

Thus, the fallacy of the syllogism lies in the fact that the first premise is taken under the condition of abstraction, in other words, it refers to animality as existing in the mind, not to animality taken in itself, whereas the second premise ([every] human is animal) refers to the things in themselves.

These logical concepts help to classify the logical terms that in turn, describe the relation of quiddities to each other. One of these logical concepts is individuality itself, and it is in this framework that Avicenna treats individuality at considerable length: an animal is not an individual by itself, only accidentally so; if we say "individual animal" it means the animal in itself and individuality, as a superadded meaning. On the epistemic level, it classifies our mental concepts.

3.2.4 Arabic philosophers on individuals

Before we turn to Avicenna's solution, we shall briefly take into account the views of his predecessors. Actually, unlike Aristotle, Porphyry has already allowed the predication of individual terms – that among predicates some are said of only one thing, as individuals, like Socrates, this man, and this object.[271] Even the description of individuals (the individuals are constituted as a proper complex of characteristics) implies that individuality started to enjoy a sort of mental status. Later in the tradition, among medieval Arabic thinkers like in al-Kindī, the term individual appears beside the quinque voces as if it was a *vox sexta*:

> Every utterance has a meaning: they are either genus, or species (*ṣūra*), or individual (*shakhṣ*), or difference, or proprium or general accident. Two things connect all these: the substance and the accident. The genus, species, individual, difference are substantial, and the proprium and the general accident are accidental.[272]

Thus, al-Kindī treats the term individual as if it would belong to the *quinque voces*; al-Fārābī, according to his general account of secondary intelligibles,[273] might have included it among them, although – to my best knowledge – we have no textual evidence for that. However, in his paraphrase of the *Eisagoge*, he has pretty much to say about individuals: starting from simple,

[270] *Maqūlāt*, 38, 17–39, 5.
[271] Porphyrius, *Isagoge*, 2, 17–19.
[272] Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 62–63.
[273] al-Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, 64–66.

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signifiable meanings, he insists that universal notions are those in (regard of) which two or more (things) may be similar. In contrast, he insists that the individual notion is that in (regard of) which no two (things) may be similar at all.[274] Then, al-Fārābī comes up with the usual distinction between universal and individual/particular that relies on the predicability on the terms: universal is that which may be predicated of more than one, and individual is that which cannot be predicated of more than one.[275]

However, the first description goes back to the notions (*maʿānī*) themselves, and their relationship to their significations. To reiterate: the individual notion (*maʿnā*) is something in which no two things may be similar; thus, it is a notion that may not be shared except by one item. Al-Fārābī does not clarify the issue more, whether this meaning is a simple one, an unshareable element, that is, a notion that is *per definitionem* unshareable; or it is a composite notion, as the notion of Zayd, which refers to a designated individual. However, this articulation seems to echo a sort of a learning method: while teaching the notions of „universal" and „particular/individual," the teacher points to common – similar properties, that is, properties shared by many. The terms signifying these meanings, indeed, refer to many. In contrast, an individual is something that has no similar element at all. As we shall see, Avicenna's argument has a similar consideration in this issue. Al-Fārābī reiterates the famous Aristotelian tenet as well that individuals falling under one species differ from each other in number.[276]

Al-Fārābī, as far as I am aware – nowhere in his extant works, addresses the Porphyrian bundle view of individuals that individuals are constituted by their proper characteristics. An exception to this would be his *Kitāb al-Taʿlīqāt*, the authenticity of which is doubtful.[277] In turn, he holds, along very Porphyrian lines, that accidents and *propria* are common in that they distinguish between species and species accidentally, but while the *proprium* differentiates one species from another always, some accidents may differentiate a species from some of them, and only temporarily. Thus, this kind of accident may be called as a relative *proprium*.[278] This tenet goes back to Aristotle's Topics, where he allows some accidents to be relative or temporal property: for example, whenever a man is the only person sitting, it is a temporal property, and if he is not the only one sitting, it is still a property in relation to those who are not sitting.[279] Actually, this is the idea that al-Fārābī applies in this context: in a company, if someone asks which one

[274] al-Fārābī, *Manṭiqiyyāt*, I, 28; *Tawṭi'a*, (al-ʿAj□m), 60; *Madkhal* (al-ʿAjam), 75.
[275] al-Fārābī, *Manṭiqiyyāt*, I, 29; *Madkhal* (al-ʿAjam), 75.
[276] al-Fārābī, *Manṭiqiyyāt*, I, 30; *Madkhal* (al-ʿAjam), 76.
[277] Gutas, 1988, 143, n.6.
[278] al-Fārābī, *Manṭiqiyyāt*, I, 37; *Madkhal* (al-ʿAjam), 84.
[279] Aristotle, *Topica*, 102b 20–26.

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is Zayd, and the answer is that he is the one who is talking if no one happens to be talking at that moment. In this case, the accident talking distinguishes him (*yumayyizuhu*) from all the others, even if they are all capable of talking any time. Thus, al-Fārābī links the distinction by accidents to a relation, to a given time (*waqt maḥdūd bi-ʾaynihi*) and a given, definite thing (*shay' maḥdūd bi-ʾaynihi*).[280]

The inseparable accidents are more effective in differentiating between individuals than the separable ones.[281] Of course, this view can be traced back also to Porphyry.[282] What is worth of interest in here is that al-Fārābī clearly attributes to the accidents the role of distinction (*tamyīz*). However, he does not seem to be interested in clarifying the criterion of the distinction between individuals, however, following Aristotle, he takes them as relative properties that link the distinction between individuals to time and concrete particulars. In this text, al-Fārābī does not speak about the constitution of individuals; rather, he attributes to the accidents a mere distinguishing role.

3.2.5 Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī and the Baghdad school

The Baghdad school in general held that the term "individual" is equivocal, which provoked Avicenna's sharp critic, as we will see in short. To my knowledge, at least two members of the Baghdad school shared this view, Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī and Avicenna's contemporary, Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Ṭayyib. To understand what they might have meant by the equivocity of the term "individual," one should start from their general tenets regarding equivocity and univocity. We are in a far better position regarding Ibn al-Ṭayyib because his commentary on the *Eisagoge* and the *Categories* are available.

On the other hand, Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī has only two short treatises on the equivocity of the individual. Both have practically the same contents: his opponents erred in two domains regarding the univocity of individuals. The first is about the interpretation of the controversial Porphyrian description, *the individual is that which is constituted by special characteristics, the assemblage of which cannot be the same in any other particular at any time*, and the second is an epistemic argument. According to Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, their main argument is based on the definition of univocal and equivocals: he reiterates the Aristotelian tenet[283] that univocals are those terms that if true, their definitions are true as well,[284] in the sense that if the name applies

[280] al-Fārābī, *Manṭiqiyyāt*, I, 37; *Madkhal* (al-ʿAjam), 84.
[281] al-Fārābī, *Manṭiqiyyāt*, I, 37; *Madkhal* (al-ʿAjam), 85.
[282] Porphyrius, *Isagoge*, 8, 7–12,11.
[283] Aristotle, Categories, 1a1–2, 5–6.
[284] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 174.

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to something, its content applies to it also. In case of individuals, the Porphyrian description of individuals applies to every individual, since what the term „individual" means, is the same in every individual, namely, that the bundle of its special characteristics cannot be the same in anything else. This is the usual interpretation of individuals. To put it simply, the philosophical notions, in general, are univocal terms, like substance, accident, individual. These are not equivocal terms, because they represent one definition or description that is true of everything of which they are predicated. In other words, Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī's opponents insist that the term individual is univocal since the reference of the term „individual" – the frequently quoted Porphyrean description – applies to every individual in the same way.

Their second argument, as Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī reports, is an epistemological one. Since the meaning of the term is one and common to everything of which it is predicated, if I know one instance, I also know that it is applicable of anything onto which its name fits. This statement may be best understood as compared to pure equivocity: since it is the property of equivocals that if I happen to know one of them, I cannot know any other instance of it bearing the same name. If I know that *ʾayn* means "eye" in Arabic, my knowledge that *ʾayn* means "eye" does not lead me to know that *ʾayn* means "well", or "fountain" in Arabic, because the definition of "eye" and "well" has nothing in common, except that their names happen to be the same by chance. On the other hand, if I know that Zayd is an individual – that he is unique, and in consequence, he has properties the bundle of which cannot be found the same in anything else – I know that ʿAmr is an individual too because this description is true of his essence as well. Indeed, the denotation of the term individual does not change in Zayd nor ʿAmr.

Thus, Ibn ʿAdī's colleagues start from the assumption that *no* equivocal term[285] is so constructed that we should infer from the knowledge of one of them to the knowledge of the other. They take proper names as examples: if we know that Zayd Ibn ʿAbdallāh is called Zayd, we cannot infer that Zayd Ibn ʿAmr is called Zayd too.[286] They propose a Cesare syllogism:

No [equivocal] is [such that if I know one of them, I know the others, denoted with the same name as well]

All [individuals] are [such that if I know one of them, I know the others, denoted with the same name as well]

---

[285] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 208: *lā wāḥid min asmāʾ mushtaraka*.
[286] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 209.

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No [individual] is [equivocal][287]

Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī's response to them consists of two phases, a semantic and an epistemological one. In the latter, he attacks the first premise and shows that it is not true that No [equivocal] is [such that if I know one of them, I know the other as well].

As for the first, according to him the Porphyrian description of individuals already contains equivocal terms, and then, in both treatises, he tries to refute their epistemological argument. He shows that it is not the property of univocal alone that knowing one instance of them entails the knowledge of another. He shows that this statement is true of some equivocals also, thus, this argument, as applied to the term "individual" does not entail that individuals be univocal.[288] Therefore, the first premise is false.

As for his first step, he simply asserts that the Porphyrian description contains equivocal terms, namely the properties: individuals are those whose bundle of properties cannot be the same in anything else. Here, as Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī stresses, Zayd's properties are other than ʿAmr's properties. Thus, they cannot signify the same meaning. In consequence, Zayd's essence is other than ʿAmr's essence.[289]

However, the difficulty in this argument seems to be that Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī does not use the term property (*khawāṣṣ*) in its technical meaning that is, as a logical notion applied on the mental level. To understand it as an equivocal means that this one name refers to several meanings, to all the accidents and properties Zayd might have. However, in this case, the rest of the technical terms, like the term "substance" would be equivocal as well because it refers to different individual natures as applied to Zayd and ʿAmr.

> I told him: We say now that „other" differentiates between individuals [in the same way] as it differentiates between two different species.
>
> He said: Yes, because the nature of the individual – if you prefer, say that the intention of the individual as an individual – is other than the nature of this other individual.
>
> I said to him: The description of the individual may be true of all of them, and this name inevitably falls on the uttered [intention] (*musammā*), which is its meaning (*ma'nā*). Moreover, that meaning exists in many.
>
> He said: it is only true by relation (*munāsaba*), that the proper characteristics that constitute this individual have a relation to [this individual]. This relation is the same as the relation of the other [proper characteristics]

[287] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 209.
[288] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 209–210.
[289] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 169; 209.

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> to that [individual]. Moreover, this is because what he says, "the proper characteristics' is an equivocal term. So, the proper characteristics of which the individual of Zayd is constituted is other (*ghayr*) than that of the individual of ʿAmr. [This is] because the meaning "individual" in none of them is like the nature of man in each one of which falls under [the species of human].[290]

It is not easy to reconstruct what Ibn ʿAdī might have had in mind. However, just before this passage, he reminds that Porphyry smashed the difference between individuals falling under one species and individuals falling under several species. In the Porphyrian formulation only the *differentia specifica* (the most proper difference, *διαφορά ἰδιαίτατα, al-faṣl khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*)[291] produces an "other" (*ἄλλο, ākhar*) – when "rational" added to "animal" it results in "human" – whereas general and proper differences produce only otherlike (*ἀλλοῖον, ghayr*) – when "white" is added to "human", it results in a white human – that is, a human of different quality, which is a sort of accidental difference.[292] In a fragment Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī offers an explanation: the „in another" (*fī ākhar*) as applied to individuals in the Porphyrian "bundle" statement (*alladhī yataqawwam min khawāṣṣ lā tūjad jumlatuhā fī ākhar ghayrihā*) indicates that the difference that is between individuals is constitutive for the individual essences, insofar as they are individuals, because the properties act like *differentiae specificae*: they constitute another individual substance. Porphyry used the term „otherlike" because the individual essences are accidental contrasted to their substances.[293] Individuals, falling under one *infima species*, like Zayd and ʿAmr have no specific difference, like „Zaydity" or „ʿAmrity" or the like.

Infimae species differ from each other in virtue of their *differentia specifica*, humans by their rationality. This rationality has one meaning that makes every human a human. However, individuals are constituted by proper characteristics, the assemblage of which cannot be found in any *other*. Taking this last fragment, it is the difference (*al-ikhtilāf*) is that which constitutes an individual qua individual. And still, qua individuals, they have different natures. Although they have no specific difference, they are different natures that may equally be called others.

However, if every individual has a unique nature, then how may the term „individual" apply to them? As we learn from the previous quotation, „individual" has still one meaning, the frequently quoted Porphyrian description that applies to different natures: for Ibn ʿAdī and later

[290] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 169.
[291] Porphyrius, *Isagoge*, 8, 8; Furfūriyūs, *Īsaghūjī*, 1072.
[292] Porphyrius, *Isagoge,* 8, 19–20; Furfūriyūs, *Īsaghūjī*, 1073.
[293] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 179. That is, Zayd and ʿAmr are accidental to the species human, because they have no specific difference; compared to each other, they differ in virtue of accidents, not due to a *differentia specifica*.

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for Ibn al-Ṭayyib it was only understandable if they understood the individual as an equivocal term. However, which kind of equivocity did they intend?

Ibn ʿAdī's opponent, taking a step back approves that the term individual, if predicated, is true only by correlation (*munāsaba*). That is, the individual natures are different, but they have something in common, namely a relation of the bundle of their characteristics to their subject.

Thus, every unique bundle has a relation to the individual substance in which it inheres. This relation (*nisba*) is unique, and thus the relation to one substance is true of every single individual. As we learn from the Neoplatonic commentary tradition and Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Ṭayyib, this falls under the category of equivocal by analogy/relation.

> The name "individual" includes all the individuals in the same way as an equivocal name, but it is not the same as an equivocal name which may occur anyhow, but under [the name "individual"] there is a certain meaning which is a relation in accordance with which it is. When it is seen it is called by this name ["individual"]. This relation is that the combination of the propria of each individual is not found in another, but it is that of which this individual is composed, and it is the other of which that other individual is composed.[294]

Ibn al-Ṭayyib's position is almost the same as Ibn ʿAdī's. For him, individual means the relation, to be more precise, the unique relation that the bundle of characteristics has to its subject.

In the case of Ibn al-Ṭayyib, we are in a very good position to evaluate his views on equivocity, because we his Commentary on Aristotle's Categories is available.

What he presents in this work is a clear continuation of the Late-antique commentary tradition. Names are equivocal, where one common utterance designates different definitions or descriptions. The commentators distinguished between two main sorts of equivocals: equivocals by chance and equivocals by deliberation. The former is the so-called pure equivocals, where the name is identical, but the definition under them are completely different, like the two Alexanders, as referring to Paris and the Macedonian.[295]

Equivocals by deliberation occur when someone thinks the matter over, and for a specific reason imposes the same names on different things. Under this type, there are several subgenres:[296]

a. by analogy (*bi-ṭarīq al-nisba*)

[294] Gyekye, 1979, 92.
[295] Simplicius, *in Cat*., 31, 23–32, 19; Ammonius, *in Cat*., 21, 16–22, 11.
[296] Ferrari, 2006, 37, 20–38, 17.

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b. by simile (*bi-ṭarīq al-tashbīh*)
c. deriving from one agent (*min fāʿil wāḥid*)
d. directed towards one goal (*tasūq ilā ghāya wāḥida*)
e. deriving from one agent and directed towards one goal
f. by „hope" (*ʿalā al-istibshār*)
g. by „memory" (*ʿalā al-tadhkira*)
h. by „hope and memory."

What is of greater concern for us is the very first type, namely the equivocal by analogy (*bi-ṭarīq al-nisba*). According to Ibn al-Ṭayyib, this is the following:

> Equivocals by analogy are like the point, the unity, the fountain of a river, and heart. All of these are called "principle" (*mabda'*) of the thing from which they derive. As for the point, it is [the principle of] the line, because the line is generated from its evolving. The unity is [the principle of] number, the fountain is [principle of] the river and the heart is [the principle of] the animal. These are not called principle by chance, but by deliberation and thinking. This is because when a thinker thinks [of them], he finds them as deriving from [a principle] in the same way, he finds a correspondence between them in the name because of the relation that he found as being common in them, namely, in those that derive from it. Even if their natures are different, they evolve in the same way.[297]

Actually, these things, like the river, the line, number, are all derived from a principle. As for the examples that Ibn al-Ṭayyib cites, they recall Aristotle's account of the principle from the Book Delta of the Metaphysics,[298] but it follows more closely Simplicius' Commentary on the Categories. For Simplicius, the equivocals by analogy are the second subsection of equivocals by deliberation, and the first example that he enumerates is the "principle" (ἀρχὴ).[299] Their starting point is entirely different, the point, unity, fountain – although all of them might be called a principle. This is because they all have something in common: a certain relation, which in this case means that something derives from them.

Thus, here we have different natures, but they share one aspect: because of this relation, they all might be called a principle.

This helps us to understand the second, epistemic response. We shall remember, that Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī attacks the first premise: No [equivocal] is [such that if I know one of them, I know the other as well]. He shows that there are indeed equivocals of which this statement is true. There are equivocals the subject of which contains at least one meaning, which is common, whereas

[297] Ferrari, 2006, 37, 20–27.
[298] Aristotle, *Met*., 1012b34–1013a11.
[299] Simplicius, *in Cat.*, 31, 33. Note the similarity (Ibid., 31, 34–32, 2): *δεύτερος δὲ ἀπὸ διανοίας τρόπος ὁ κατὰ ἀναλογίαν, ὅταν ἀρχὴ λέγεται ὁμωνύμως τῶν μὲν ἀριθμῶν ἡ μονάς, τῆς δὲ γραμμῆς ἡ στιγμή, των δὲ ποταμῶν ἡ πηγὴ καὶ των ζῴων ἡ καρδία.*

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the others are not. For example, "white": since white is in the snow, swan, white lead and salt, they share one element, whiteness, whereas their natures are different. From knowing that one of them is white one might easily infer that the other is white too. Thus, Ibn ʿAdī concludes that it doesn't follow necessarily that the white is not equivocal.[300]

As Ibn ʿAdī presents this argument, a slight fallacy seems to be there: white in his example works like a univocal term. If he meant that white is homonym, just because the degree of whiteness is different in each, it might have been understood as an equivocal, or at least, a certain kind of equivocals, but he leaves us without further specification. Even though white has nothing to do with equivocals by analogy, Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdi's move intends to falsify the first, already quoted premise. The example of white does just that.

For Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī and Ibn al-Ṭayyib, the term individual works along the same lines. It covers different natures – that of Zayd and ʿAmr respectively, but these natures have something in common: they are unique, and the bundle of their properties cannot be found the same in anything else. Thus, they are similar in sharing this notion. Otherwise, they are different essences.

The sentence "Zayd is an individual and ʿAmr is an individual" runs parallel with the sentence "The fountain is a principle, and the point is a principle." In the latter, the fountain and point are different natures, although they share a certain notion, namely that something derives from them. However, this latter short of equivocals is on the level of secondary substances; whereas the term "individual" as an equivocal term is predicated only of primary substances.

However, there are several problems with this position. One might wonder why would not be this type a univocal term: since even the term individual as referring to Zayd and ʿAmr denotes a common element, namely the unique relation to their substances. In this case, even the term *substance* ("not in a subject") should be equivocal because it denotes different substances, in a proposition like Zayd is a substance. However, the substantiality in Zayd is the same definition of substantiality that is to be found in ʿAmr. In propositions like the tree is a substance, and the horse is a substance, the definition of substantiality is predicable of them in the same way.

Nevertheless, there is a difference between the proposition "the tree is a substance" and "Zayd is a substance." The first one is true always, whereas the latter is not. That is to say; individual propositions do not express universal and unchangeable truths. This idea often recurs in Ibn ʿAdī's oeuvre. In his short essay on the relation of logic and grammar he concludes that unlike grammar, the subject matter of logic is not signifying expressions in general, but expressions

[300] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 170, 210.

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that signify universal things, namely, the *quinque voces*.[301] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī's theory on the threefold distinction of common things corroborates this view. According to which common things might have logical existence, insofar as they exist in the soul, like the "universal human," natural existence, insofar as they exist in the individuals, that is, in the matter along with the accidents that render it an individual, like the individual human, Zayd. Besides, the intention of the definition of human (rational, mortal animal) exists apart from these two existences, enjoying a divine sort of existence, which is ontologically prior to the former two. [302] When we predicate human of Zayd, we predicate the absolute, unspecified humanity, namely the one that exists by the divine existence.[303] In other words, our predicate, in this case, is a common item between the two sorts of existences. Since Zaydity is not such a common item, it cannot be predicated in this way. Second, the adjective universal is a derived name, coming from universality, which means that it can be predicated of more than one object, and universals are composites in the mind, being composed of the intention of a definition, like human, and universality.[304] Nevertheless, Ibn ʿAdī does not mention particularity or individuality as logical predicates, but they could easily mean logical references in the same way as universality does. Similarly, Avicenna draws a clear ontological distinction between mental concepts, and those things, which exist in the outer reality. In contrast to this view, he practically lifts individuality to the level of mental concepts. For Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī and Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Ṭayyib the term *individual* is equivocal by analogy: the proposition "Zayd is an individual" means for them that Zayd is constituted of a unique bundle of characteristics which is related to its subject. In other words: the bundle of characteristics has a unique, unshareable relation, and this is the meaning that applies to every single individual. Although this relation – *nisba* – seems to be univocal because it is the same relation in every individual; but this relation depends on the unique bundle itself, without which it has no meaning. Thus, the proposition "Zayd is an individual" means that Zayd is constituted of a unique bundle of characteristics having a specific relation to its subject," which is different in every single case.

3.2.6 Individuality

The equivocity of individuals according to the Baghdad school was obviously known for Avicenna because he turns against this view, as far as individuality is concerned. According to him, individuality – *šakhṣiyya* – is like the absolute genus and the other logical intelligibles:

[301] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 419.
[302] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 154.
[303] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 156.
[304] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 155.

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> We don't say that Zayd and Amr are individuals as equivocals, as most of them think, unless, that we mean by the individual a certain individual. As far as the absolute individual is concerned, it signifies one general meaning. Thus, if we say that Zayd is individual, we don't mean by that that he is Zayd, but we mean that he is [an individual] inasmuch as its meaning (*mafhūm*) cannot be shared by anyone else. However, this meaning is shared by others. Therefore, individuality is [one] of those states, which are attached to the natures subjected to absolute genus and absolute species.[305]

Thus, for Avicenna, individuality is a similar notion to the absolute genus and absolute species[306]: it is a mental accident that accedes to a quiddity in itself, like humanity, and in consequence, the individual human comes to be. For Avicenna, the term *individual* is univocal; it denotes the same concept in every instance that its meaning cannot be shared.

He understands the Baghdad peripatetics as saying that the term "individual" is equivocal by chance, namely that the meaning falling under the term *individual* is completely different in every instance: as predicated of Zayd it means the intention of Zayd, and as predicated of ʿAmr, it means the intention of ʿAmr. Nevertheless, as we saw above, their view is a bit more sophisticated. Still, Avicenna's critic is valid, even though the equivocity of individuals as elaborated in the Baghdad school is equivocal by analogy.

To avoid this difficulty, Avicenna lifts individuality to the secondary intelligibles. This move puts it among the logical accidents; thus, it interprets individuality in strictly logical terms.

The proposition that "Zayd is an individual" means that Zayd has a meaning that cannot be shared. Thus, what we understand of Zayd, his concept cannot be shared by anything else. This idea leads to an epistemic approach of individuals: what is the criterion that a certain concept cannot refer but to one object alone?

Avicenna's discussion in the *Madkhal* I. 12 has two approaches to describe individuals. The first is a derivative one, where he starts from the quiddity in itself and adds further elements to it until a concrete individual is formed in the mind. In this process – although it is not his goal – he mentions some criteria required for an individual to become an individual *in intellectu*:

> The individual becomes individual only, when accidental, concomitant and non-concomitant properties become linked to the nature of the species, and a piece of matter capable of indication has its being singled out for it. It is not possible to link as many characteristics to the species as you wish, so that, finally, there is no indication of an individuated concept, by which the individual is constituted in the intellect.[307]

[305] *Madkhal*, 71.
[306] I translated *jinsiyya* and *nawʿiyya* as absolute genus and species, respectively.
[307] *Madkhal*, 70.

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In conceptualization, starting from the species, human, one needs to add characteristics to it to arrive at the concept of the individual. However, following Avicenna's Pophyrean formula (the meaning of an individual cannot be shared by others), among the characteristics it has, there must be an already individuated, or individual element. In other words, the set of characteristics must have an element that singles it out from other individuals. Since it is in the mind, – we should not forget that Avicenna talks about concept-formation where all the predicates are universal: the assemblage of universals will always be shared by others. Therefore, in describing an individual in the mind, he needs to point to an individuated concept. In what follows, Avicenna seems to look for such a concept:

> So if you say: Zayd is the handsome, tall, literate so-and-so [man] as many attributes as you like; still the individuality of Zayd has not been singled out for you in the intellect. Rather it is possible for the concept consisting of the totality of all that to belong to more than one. Rather, however, existence and the ~~i~~ndication of an individual concept single out Zayd, as when you say that he is the son of so-and-so, is what is existent at a certain time, is the tall one, the philosopher. Moreover, then it would have occurred that at that time there is not something sharing with him in those attributes, and you would have already had this knowledge also by this occurrence, and that is through a perception analogous to what is indicated by sensation, in some mode indicating the very same so-and-so at the very same time. Here you would be verifying the individuality of Zayd, and this statement would be significative of his individuality.[308]

In this much-quoted passage, similarly to Elias' method, Avicenna raises the question of how a bundle of characteristics may be unique? In the previous text, he already made mention of an individual concept, and here, he elaborates the issue further. First, Avicenna seems to use consistently the verb *taʿayyana*, or *ʿayyana* (to single out, determine), [309] which implies a certain degree of definiteness.[310] As I will argue later, this term bears the same meaning in metaphysical context as well, signifying a determinate, but not fully clear state in the process of coming to be.

Avicenna, in contrast to most of the thinkers, both Greek and Arab, does not hold that the bundle of characteristics on its own would be theoretically unique. On the mental level, he stresses that the individuality of, say, Zayd, needs to be singled out by some feature.[311]

[308] *Madkhal*, 70. The translation is quoted from Gracia 1994, 48-49.
[309] This is the fifth and second form of the root *ʿayn*, which in philosophical context is analogous to the *šaḫṣ*, individual. Therefore, I prefer to translate it as to be singled out - or to be one; the term implies a certain degree of definiteness.
[310] Black, 2011. 267.
[311] This tenet corresponds to Question (1a), that is, what makes y by an individual, and (2ai), if y is an instantiated kind, what makes it differ from another instantiated kind. See Chapter 1.1.1.

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3.2.7 Existence and indication of an individual concept

First, Avicenna refers to existence and indication of an individual concept (*al-ishāra ilā ma'nā shakhsī*). To fully understand, what Avicenna may have had in mind, a careful analysis of these two concepts seems necessary.

The reference to existence can be best understood as taking into account Avicenna's ontological background that a certain quiddity may exist either in the mental or outer existence, that is, *humanity* exists either in the mind or in individuals. In my opinion, there at least two candidates for the meaning of existence in this passage:

1. Existence as conceived as the existence in individuals: the existence of Zayd that is, the *wujūd ithbātī* of the *Ilāhiyyāt* I.5. In this case, it is clear that the existence of Zayd is other than the existence of ʿAmr.
2. Existence as conceived as the existence in the mind: the very existence of the individual concept itself, so long as it is in the mind. The concept of Zayd exist in the soul when I think it; its existence is other than that of another individual, say, ʿAmr. It is very similar to two identical quadrangulars as conceptualized in the soul.

In the first case, it is existence *in re* that may have meant by *wujūd*, that is, the very existence of Zayd, his *wujūd ithbātī*. In other words, it signifies that Zayd exists from time A to time B. As such, this, particular existence is by all means unique to Zayd; however, as conceptualized, it only refers to the notion of existence in itself. Just like above, it must be specified with temporal relations to be taken as a determined, designated existence.

For Avicenna, existence is among the primary notions that cannot be grasped by definition, i.e., there is no "more known" concept that would explain its meaning.[312] It has no definition, no description; it has no genus and difference; nothing is more general than it.[313]

Thus, everyone has an instinct what "to be" might mean. On the other hand, as Avicenna frequently stresses, existence has only one meaning. He turns the table against those who maintain that the term "existent" would be a homonym.[314] A proponent of this view is Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī from the Baghdad school.[315] He goes so far as to say that who disregards the fact that

[312] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 29, 5–6.
[313] *Ilāhiyāt-i Dānishnāma*, 8.
[314] *Ilāhiyāt-i Dānishnāma*, 36–38.
[315] Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 154.

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the term "existent" means one thing is out of his mind.[316] Although Avicenna clearly ascribes himself to the view that existent is a "modulated" term (*ism mushakkik*) that it is one in everything of which it may be predicated, but it is still different according to priority and posteriority, nobleness and strength or weakness. [317] As Avicenna articulates it in the *Kitāb al-Mubāḥathāt*, existence does not differ in species; it only differs in strength and weakness. It is the quiddity of the thing which is different, but the existence it indues is not different in species: the horse and the human differ from each other due to their quiddities.[318] The sentence that "the human exists' or that "the horse exists" means no different sort of existence. Its meaning is the same because it has one determined meaning (*al-ashyā tashtarik fī al-thubūt wa-l-wujūd bi-mafhūm muḥaṣṣal wāḥid*).[319] However, in case of substance and accident, existence, although being the same, differs by a state: the existence of the substance is prior to the existence of the accident.[320]

This is Avicenna's simplified version of *tashkīk al-wujūd*.[321] In the philosophical tradition, the main problem that governed this inquiry was to understand how would "existence" be predicated of the ten categories? Then, in Avicenna's system, it seems to extend to a transcendental level, as Treiger has convincingly shown, insofar as it explains how could be both God and the creatures called "existent."[322]

What is more important for our purpose is the very fact that existence, taken as *wujūd ithbātī* has one determined meaning. Thus, as predicated of Zayd, and as predicated of ʿAmr, this feature does not distinguish between them. This predicate is only one in the bundle of predicates: in itself, it is just like "white": its meaning may be shared.

If we return to our passage, this seems to be the reason why Avicenna adds the indication of an individuated concept (*ishāra ilā ma'nā shakhsī*) to existence. The existence of Zayd, taken as a *wujūd ithbātī*, extends simply to his lifetime, starting from his birth.[323] Indeed, the second example Avicenna lists in his description is "the existent at a certain time" (*al-mawjūd fī waqt fulān*).[324]

[316] *Maqūlāt*, 59.
[317] *Maqūlāt*, 10,4–11,2.
[318] *Mubāḥathāt*, 41 [9].
[319] *Maqūlāt*, 60, 8; 12.
[320] *Maqūlāt*, 60, 13–16.
[321] For the history of this tenet see Treiger, 2012.
[322] Treiger, 2012, 360.
[323] Whether Zayd's person survives death, seems to be another question, to which we shall return later.
[324] *Madkhal*, 70, 16.

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However, as he makes it clear in the Metaphysics, even this reference is universal. If one would describe Zayd as he is the one who was killed in a certain town at a certain time, this description is still universal.[325]

In other words, a description must contain a feature that is already individuated; in other words, of which we know that it is individual.[326] Indeed, he inclines towards the indication (*ishāra*) of an individual concept. However, this indication refers to something sensible. Therefore, it is actually a sort of direct testimony.[327]

In the *Madkhal* of the *Shifā'*, he ascertains that even on the mental level, a sort of intellectual indication is needed: that is, it is not sense perception, but it is like sense-perception. This process, as Avicenna puts it, follows al-Fārābī's solution of relational accidents closely, that is, that common accident, like "white," or "standing" might distinguish certain individuals from another if at that particular time and place there is no one, who would share these features.

Avicenna alludes to the same idea:

> (...) As when you say that he is the son of so-and-so, the existent at a certain time, the tall one, the philosopher. And then it would have occurred that at that time there is not something sharing with him in those attributes, and you would have already had this knowledge also by this occurrence, and that is through a perception analogous to what is indicated by sensation, in some mode indicating the very same so-and-so at the very same time.[328]

Thus, any accident if at a certain time has no pair would be sufficient to distinguish it from anything else. However, this requires that we know that nothing is sharing with it at that time. In other words, it relies on memory of particular occurrences; if we happen to know that Zayd is in the room. We also know that there is no one else in the room, we know for sure that at that time "being in the room" may be predicated truly only of Zayd, then this feature is exceptionally significative of Zayd. Alternatively, if Zayd is the only son of ʿAmr, and we happen to know it, and we happen to know the same ʿAmr, i.e., the same individual, then the "Zayd is the son of ʿAmr" sufficiently singles out his concept from others. This process that relies on memory has an already individuated element: a given room with no one in it at a certain time, and ʿAmr respectively, who is known by those who share his memory. This brings us to the investigation of another term, namely, indication (*ishāra*).

[325] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 246, 12–13.
[326] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 246, 14–16; *Madkhal*, 70, 17–20.
[327] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 246, 15.
[328] *Madkhal*, 70, 16–19.

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3.2.8 Indication

This process, according to Avicenna, is very similar to sensible indication. In the *Maqūlāt* of the *Shifā'*, he defines what he means by indication:

> The indication is a sensible or intellectual reference to a determined thing, which nothing else can share, even if it would be of the same species.[329]

In this passage, Avicenna's main objective is to comment upon Aristotle's view that the substance seems to mean „a this": *πᾶσα δὲ οὐσία δοκεῖ τόδε τι σημαίνειν*.[330] Thus, being designatable by indication is a proper description of substances. Nevertheless, it is plain that accidents cannot be pointed at but accidentally: since they exist only in a substrate, the determination of the substrate makes their designation possible.[331] In short, Avicenna makes clear that accidents and secondary substances cannot be referred to by indication, only in an accidental sense; thus, indication in its proper sense refers to spatially extended primary substances. It is interesting to see how Avicenna articulates it:

> The sensible indication that singles out the substrate is distinctive only of the substances that may be distinguished by extension.[332]

Thus, only spatially, extensionally different substances are capable of sensible indication that occupy distinct spatial locations. This idea accords well with common sense that spatial determination is necessary for something to be designated. Nevertheless, as we will see, intellectual features are strictly devoid of spatial and temporal determination.

Therefore, what is more, interesting is the mental indication (*al-ishāra al-'aqliyya*). Here, Avicenna has to face two problems: (1) whether accidents are capable of mental indication, (2) whether secondary substances are capable of mental indication.

First, he highlights that accidents, taken as concepts, cannot be pointed at because their concept is universal, shareable by others – thus, whiteness in itself cannot be pointed at but as a universal: this contradicts to the original description that the indication cannot be shared. If we take an accident, like white as unshareable, it is impossible for the intellect to do.[333] Unless if it would inhere in mental substrates by which it would differ from others: like the concept of the "white horse" and the concept of the "white sheep" in my mind. In both cases, whiteness

[329] *Maqūlāt*, 103, 15–16.
[330] *Aristotle, Cat.* 3^{b}10. In Hunayn's translation: [...] *jawhar yadull 'alā maqṣūd ilayhi bi-ishāra*. (*Manṭiq Arisṭū*, 38.)
[331] *Maqūlāt*, 103, 16–18.
[332] *Maqūlāt*, 103, 18–19.
[333] *Maqūlāt*, 104, 3–4.

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inheres in different mental substrates, that is, it accedes to horseness and sheepness respectively. These two whites are different only due to their intellectual subjects to which they have a certain relation, that is, a relation of inherence. This subject serves as a matter for them.[334] In this case, however, these two concepts are two determined mental existents; and even if they would be indicated this way, they are not indicated at the first intention.

In this sense, two universal concepts might be indicated, but only because they have different content: horseness plus whiteness, and sheepness plus whiteness. Although "white horse" and "white sheep" may be indicated as distinct mental existents, both refer to all that is horse and white, or sheep and white at the same time. However, even if someone allows this kind of indication to be a proper indication, it would not be in the univocal sense. Avicenna insists that there is no indication of universals because they have no determination (*ta'ayyun*).[335] This last addition might be only understood if it means that they have no determination in the outer world.

Therefore, spatial differentiation is the crucial factor here, which is impossible on the intellectual level. In the following, we will turn the physical idea that excludes spatial particularity from the intellectual level. It serves as an argument that the intellectual soul is immortal, and it does not perish with the peril of the body. Nevertheless, since indication always refers to something endowed with spatial position, we find valuable remarks on this question here.

3.2.9 The place, where indication to an individual concept is possible

As we have already mentioned it in several contexts, the intellect cannot intellect an individual qua individual. If we return to Avicenna's passage in the Madkhal I.12, we see him alluding to an already acquired knowledge ("son of so and so"), to time ("existent at a certain time") so that nothing shares these features at that time.[336] This last one implies practically the awareness of a particular event.

Suppose that we are aware that Zayd has no brother at time t, and his father is ʿAbdallāh. The predicate that he is the *son of ʿAbdallāh* signifies only him, on the condition that we all agree on the identification of ʿAbdallāh, another individual.

[334] *Maqūlāt*, 104, 4–8.
[335] *Maqūlāt*, 104, 9–12.
[336] *Madkhal*, 70, 16–19.

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These examples, as being signified by proper names, are individuals. Their notions are contained in the memory, on a psychic faculty imprinted in a corporeal organ. For Avicenna, unlike the intellect, all the psychic faculties are placed in a bodily organ, and thus, they are divisible. The intellect thinks only the universal concepts, and his argument rests on the fact that a concept like this cannot be placed in a divisible faculty.[337]

The faculties of the soul, like the five senses, the sensus communis, imagination, estimation, and memory are all in a bodily, i.e., extended organ. In consequence, only the intellect can contain universal intelligibles, whereas the rest of the faculties cannot: their scope is restricted to particulars or spatially differentiated objects.

This leads us to Avicenna's theory of mental representation.[338] For the sake of simplicity, he prefers to present the problem by drawing squares: the two squares on the two sides are identical in every feature, except their position.

Avicenna then asks for the reason that explains their difference. There are several candidates: the form, a certain accident, either concomitant or separable, or their substrates. He concludes after a lengthy discussion that it cannot be the form of squareness, because it is the same for all the squares, nor the accidents, be they concomitant or separable. The concomitant accident is the same for all sharing the given quiddity; therefore, it does not differentiate. If the separable accident parts, the form of the imagined concept will change. The imagination does not imagine it like this because of an inhering thing; it just imagines it as it is.[339] It is possible to suppose among the intelligibles that being-to-the-right be superadded to squareness, but not in the imagination because here the image derives from the material object perceived by sense-perception. It is a direct representation, its being to the right is not due to its definition; at least, it might be due to something on the account which it is deserved to be described as such.[340] Moreover, this is the spatially distinct material substrate. If we change the position of the two squares, so that the one on the left goes to the right and the one on the right goes to the left, they

[337] This is what he attests in his letter addressed to al-Kiyā: *Mubāḥathāt*, 373 [1159]. This is the most important idea on which his argument for the immortality of the rational soul rests, however, there is no place here to get into more details. See *Nafs*, 188–192.
[338] See Black, 2014, 204–210.
[339] *Nafs*, 168, 11–16.
[340] *Nafs*, 169, 7–10.

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will still be different. Therefore, the only possibility left is that their difference is due to the divisible substrate in which they inhere. In other words, the only candidate left is that their distinction is due to the difference of parts in the receiving faculty or tool, in which they are imprinted.[341]

The spatially differentiated images may be represented only in a spatially extended organ that has spatially distinct parts. Otherwise, the representation of spatially non-distinct objects is impossible. Avicenna goes so far as to admit that a concept cannot be represented in the imagination, only as individuated:

> As far as the imagination is concerned, until the concept is not individuated by which it is individuated, it cannot be represented for the imagination. […] until the represented does not have a determined particular position; it cannot be imprinted in the imagination, nor may it be anything that might be subject for any supposition.[342]

The author stresses the importance of the determined particular position (*waḍʿ maḥdūd juzʾī*), as a *sine qua non*: if it not spatially extended, it cannot be differentiated from a similar object.

If we start from an intellectual concept, the problem is the same. We may conceptualize humanity or the universal human, but we cannot represent it in the imagination, only as endowed with individuating features, and, only if we posit it into a spatially structured field. If we imagine Zayd and ʿAmr together, they must be in spatial relation to each other, that is, in our imagination, they must stand beside each other.

Although Avicenna is not that explicit regarding spatial accidents, this is what he makes clear in the *Dānishnāma-yi ʿAlāʾī*:

> Whenever we strive to propel this concept [i.e., that of humanity] into the imagination, we cannot – and the estimation does not accept it – but whenever the imagination or the estimative faculty want to receive it, it makes an individual form (*ṣūrat-i shakhṣī*) [from it], like Zayd or ʿAmr, or a human being who has never been. However, if it has been, it would have been an individual [human] on the one hand, and it would have been mixed with material features.[343]

In this passage Avicenna offers a reversed perspective: if we start from a universal concept, like humanity, we cannot imagine it, unless, if we endow it with several accidents, that is we represent it in our mind. It means that it is a concrete particular or an imagined one.

[341] *Nafs*, 167,12–170,9.
[342] *Nafs*, 169, 14–17.
[343] *Ṭabīʿiyyāt-i Dānishnāma*, 106.

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Thus, apart from the intellect, the inner faculties of the human soul are in a spatially extended organ. He is adamant that the intellect can think only universals, and the assemblage of universals will still be universal.

As it became clear above, the so-called individual concept cannot be intelligible; because every single intelligible concept is universal. Thus, it must be retained in a divisible organ, where particular features may be represented.

This is for the identification of Zayd: we may identify it only if temporal and spatial relations are taken into consideration, as we saw in the *Madkhal* I.12.

Nevertheless, this is only the epistemological whereabouts of individual concepts. This theory leads us to the metaphysical necessity of spatial difference of individuation. The mental representation mirrors this condition, which is a sufficient reason that explains the distinctness of different objects.

Avicenna's theory on the vague individual clearly mirrors this distinction. The vague individual is an undetermined concept of an individual, but it is not a unanimous opinion in the secondary literature, whether it means imagined and mentally represented individuals or intellectual, vacuous concepts of individuals. In the next chapter, I will argue that this idea relates to vacuous intellectual concepts as well. On the other hand, this is a good bridge that leads us back to the conceptualization of individuals, because the vague individual is another formulation of individuality, namely that the concept of the individual consists of a given quiddity in itself and the concept of individuality.

3.2.10 The individuum vaguum – *al-shakhṣ al-muntashar*

In the mind, the concept of an individual is unshareable, in the sense that its meaning cannot be shared by anything else. Every intelligible, however, is universal, and a assemblage of universals, although they narrow down the scope of reference, will still be universal.[344] Looking for a criterion that renders a concept to signify only one object, Avicenna concludes that ostensive indication (*ishāra*) will play this role. However, the indication can only refer to a sensible thing that is spatially located; namely, that is distinguished from others by extensional accidents.

[344] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 246, 4–6.

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Thus, the assemblage of universals that describes Zayd is theoretically shareable; that is, the assemblage of universal properties is still undetermined.

The concept of an individual as a bundle of intelligibles recalls Avicenna's notion of the vague individual (*individuum vaguum, shakhṣ muntashar*). The vague individual is an undefined individual subsumed under a certain species. [345]

Thus, it implies an understanding of an undetermined individual which is contrasted with the determinate or designated individual (*mu'ayyan, mushār ilayhi*).[346] According to Debora Black's contention, Avicenna is adamant in holding that the vague individual would refer only to sensible perceptions.[347]

Avicenna, however in the first book of the Physics seems to propose an intellectual account of vague individuals. He proposes two meanings of the vague individual, where the second one is only equivocally such. The first meaning is that it is a certain individual among the individuals of the species under which it is subsumed, without specifying which one it is, or how it may be described.[348] The second account, which is only equivocally such, means something else by the same denotation: it is a this, a determined, let us say, corporeal individual, which cannot be anything else, but still classifiable as being an animal or an inanimate body.[349] That is, it still can be specified with more genera, as the animate (*ḥayawān*) and inanimate (*jamādī*) terms imply, both being subsumed under "body" in the *Tabula Porphyriana*. This latter is indeed, cannot be intellectual, because it is referred to as one defined, designatable object, and this is what only can be placed in a divisible psychic faculty.

On the other hand, the first meaning of the vague individual may be universal. Avicenna clarifies this first meaning of "vague individual" in this way: "It is as though the sense of *individual,* [which means that it is] not divided into the multitude of those who share in its definition, has been combined with the account of nature applied relative to the species or the kind. From them both, there is derived a single account termed *a vague, indeterminate individual*— just as is indicated by our saying, "Rational, mortal animal is one," which does not apply to many nor is it defined in this way. The definition of individuality is added to the definition of the specific nature."[350]

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[345] *Samā'*, 9. Tr., Jon McGinnis, 2009, 9. *the reason is that what is understood by the expression vague individual in [the first] case is one of the individuals of the species to which it belongs, without determining how or which individual*.
[346] Black, 2011, 260.
[347] Black, 2011, 268.
[348] *Samā'*, 10. Tr., Jon McGinnis, 2009, 10.
[349] *Samā'*, 11.
[350] *Samā'*, 9. Tr., McGinnis, 2009, 9.

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In this passage Avicenna practically reiterates what we have seen in the *Madkhal* I.12: he returns to his model: he adds to nature (humanity), which might be a species as classified in the mind, the concept of individuality. In this wording, individuality is that which is not divided into those who share its definition. This description seems to follow what the Greek term *ἄτομον*-individual comprises that it is not divisible to those that share its definition – because, nothing shares actually its definition.

What is more, Avicenna gives an example of this model of "nature plus individuality": „A rational, mortal animal is one" in which the predicate "one" runs parallel with individuality. What is striking here, is Avicenna's example: predicating „oneness" of a certain human (a rational mortal animal), that is, a certain human is one and taken in this way, it cannot be predicated of many. Again, it implies that this concept is such that it is a certain species, like humanity, taken with a specification that it is one, and as one, it cannot be applied to many. Nevertheless, this whole description applies to any individual subsumed under that very species.

In Avicenna's example, the subject is particular – because the definite article is missing – which makes it refer to an indeterminate, not quantified object. (Nevertheless, the proposition would work equally well in a universal form that „every rational mortal animal is one").[351] Since the whole notion of the vague individual is meant to mean an indefinite concept that is not yet qualified, or not yet decided to which object it refers.

This reading is corroborated by Avicenna's concluding words:

> So, the vague individual in the first meaning can be thought to be any existing individual of that genus or the one species. In the second meaning, however, it cannot be thought to be just any individual of that species, but can only be this single, determinate one.[352]

The first sentence clearly implies that the vague individual works like a universal. When it comes to semantics, it acts as the intellectual notion of the individual, that is applicable to any individual subsumed under the given species. This is an intellectual conceptualization of the vague individual.

Thus, I see no reason why a vague individual would not refer to intellectual objects too.[353] This reading implies a looser sense of the *individuum vaguum*. It is true that Avicenna uses this concept for different purposes, as Deborah Black has already highlighted: in the

[351] If we take the universal human concept as an existent in the mind.
[352] *Samā'*, 9. Tr., McGinnis, 2009, 9, with my modifications.
[353] In contrast to Black's view, since she thinks that for Avicenna vague individual refers only to sensible preceptions. Black, 2011, 260.

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epistemological sense it serves to mean an intermediate stage in the bodily psychical faculties that lead to abstraction. Both imagination and estimation have recourse to the vague individual.[354] In the metaphysical sense, it explains how providence is meant to maintain not concrete individuals but a whole species.[355] Nevertheless, the idea that providence extends only to universals supposes an intellectual undetermined conception of individuals. The celestial intellects can only think universals. In one of Avicenna's latest works, the spurious *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt*, he deals with God's knowledge of particulars at great length. Actually, this question is an upside-down perspective compared to abstraction: here, the problem is how to grasp individuals in a universal way. Here the author refers to vague individuals as an object of the intellect. Unlike designated individuals that may be identified by indication or by referring to their position in a given moment, the vague individual may be grasped by the intellect, but it may refer to many.[356] Even if it is composed by one of Avicenna's pupils, it equally allows for the intellectual role of vague individuals.

The main passage that seems to imply that the vague individual refers to objects of imagination (*khiyāl*) is the following: *wa-hādhā al-khiyāl alladhī yartasimu fīhi mathal-an min al-shakhṣ al-insānī muṭlaq-an ghayr mukhaṣṣaṣ, huwa khiyāl al-ma'nā alladhī yusammā muntashir-an*.[357]

In Black's translation, the phrase sounds as follows:

> And this image which is inscribed in it, for example, of the human individual taken absolutely without specification, is the imagined intention which is called 'vague.'[358]

Here, the related pronoun *alladhī* might refer to *al-ma'nā* (concept) and *khiyāl al-ma'nā* (imagination of the concept) as well. Deborah Black seems to understand it in the second sense; however, it may be read as referring to the *al-ma'nā* alone, in the sense that it is the very concept that is vague, not the imagined concept. In this interpretation, we have a vague concept – on the intellectual level – occasionally having a representation in the imagination.

In other words, the definition he offers does not exclude the possibility for the vague individual to refer to a mental, intelligible concept. However, as we saw, it has different roles according to the different contexts in which it occurs.

[354] Black, 2011, 267.
[355] Black, 2011, 262.
[356] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 33, (M) 67–68 [58].
[357] *Samā'*, 9.
[358] Black, 2011, 267.

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Turning back to the *Madkhal* I.12, Avicenna, in his tenet that only existence and the indication to an individuated concept singles out an individual, use the term *yu'ayyinuhu* – the participle of which (*mu'ayyan*) usually stands for the designated individual. It implies that Avicenna speaks about a non-designated, that is, a sort of a vague individual.

We saw Avicenna's view on the intellectual conceptualization of individuals, and we saw the problems he faced during their identification. The individual must be singled out by an individual element, that is by spatial relations that may exclusively be indicated by indexical references. What is left to consider is the logical tools by which an individual can be grasped and identified.

3.2.11 Definitions and descriptions

In a similar vein as in the Peripatetic and Neoplatonic commentary tradition, Avicenna maintains that individuals cannot be defined. Aristotle insists in numerous passages that there is no demonstration of perishable things, and there is no knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of them simpliciter, but accidentally.[359] Since sensible individuals have a matter, they undergo change, and they can be otherwise, whereas demonstration and proper knowledge may hold only for necessary, and unchangeable truths. Thus, we only may have an opinion (δόξα) of particulars.[360]

Avicenna reiterates this Aristotelian position that individuals can be known only accidentally.[361] First, because the demonstration must consist of universal and eternal (*dā'im*) premises, and if an individual, like Zayd, is the subject of the minor premiss, it is no longer universal, nor eternal. In consequence, the conclusion would be equally individual.[362] What Avicenna may have had in mind, is a syllogism like this:

Every human is animal

Zayd is human

Zayd is animal

[359] Aristotle, *Post. An*. I.8, 75b 24–25. Tr. by Barnes, 1993, 13.
[360] Aristotle, *Met*. Z 14, 1039b27–1040a7; *Met*. (a 1), 993b27–31; *Post. An.* (I.8), 75b 21–36.
[361] *Burhān*, 171, 6.
[362] *Burhān*, 171, 6–10.

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Therefore, there is no demonstration of perishable things. They can be only a subject of temporal syllogisms.[363] Furthermore, even if the conclusion "Zayd is animal" is true, it is not true always, because if Zayd disappears from our senses, it is no longer sure whether his features are still predicable of him, not even the essential ones: there is no guarantee that he is still an animal. If he dies, he is no longer an animal.[364]

Since definition may be either the principle of demonstration, or its conclusion, or a whole demonstration, or just a reverted demonstration, the parts of a definition are practically parts of a demonstration.[365]

Besides, Avicenna adduces a new argument that perishable things cannot be defined. Perishable things differ either from instances falling under another species or from instances of their own species. In the first case, when Zayd differs from Bucephalus, the horse, the distinction may be attained by essential predicates, like being rational – since Bucephalus is not rational. However, being rational is not proper to Zayd, insofar as he is this individual, but it is due to his species, human, which is common to all human beings. Thus, this is not Zayd's definition insofar as he is this individual, Zayd. On the other hand, when Zayd is compared to ʿAmr, another human being that is another individual subsumed under the same species, they differ from each other by accidents, potentially by an infinite number of accidents. Since this proposition consists of accidents, it obviously cannot be a proper definition.[366]

In this second argument, Avicenna starts from the possible ways how perishable individuals would differ from each other. It seems that he had taken granted that individuals have no definition in the proper sense, in such a way that definition signifies the very quiddity of the given object. Instead, he implicitly suggested that the only possibility left is to draw a distinction between individuals, taken that individuals have no *differentia specifica* under a certain species. Avicenna used the terms *mufāriqa* and *mumayyiza* respectively to indicate the difference between them.[367] As he reports, for some people, even the scope of definition was similar,

[363] *Burhān*, 171, 1–5. Note that for Avicenna, propositions may be conditionally necessary, that is, on the condition of the existence of the essence (*mā dāma mawjūd dhāt*), or on the condition of predicaton (*dawām kawn mawḍūʿ mawṣūf-an bimā wuḍiʿa maʾhu*). See *Ishārāt* I, (al-Ṭūsī), 265. But these propositions do not produce certain knowledge, only accidental one, because the relation between the predicated elements is temporal.
[364] *Burhān*, 171, 4–5. Apparently, probably for the sake of the argument, Avicenna did not take into consideration the survival of the individual human soul.
[365] *Burhān*, 171, 12–14.
[366] *Burhān*, 171, 13–18.
[367] *Burhān*, 171, 14–18; 20.

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namely, the distinction by essential features, or, concise sentence that distinguishes the goal essentially.[368]

In the Logic of the *Dānishnāma-yi ʿAlā'ī* Avicenna highlights that description indicates things of which we have no definition. To indicate it (*nishān dādan*) means to single it out from others (*judā kardan*).[369]

Avicenna is consistent that accidents count for the distinction between existents – and actually, this is what descriptions consist of. The perfect definition serves to indicate the quiddity of a thing, that is, its perfect reality by which it is what it is, and by which its essence (*dhāt*) comes to be realized.[370] The imperfect definition is that which does not cover the perfect reality of the thing; it only may serve to distinguish it (*tamyīz*) from others by essential attributes. As far as the distinction by accidents is concerned, it is a description: while the imperfect description is that which does not distinguish it from all the other existents,[371] the perfect description is that which distinguishes it with accidents from all the others, especially if it contains the genus proximum.[372]

Thus, apart from definition taken in the strict Aristotelian sense, all the other forms of definition and description have the distinction as to their scope. However, he concludes that even if perishable individuals may be distinguished from each other, they have no definition. First, because the essential attributes do not distinguish them under the same species, and second because the essential attributes are not predicated on account of this individual, but of the nature of the species. In this sense, perishable individuals may be defined only accidentally: Zayd is rational, but not because he is Zayd, but because he is human, and the human is not necessarily Zayd, but only contingently. It is only the accidents that may distinguish it from others, but they might be potentially infinite.

This solution runs along Aristotelian lines, in the sense that individuals cannot be defined. They are only the object of sense perception, and, as such, can only be characterized by description.

Besides, Avicenna adduces a more general descriptive tool, the exposition of the name, the *sharḥ al-ism*, or *al-qawl al-shāriḥ*, or *al-ḥadd al-shāriḥ li-maʿnā al-ism* (a definition that

[368] *Burhān*, 52, 13; 18.
[369] *Manṭiq-i Dānishnāma,* 25.
[370] *Burhān*, 52, 18–20.
[371] *Burhān*, 52, 3–10.
[372] *Burhān,* 52, 10–11.

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explains the meaning of the name) in which the existence of the thing is not considered.[373] Namely, that the expression does not indicate the essence of the thing as it exists, but only enumerates the features predicable of it. Avicenna refers to the "definition" of the equilateral triangle at the beginning of Euclid's *Elements* that it has three equal sides.[374] The explanation of the name indicates those names too, whose meaning (*ma'nā*) has no definition.[375] In the *al-Manṭiq al-Mashriqiyyīn*, Avicenna simply lifts the *qawl shāriḥ* above the definition and description, being the broadest category of concept formation.[376] In other words, this is where the description of individuals pertain.

In this Avicennan context, definitions consist of descriptive (*nā'it*) terms, which do not contain any indication to any definite item; because if it contained indication, it would be a name or some other reference.[377] In every definition, there are only universal notions which can narrow down its reference, but still, remains universal, in the sense that it is capable of referring to many things. Therefore, individuals can only be grasped by testimony (*mušāhada*).

> If what is referred to is an individual among others under a certain species, there is no way to that but by testimony, and the intellect cannot grasp it, but by means of sense perception.[378]

To sum up, Avicenna aims to describe an individual notion in the mind. One nature – be it humanity – taken along with individuality – in the sense that its meaning cannot be shared – becomes an individual human in the mind. This means that there is an individual, the meaning of which cannot be shared. This seems to be only a consideration, along with absolute genus and absolute species, which specializes the quiddities in the mind. Individuality is similar to unity in this respect, by having only one relation to one given existent. However, they are not identical to each other. Individuality is a general universal concept which applies to the concrete, externally existing particulars. It signifies the content of the concept "being not capable of being shared by many." Unity, although equally applicable to individuals, means a different aspect that is implicitly included in the concept of individuality: the "not capable of being shared by many" and "a reference to only one" are extensionally identical. When we will

[373] *Najāt*, 159; see al-Fārābī, *Alfāẓ*, 89.
[374] *Najāt*, 159. Euclides, *Elementa*, 3, 13-14: ῶν δὲ τριπλεύρων σχημάτων ἰσόπλευρον μὲν τρίγωνόν ἐστι τὸ τὰς τρεῖς ἴσας ἔχον πλευράς.
[375] *Burhān*, 292, 1–2.
[376] *Manṭiq al-Mashriqiyyīn*, 10.
[377] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 246, 14–16.
[378] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 246, 14–16.

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turn to unity in Metaphysics, which, for Avicenna, means that whatever is one has an indivisible existence, we shall explain its implications further.[379]

Once we got here, the question arises, how can we explain this uniqueness that the logical accident individuality implies?

Avicenna seems to suggest that the existence and a sort of mental demonstration to an individual concept could single out – or determine it. While thinking about humans – at least this is my intuition – Avicenna refers to some sort of individual content, coming from sense perception – or memory. In this case, my concept of Zayd would not be intellectual because it is still not abstracted from every changeable feature. Alternatively, another solution is the description, which can refer to an individual – but given that it will perish, its knowledge will change as well. Even if I know the period of its existence, it would not be a definition.[380]

When it comes to this unique reference to one exact object, it presupposes a determined spatial spot and spatial accidents. In Avicenna's theory of abstraction, the representation of individuals needs an extended bodily organ to mirror their spatial distinctness. This is in accord with the idea that individuals cannot be identified nor defined by intellectual, universal features.

3.2.12 The origin of the concept individuality

What is of greater interest for us is the nature of these terms: where does the idea of universality and particularity come from? Michael E. Marmura insists that universality simply means the relation of the concept to things *in re*: it is the abstraction of the quiddity's extramental relation of „being common to many."[381] On the other hand, Jon McGinnis takes into account Avicenna's epistemology as well and concludes that it is the Active Intellect that imparts the accident *universality* to the quiddity in itself in the mind after the human has had multiple encounters with concrete particulars and stripped away all the individuating accidents. In other words, if it abstracted all that accompanies the quiddity.[382] Both of these views are tenable; since Avicenna's epistemology indeed presupposes the intervention of the Active Intellect to acquire the plain intelligibles. However, other items among the secondary intelligibles, as the genus, species, and difference signify simply relations between mental concepts according to generality and specificity. Avicenna distinguishes between two levels where generality (*'umūm*) comes to the fore. First, generality according to the particular subjects, where the

[379] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 109, 5-6.
[380] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 247, 2–3.
[381] Marmura, 2005, 34.
[382] McGinnis, 2007, 173.

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animal is more general than the human; if our starting point is the subject, like Zayd. Second, it may be according to the adherent considerations that accompany mental notions: the animal in itself is more general than the animal taken as a genus, or the animal taken as a species, or as an animal taken as an individual. In this latter case, genus – species – individual are different considerations that differ in generality. [383] These considerations reflect the reference of the notion in question to the existence *in re*: animal, taken as a genus means an existent, who is animal, without taking into account whether it is a horse, a human, or a duck. Animal taken as a species refers to a body which has soul, no matter whether it is a palm tree or a dog. Animal, taken as an individual, seems to refer to any individual *in re* which is an animal, and in this case, it means the animality of – say – Zayd, in other words, it signifies a unique thing – whose concept cannot be shared (and this is what the term "individual" signifies) that is an animal. In other words, the "individual animal" refers to only one subject alone, which is an animal.[384]

Thus, the logical intelligibles classify the quiddity in itself according to generality and specialty. In this sense, Marmura's interpretation seems to be right: He says the following:

> Both the ideas of particularity and universality seem to be abstractions of the relation of the quiddity in external reality to the particular existents.[385]

In his wording, particularity seems to correspond to the term *šakhṣiyya*, rather than *juz'iyya*.[386] In this sense, this is a meaning, which makes the quiddity specific in the sense that it refers to only one object.

In case of individuality as logical universal, Marmura's solution seems to be closer to the point: it is hardly conceivable that it comes from the separate intellects. First, because there is no demonstrative knowledge, and definition of individuals, only sense-perception might attain such kind of knowledge: the concept of an individual qua individual, cannot be universal. The idea of individuality, insofar as it is a universal notion, so to say, a logical universal, it seems to come by with the contact of the rational soul with the *Dator Formarum*, just as every universal does.

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[383] *Madkhal*, 71, 13–19.
[384] However, this last example is not like the former two: in those cases animal may well be either a genus or a species according to the *Tabula Porphyriana*, as an individual, it may only following another consideration - because what is above it, body, is not an ultima species for it. Thus, animal as an individual may be taken only if it means the animality of Zayd.
[385] Marmura, 1992, 80.
[386] In this context Avicenna doesn't speak about *juz'iyya*, which would be the direct translation of the English term.

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However, to answer the question where does individuality come from, we should re-enumerate Avicenna's different articulations of individuality.

As Marmura pointed out, one of them seems to be the conceptualization of the notion's relations to its referents. This candidate is simply the result of human thinking; it is just the generalization of the primary notion that a certain individual is there.

The second account of individuality is the one based on Porphyry's *Eisagoge*: the individual is the concept of which cannot be shared by anything else.

The third account is based on the role unity plays in individuation:[387]

> As the man can exist with a certain accident, such as the man capable of laughing, this can be predicated of everything of which the man alone can be predicated among the particulars that serve as the subject. In a like manner, the individual man. This is because unity is one of the concomitant accidents, which follow things. We will make clear that it is not constitutive for their quiddities. If unity is linked to humanity in the aforementioned way, the individual man is generated from them, which is shared by every individual.[388]

In this passage, Avicenna comes up with a new formula, according to which the individual human comes to be, only after unity is getting attached to humanity in itself. Every individual human shares the concept of the "individual human" since it only means that this concept refers to a human being that is one, that is, an individual. Avicenna highlights that unity, just like existence, is not essential for the thing, whatever it may be; it is only a concomitant accident: if the thing is conceived as the quiddity in itself, it is not one essentially, because in this case the humanity that is in Zayd, may be the same as the one in ʿAmr. Thus, unity is something additional to the quiddity; a necessary condition for it to become a particular existent.

Unity is a concomitant accident of things,[389] and it is a real accident *in re*:[390] Avicenna is adamant that it is not only a mental existent but a real concomitant feature that accompanies the thing so long as it exists. Since unity and existence are correlational notions, that is, everything that is said to be that exists it is also one, and everything that is said to be one, also exists.[391]

This third formula (unity plus humanity makes the individual human) gives a general account that is true of every individual. Thus, this account with unity does not count for the distinction

[387] This account corresponds to (1c) in the theoretical approach, what makes y to be one?
[388] *Madkhal*, 71–72.
[389] *Ilāhiyāt*, 109, 10; 106, 14; however, in this case it is the concomitant accident of substance. For further details see Wisnovsky, 2003, 158–159.
[390] *Ilāhiyāt*, 119, 3–9.
[391] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 303, 5–8. We shall turn back to the relation of thing - existence - and unity later.

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between individuals; it rather gives an idea of the so-called derivative individuation.[392] Unity makes the quiddity one; which is a necessary condition for humanity to become a certain human, because every individual human is one in number, and there is no human individual that would not be one in number.

Since unity and existence are correlational terms, and unity means indivisible existence, in this respect, it is subsumed under existence. It is true in the sense that whatever has a particular existence is one. As for the origin of unity, is it possible that unity always accompanies existence, simply emanates along with existence at the moment of a generation. In this sense, it would be a unity that would make the individual human, as being attached to humanity itself along with existence. However, this addition still needs to be verified in the Metaphysical context.

3.2.13 A specific context: God's knowledge of particulars

Finally, let us consider a theologically inspired problem that pertains to the epistemic approach to individuals. One of al-Ghazzālī's main criticism against Avicenna was about God's knowledge of particulars. This is actually one of the classical Avicennian problems that accordingly instigated a considerable scholarly interest.[393] All authors agree that for Avicenna, God does not know the particulars, except in a universal way. That is to say, individuals cannot be identified with universal knowledge, because, as we have just seen, it does not fulfill the criteria of individuality: to put it simply, it will always apply to many. Peter Adamson highlighted the point that God does not know particulars because there is no such thing as knowledge (*'ilm*) of particulars, only a sort of awareness of them.[394] In other words, Adamson underlined that this is more an epistemic question, rather than metaphysical. As we saw, individual concepts need something particular, a particular concept they may lean on to be individual. This is clearly in line with Adamson's observation. Accordingly, scholars usually agree that Avicenna's position – God's knowledge in a universal way – that is, the intellectual knowledge of a given individual, is not a sufficient solution, it is barely enough to identify them.

However, as it is well known, Avicenna recurs to an example that aims to show that knowledge of individuals, at least of certain individuals is possible. This is in the case of unique instantiations of the species, where the definition refers to only one object. This knowledge

[392] See, Galluzzo, 2012, 310.
[393] Adamson, 2005; Marmura, 1962; Zghal 2004; Acar 2004; Nusseibe 2009.
[394] Adamson, 2005, 274.

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holds true of them always; even though this exclusivity, namely that there is no other object sharing that definition is due to external causes, not to the definition itself.

That is to say, this is a plain epistemic problem involving two main issues regarding individuation: first, it is about the identification of individuals; second, about the definability of individuals qua individuals.

As for identification, we have already seen that Avicenna postulated an individual concept or reference to an already individuated object to fulfill the referential criteria that are, that an individual concept must refer to only one object. However, God knows individuals in a universal way, which means just the opposite: his knowledge cannot refer to only one item at all, except in case of the eclipse or celestial substances that are unique instantiations of their species. The solution he proposes is the knowledge of causes – that is always true.[395] God is the utmost principle of all existence; he intellectually knows all the celestial substances, those that are unique instantiations of their species, and universally the principles of particular objects in the sublunary world. However, sublunary substances are not unique instantiations of their species; their identification needs an exclusive element or a designation. However, a designated, sensible individual object is not intelligible, inasmuch as it is a designated, sensible object. As the author of the *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt* admits, this is because designation or indication (*ishāra*) cannot refer to spatially different things, namely those things which are different in their spatial position (*waḍ'*).[396] Two material things always have different positions because they occupy different places. As the text adds:

> The intelligible from one, sensible, designated individual is impossible inasmuch as it belongs to that individual.[397]

As we saw above, only the vague individual is that which may be universally grasped. If we turn to the definability problem, we must briefly introduce Avicenna's theory of divine knowledge.

When it comes to the way how God knows particulars, Avicenna expressis verbis quotes Themistius. In his commentary on the *Metaphysics Lambda*, he praises Themistius who elaborated on the idea that God knows everything from Himself, by a non-discursive kind of intellection. That is, he does not intellect objects as somehow perceived from outside, but he

[395] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 359, 15–360, 1.
[396] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 33, (M) 67 [58].
[397] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 33 (M), 67 [58].

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intellects everything all at once.[398] Avicenna is consistent throughout his works that God knows everything inasmuch as He is their cause.[399] God's thought is atemporal, and an all-at-once type of intellection: in the *Kitāb al-Hidāya* Avicenna calls it "beyond intellectual" (*fawqa 'aqlī*), which alludes to the *Neoplatonica Arabica*, the *Kitāb al-Khayr al-Maḥḍ*.[400] It is a non-discursive knowledge that may be propositionally structured, as Peter Adamson has pointed out.[401]

Avicenna recurs to an example of someone, who asked about a complex thing, and he immediately knows the answer in his mind, but when he elaborates on, from form to form, and proposition to proposition, the answer becomes propositionally structured.[402] God's knowledge is something like the first kind of intellection, whereas the second is rational, psychic knowledge.

Be that as it may, since Divine knowledge may be propositionally structured, at least possibly, it opens up the possibility to recur to the universal knowledge of particulars. Since God is the ultimate principle of everything, he knows everything as their ultimate cause, because everything derives from Him by concomitance. The *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt* proposes that all the individuating accidents may be known universally in a propositional form: whenever p, then q. That is, whenever matter gets putrefied in the veins, fever follows it. If it happens to a certain individual, then he becomes feverish.[403] It seems to be a viable option, but this hypothetical syllogism still lacks reference to a concrete particular.

The author then goes and adds that sensible data may be intellectually grasped, even though we do not intellect them by their causes. In our view, he means that if we perceive a certain human being, we can build an intellectual concept of it as abstracted from material accidents, but the knowledge of this bunch of characteristics does not derive from abstract intellection but form sense perception. That is, it is a changeable, temporal kind of knowledge.[404] Along the same lines, God knows everything only intellectually, that is, as derived from His essence. That is even so with the individuating features, like spatial position. If we know the cause of a certain

[398] *Commentaire sur le livre lambda*, 57.
[399] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 359, 15–362, 11; *Ishārāt*, 328–329, *Ilāhiyyāt-i Dānishnāma,* 86–90, *Hidāya*, 266–69.
[400] *Aflāṭūniyya Muḥdatha,* 12.
[401] Adamson, 2004, 90-91.
[402] *Hidāya*, 266–267.
[403] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 98, (M) 358 [636].
[404] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 97–98, (M) 358–360 [636].

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spatial position, and we may reformulate in a hypothetical syllogism, we have a universal notion of it.[405] Moreover, this is how God knows individuals.

> For us as well, if we perceived the causes of a certain individual, and we judge that whenever those causes exist, exist the individual of those causes, as the causes of its individuality. However, we do not know which cause leads to the existence of these causes because the preceding causes are infinite in number. For the First, those causes in their system and arrangement are all intellectual, then no existent slips away from his knowledge.[406]

This solution has still some shortcomings: first, it still does not identify individuals. However, as it was commonplace in Neoplatonism, this intellectual knowledge is nobler than the one based on the senses. Second, even though we accept that God knows all the causes that lead to the generation of an individual, these causes will be still infinite in number. If God knows them universally, he immediately knows the whole infinite series as one intelligible in his own essence. Third, this world view would entail a sort of predestination, that is there is no room for free will. Be that as it may, what is important for us that these texts from the *Ta'līqāt* give the impression, that it is theoretically possible to know an individual, by knowing all the causes that cause the individual. This corroborates the "bundle-reading" of individuals, that the bundle of accidents builds up an individual, even though the bundle is not sufficient to identify it. This is clearly in line with the indefinability of individuals, that is, they have quiddity on their own, if they have quiddity as Socrateity, only in an equivocal sense.[407]

To sum up, the theological problem of God's knowledge of particulars is actually a deep epistemic problem that is clearly in line with Avicenna's logical view about individuality. This is a framework where the elaboration of definability and identification individuals was a major desideratum. Avicenna's solution as articulated in his logical writings fits well into this metaphysical problem.

In this section, apart from the well-known Avicennian works, we draw much material from the spurious *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt*. Reading these texts, one has the impression that many recurrent themes in it revolve around God's knowledge of particulars: divine causality, individuation, the intelligibility of individuals. If this work was compiled by Avicenna's students, mirroring their discussions, the idea that lies behind these texts is clear: spatial position and time is the criterion

[405] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 98, (M) 359 [636].
[406] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 97–98, (M) 359–360 [636].
[407] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 245, 15–17.

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of individuality, these are the features that cannot be grasped intellectually, only in a universal way, namely via its causes.

3.2.14 Conclusion

Among the Neoplatonic commentators, it was Elias who challenged the "bundle-view" in the description of individuals, postulating a spatio-temporal reading instead, in the identification of individuals. As we saw above, the Late-antique commentators already raised questions about particulars that found their ways into the Arabic-speaking world. Since the scientific toolkit, the logical tradition based on the *Organon* was the same, the Arabic philosophers had very similar solutions to similar questions. This chapter provides further evidence that the Islamic philosophy may be regarded as the continuation of the Greek tradition.

Avicenna, due to his distinction between the two sorts of existences, has quite a clear-cut view on individuals. On a mental level, individuals have a concept that refers to only one object. As opposed to the Baghdad Peripatetics, he understood individuality as one of the secondary intelligibles, signifying a unique relation related to only one thing. This unique reference has a criterion, and this is what Avicenna is looking for: in his later works, he seems to suggest a solution, a feature that is individuated in itself. This is the spatial position, which directly leads us to the ontological and physical approach of individuality.

As we saw, the spatio-temporal differentiation between individuals is the ultimate condition of the identification. Since material individuals qua individuals cannot be conceived but as spatially distinct objects, their mental representation occurs in a spatially extended, that is, divisible organ. In other words, the spatial distinction is an epistemic criterion, not only for the identification of individuals but for their representation as well. Therefore, the spatio-temporal distinction is a necessary condition for something to be represented as an individual. As we shall see, this idea will reappear throughout Avicenna's *opus*, when it comes to the metaphysical approach to individuation. In the next section, we will talk about Avicenna's account of place, motion and spatial position, and the structure of the universe, which has a crucial role to play in his theory of spatial differentiation. After, we will turn to the metaphysical structure of individuals.

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3.3 Physics

Introduction

It may sound strange to address a question like individuation in a physical context, but sincet material individuals consist of matter and form, some features are indeed elaborated in this topic. Needless to say, the spatio-temporal reading of distinction has its roots in Avicenna's physical teaching.

Therefore, a closer understanding of Avicenna's account of location seems to be of crucial importance. In the following, we will briefly consider his theory of place and positional motion, because, as we will see, this is the ultimate physical criterion of multiplicity in the material world.

There are other topics originally treated in the Physics that we addressed elsewhere: like the argument on growth, because, for our purposes, it fits more into the metaphysical account of identity.

3.3.1 Place and location

Avicenna follows Aristotle's account of place that is the innermost boundary of the surrounding body, and he distinguished it from the place on which a body rests, occupying it.[408] Avicenna sacrifices lengthy passages to refute the opponent views; but the most interesting is the one where stands up against Philoponus' account of place as an immaterial extension.[409] The argument is closely tied to the impenetrability argument that two bodies cannot occupy the same place. Avicenna defends Aristotle against Philoponus, showing that there are no immaterial dimensions that exist on their own as if they were something like the absolute place. Avicenna adduces several arguments against this tenet:[410] among them, one builds on the interpenetration-argument. Two physical objects, namely two bodies in which the three dimensions may be supposed, cannot go through each other.

To put it short, for Avicenna, the criterion of impenetrability is the dimension itself.[411] If the matter does not interpenetrate another one, it must be a certain matter, that is, it must have a spatial position, which is accidental in it. A certain piece of matter is divisible; it may be opposed to another piece of matter, if it is endowed with dimensions, and it is in virtue of the

[408] *Najāt*, 233.
[409] On this see McGinnis, 2006, 53–55.
[410] For a general account see McGinnis, 2006, 57–61.
[411] *Samā'*, 121, 14–16

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dimensions that it cannot occupy a shared place with something else.[412] As we will see later, it is the corporeal form that is practically the subject of three-dimensionality.[413]

Spatial allocation is of crucial importance here, because, for Avicenna, it is spatial position by which he describes the difference between the interpenetrating objects:

> The meaning of interpenetration is that anything you take from one of the two [interpenetrating] things, you find locally (*fī al-waḍʿ*) with it something of the other (since one is not locally separate from the other), so that which opposes this very thing, and so its parts are taken to be distinct from the parts of that one.[414]

If two interpenetrating things occupy the same place, they fall into completely the same extension. If we point to any spot on one of them, that point must be identical for the two overlapping bodies. Here, Avicenna uses the term *waḍʿ* (spatial position). If not, then the two bodies must be distinct in position. That is, the difference in position is a necessary and sufficient condition for a body to be distinct from another one. That is, the spatial position also appears here in the sense of distinction, echoing the epistemic approach.

Avicenna also adduces the Peripatetic, or Themistian principle that matter is the cause of multiplicity. This is a refutation of another simile that a vessel in itself would contain an immaterial dimension, and the filling material would have another, material dimension. Avicenna, however, simply applies the principle that things agreeing in species may only be multiplied by their underlying matter.[415]

Although these arguments appear in a specific context here, namely, in refuting Philoponus' tenet of immaterial dimensions, they contain well-defined elements that play an essential role in his theory of individuation. The matter is the cause of multiplicity; location, on the other hand, which may be described by the category of spatial position is the principle of distinction as far as material things are considered. These two principles explain two different things in individuation: multiplicity and distinction.

It is worth noting that even in this passage, Avicenna uses the term *ḥayyiz* (extension) indicating location.[416] As we will see in the process of generation, Avicenna's version of the particularization argument indeed rests on this physical tenet. As we saw in the introduction, the particularization argument derives probably from the Kalām discussions: in the context of

[412] *Samāʿ*, 121, 11–14.
[413] See chapter 3.4.4.3.1.
[414] *Samāʿ*, 121, 8–10; Tr. by McGinnis, 2009, 174.
[415] *Samāʿ*, 122, 9–15.
[416] *Samāʿ*, 122, 3;

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whether the atom has extension *per se* or not,[417] or that of the creation of accidents, which was meant to show that the existents need a Creator.

In the later Avicennian, spurious works we find certain additions to these tenets. We will turn to these passages later, in the chapter "Individuation in the Later Works." The author, whoever may he be, makes clear that place in itself is not individuated. A certain place, inasmuch it is a place, does not contain anything that would explain its specificity as opposed to another place. It is rather the spatial position that explains the distinction between two supposed places.[418]

In other words, the spatial extension is a concomitant accident of every body, or to be more precise, of every matter endowed with corporeal form. As we will see in the hylomorphic context, no body occupies a certain extension due to its being a body. Although every body has a natural extension, where it rests, it is not due to its being a body, but due to its elements. It results in an inclination towards a certain place. However, this inclination presupposes different locations.

In the following, we will consider the source of the particularity of the material world. Since spatial features seem to identify particulars, spatial extensions and positions need to be determined. This determination of the material world is the scope of the next few chapters.

3.3.2 Motion and positional motion

To understand where particularization comes from, we must start with motion in a brief introduction.

Interestingly enough, in the particularization of the world spatial position has a fundamental role play. As we will see later, the source of multiplicity is matter, but the diversity of the material world cannot derive from prime matter, namely, only from pure potentiality. Avicenna, indeed, turns back to the celestial motions to explain how differentiation, in general, comes to be. In the next few lines, we will briefly consider its implications.

Avicenna follows Aristotle in the definition of motion that it is the first perfection of what is in potency, inasmuch as it is in potency.[419] Then Avicenna distinguishes between two meanings of motion. The first is taken as a process that starts from the starting point of motion and ends at the final point; this is an intelligible, continuous process that exists only in imagination.[420] On the other hand, the motion that exists actually in the moving thing is an intermediate state

[417] Dhanani, 1994, 62–66.
[418] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 98–99; (M) 275–276 [467].
[419] *Samā'*, 83, 5; Aristotle, *Physics*, 201a10–11.
[420] *Samā'*, 83, 19–84,

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(*ḥāla mutawassiṭa*) between the two limits of motion.[421] It is not a static state that it would actually exist there for a moment; rather, it just transgresses a distance in a given moment.[422] This presupposes Avicenna's account of dynamic instant.[423]

According to the well–known Aristotelian teaching, there are three categories in which motion occurs strictly speaking: quality, quantity, and place.[424]

Avicenna, however, adds the category of position to this set.[425] This solution is a response to an old debate on whether the cosmos as a whole is in place or not.[426] What most concerns us here is the positional motion that makes motion possible for the sphere. The main problem with this kind of motion that position has no opposite, and in consequence, the motion would be inconceivable in the Aristotelian sense.[427] Avicenna simply admits that two distinct positions, although not being real opposites, are not far from being opposites.[428] To explain the celestial motion, there is no need for real opposites, however.[429]

The proximate cause of the heavenly motion is the particular will of the celestial soul. This particular will is represented in the positional motion that each particular will moves the celestial body to a certain position, and then to another position. It practically means rotation that every part moves, but not all the parts as a whole.[430] Thus, even though the parts change their position concerning the other parts, the whole is still unmoved with regard to its place. It is like a ball rotating on the finger of the basketball player.

However, every motion starts from one point and ends at another: in this case these points are two distinct points – determined by supposition: they may be either identical, in which case, the circle simply rotates around its axis and returns to the starting point during a certain period of time, or two distinct points. In this latter case, this point serves as the starting point at time A and serves as the end at time B.[431]

In Avicenna's view, time is the measure of circular motion concerning priority and posteriority.[432] Avicenna has lengthy discussions to show the quiddity of time,[433] for us, it

[421] *Samā'*, 84, 9–12.
[422] *Samā'*, 84, 10–14.
[423] On this see McGinnis, 2010, 61–64.
[424] Aristotle, *Physics*, 226a23–25.
[425] *al-Samā'*, 103, 11–104, 6.
[426] For the history of this debate see McGinnis, 2002.
[427] Compare Aristotle, *On the Heavens* (I.4), 270b27–271a34.
[428] *Samā'*, 103, 11–12.
[429] *Samā'*, 103, 12.
[430] *Samā'*, 105, 5-8.
[431] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 385, 13–386, 5; *Samā'*, 91, 16–92, 1. McGinnis, 2002, 153–154.
[432] *Najāt*, 231; McGinnis, 2006, 71.
[433] *Samā'*, 155–160.

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suffices to say that as being the measure of circular motion, the source of temporal differentiation equally goes back to positional motion, and different positions in the sphere.

What is the ultimate source of particularity in the motion of the spheres?

Avicenna is following the former tradition that the proximate cause of celestial motion is the desire to be similar to the First Principle. Even though this desire is not directed towards motion at the first intention, that is, it is not the motion itself, which would be the main goal, but the similarity to the First. The celestial body receives the infinite force, insofar as celestial soul intellects the First, in such a way that its light shines upon it forever. Since the First has infinite power, the celestial soul becomes as if it had infinite power, but it has not. It is only due to the intellected object, the First. The celestial body is perfect in its substance since there is no potentiality left in its substance, nor its quantity or quality. The only feature which may include potentiality is in its place and position.[434]

This idea implies that the celestial body, which has matter and in consequence, extension, is perfectly simple. No feature is potential in it, except for its place. As Avicenna explains:

> [This is because] the celestial body in its substance has no position or place more proper, than other position or place in its extension. This is because no part of the circle of the sphere or planet is more likely (*awlā*) to be in a particular position. If one part of the celestial body is in one part of the circle, then its other part is potentially not in the other part. In this sense, there is one aspect where the celestial substance is in potentiality, in respect of its position.[435]

What we see here is, again, similar to the argument of particularization as it appears in the *Kalām*-works of the time: there are several possibilities for a given event, and none of the possibilities is more likely than the other. In this case, something, a preponderating or specializing factor is needed: as we saw above, this argument was usually used by Muslim theologians to infer to the existence of God.[436] However, Avicenna simply aims to show here that the celestial body does not move by itself in either direction. Its soul will be the reason why it moves in a particular direction. As to the question of why it moves at all, Avicenna refers to the perfection of God and the imperfection of the celestial substance.

The similarity to the First principle is utmost perfection, which lasts forever; but it is not possible for the celestial substance to reach it, that is, it will never be similar to it exactly; thus, it always strives for it: the principle of this desire is what the celestial substance intellects from the First.[437]

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[434] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 389, 10–14; *Mabda'*, 60–61.
[435] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 389, 15–390, 1; *Mabda'*, 61.
[436] See my article on the Particularization argument, Lánczky, 2016.
[437] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 390, 5.

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Avicenna uses the term *mukhaṣṣiṣ* in this context, insisting that two concept-formations and two wills must differ somehow, and it cannot be unless there is a reference to an individual specializing factor (*istinād fīhi ilā mukhaṣṣiṣ shakhṣī*) to which it may be related.[438]

The source must be something that involves divisibility and potential multiplicity – and this is imagination, a psychic faculty imprinted in the matter.

At this point, it is worth to make an epistemic outlook: one of Avicenna's main arguments for the immateriality, and in consequence, the eternity of the human intellects that they are not divisible.[439] We have also seen how spatially extended things are placed only in the estimation or in any other psychic faculty that is imprinted in the matter.[440] The huge topic of God's knowledge of particulars also belongs here: universal, intellectual knowledge cannot grasp particulars: spatio-temporal differentiation has no "place" in the intellect.

Searching for the cause of motion in case of the celestial spheres, Avicenna expressis verbis refers to Aristotle *De Anima* in the *al-Mabda' wa-l-Ma'ād*:

> The Philosopher has already implied a principle of some use in this topic since he said: to that, I mean the theoretical intellect, [belongs] the universal judgment, as for this, I mean the practical intellect [belongs] the particular deeds and particular intellections. This is not only in our will but also in the will from which the motion of the sky is originated.[441]

Here Avicenna clearly distinguishes between the theoretical and practical intellects, whereas the former makes only universal and the latter particular judgments. He infers this tenet to the celestial souls.[442]

Avicenna makes clear that the universal will cannot cause motion: the universal will, insofar as universal does not single out any particular motion, because its relation (*nisba*) to the effect, the motion, is one, even if there are more universal wills one after the other. There is nothing that would preponderate the motion from A to B, more likely that the motion from B to A. As Avicenna puts it, their relation and non-relation to their principle are one; it is not distinguished nor preponderated, and whatever does not necessarily follow from its cause, does not exist.[443]

That is if an intellectual will wants a motion from A to B, and then from B to C, then A, B, C are of the same species, and there is nothing that singles out (*yu'ayyin*) any one of them more likely than the other. It should be due to a particular, psychic will.[444]

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[438] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 386, 6–7.
[439] *Nafs*, 187,11–190, 12.
[440] See in our section on Logic, Avicenna's square example.
[441] *Mabda'*, 29.
[442] The passage clearly echoes Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 434a17–21.
[443] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 385, 4–12; *Mabda'*, 28–29.
[444] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 385, 13–386, 2.

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Even though the intellectual concept-formation can think on the whole process by a universal will, which corresponds, in this case, to the circular motion, it cannot think on any particular point on the arc. It can only think on the universal "point" that equally applies to all the points of the circle. To designate one particular point – which is a prerequisite of motion – one has to turn to the soul and sense-perception, for the aforementioned epistemic reasons: for Avicenna, the representation of spatial difference requires matter, that is, material psychic faculties.

The problem is similar to the definability of individuals. The dichotomy of the universal-particular will is an epistemic problem, just like the logical identification of individuals. To pick up one individual point, one has to relate it to an already individuated element.[445] Here also, Avicenna uses practically the same toolkit: he insists that it must be related to an individual specializing factor (*istināḍ ilā mukhaṣṣiṣ shakhṣī yuqāsu bihā*).[446]

In other words, the motion of the celestial spheres is positional motion. The ultimate source of the diversity of rotations is the imagination of the celestial soul that becomes manifested in the positional motion. That is, the first item of difference is a spatial spot, insofar as one piece of motion starts from one and ends in another. In this context also, it is a spatial position that explains the physical distinction among the different rotations. The fact that there may be multiple positions is due to the celestial matter: here again, the source of multiplicity is matter. The source of the distinct points in the matter is spatial position.

3.3.3 Avicenna's Cosmos

As we saw above, the spatio-temporal reading is entirely interspersed with all aspects of individuation in Avicenna's teaching. Thus, this seems to be the proper place to consider the structure of Avicenna's cosmos.[447] It has been argued that for Avicenna time, space and motion are continuous. As it is equally well known, this theory was a kind of an answer to the physical tenets of his contemporaries, the *mutakallimūn*:[448] indeed, Avicenna sacrifices lengthy paragraphs to refute the atomic conception of body, and place. However, paradoxically enough, even though his understanding of continuity was directed against the atomic conception of the physical world, it is still reminiscent of it at the specifics.[449]

[445] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 246,14.
[446] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 386, 7.
[447] On this see Arif, 2009.
[448] McGinnis, 2010, 75.
[449] See in case of motion, Rashed, 2003, 300.

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Avicenna's material universe is one and finite. [450] It is delimited by the outmost sphere, which encompasses the material world like a containing round body, below which the celestial spheres are located. Beneath the tenth sphere starts the sublunar world, with the Earth in its center.[451]

Avicenna has lengthy discussions to show that the existence of directions is not possible in the infinite, be it a body or void.[452] We have no reason to pursue all the arguments Avicenna proposes. Nevertheless, it suffices to briefly summarize it: a direction is always defined by a limit, that is, everything that has no limit, has no directions by nature, only by supposition. However, in this case, an infinite number of directions would be possible.

The other significant part of the argument is that directions cannot be defined by two bodies; it is only possible by one round body: by its circumference and center.[453] Since the world is one, finite entity, these two spots, the center, that is, the Earth, and the circumference of the sphere indicate the "up" and "down."

Since every body is extended, necessarily, every body occupies space. Every simple element has a proper natural place, that is to say, every element has a proper extension, natural location. If their position has been changed for some reason, for example, if they are generated outside of their natural spot, they strive to get to their proper place. This is how different bodies, be they simple or composite, move to or occupy a certain place in an arranged way.[454]

For Avicenna, no continuous magnitude consists of actual, indivisible parts, or points, because these would lead to actual infinity. Instead, he insists that any point may be posited on a continuous magnitude, even potentially an infinite number, but the posited, or indicated points do not exist as self-standing existents. They exist as long as they are indicated.[455] An indication like that has a distinguishing role (*tamyīz*): it sets this part apart from that part.

As for Avicenna's cosmos, we have already seen that the spherical, positional motion works exactly like this: there is an infinite number of supposable points, positions and body of the outmost sphere moves from such spot to another.

What is important for us, is that in this universe there is a potentially infinite number of spots that a given body may occupy. An actual spot is a "here," a spatially defined position, measured

[450] *al-Samā' wa-l-'ālam*, 76, 3.
[451] *al-Samā' wa-l-'ālam*, 50, 5–15.
[452] *Najāt*, 257–258; *Ilāhiyyāt-i Dānishnāma*, 122–125; *'Uyūn ḥikma*, 20–21.
[453] *Najāt*, 260–265.
[454] *Samā'* , 73, 4–12.
[455] *Samā'*, 182. For a more detailed account see McGinnis, 2010, 75–78.

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to the celestial spheres. In this physical universe, it is a spatial position that differentiates between the supposed parts, even though these parts are not actually and permanently there. On the other hand, as we saw *in passim*, the very fact that there are many potential points to be indicated is due to the underlying matter, owing to the famous principle that Avicenna often reiterates that the cause of multiplicity is matter.[456] The distinction between the supposable points, however, is explained by the category of position, which is only possible in a finite universe, where the directions are defined by firm elements: the center (Earth) and the periphery (celestial spheres).

As we have seen, the spatio-temporal reading is the criterion of particularity in concept formation. That is, in the logical, epistemic context it is location and time that ultimately identify a concept, as it is also a necessary condition when it comes to mental representation.

Nevertheless, in this physical context, a spatial position also particularizes. Similarly, as in the conceptualization of individuals, a universal celestial will becomes particular only as fragmented in different positions on the arc of the circular motion. Like a will, it is not intellectual anymore, but psychic that allows for material differentiation, but in this supralunar realm, it means positional differentiation. This causes celestial motion, which is the source of the particularity and fragmentation of the material world. Time is practically the measure of this motion. Not to mention that the celestial motions exercise their influence on the sublunar realm, causing motion and alteration among the elements. Therefore, spatial location is crucial to explain the particularization of the world.

As we will see shortly, this understanding of location plays a crucial role in the hylomorphic approach to individuation as well.

[456] *Samā'*, 122, 9–15; *Mabda'*, 108; or in case of the mental representation theory: *Nafs*, 167, 12–170, 9.

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3.4 Metaphysics

3.4.1 Metaphysics, as a science

As we saw above, logic has its own subject matter, the secondary intelligibles, which includes the technical term *individual*, understood as a logical notion. The logical term „individual" means practically a class by which our notions may be classified. It explains how a mental notion existing in the mind refers to only one thing.

As it is a well-known fact, for Avicenna, Metaphysics has its proper subject matter also in the classical Aristotelian sense:[457] the existent insofar as existent.[458] The investigation of existent insofar as existent represents the most general consideration of the things that populate the world.

The existent qua existent has proper accidents insofar as it is existent. Our principal contention is that in this framework, individuals can be approached from a different angle than in Logic. Echoing the later, Eastern philosophical tradition, Metaphysics has two main fields: general Metaphysics and Theology. The first, roughly speaking has existence qua existence as its subject matter, and it investigates its essential accidents, whereas the second treats mainly theological questions, those relating to the First principle, and His attributes. However, the structure of Avicenna's Metaphysics as elaborated in the *Kitāb al-Shifā'* is more complicated than this rough outline. Still, individuals have no distinct chapter in it: the problem appears in several contexts.

Metaphysics starts from the most basic notions that are primary in conceptualization: the thing, the existent, and the necessary. The "thing," as one of our most primary notions, is undefinable, since there is no "thing" that would be more known for us, that is, being "more" primary.[459] Everything has a reality – *ḥaqīqa* – by which it is what it is, and this is the quiddity (*māhiyya*). Clearly, this is something else than existence, since a reality, in other words, a quiddity like humanity, has a conceptualizable determined meaning without taking into account the mode of its existence: it may exist in particulars (*fī al-a'yān*) – like the humanity in Zayd, or in the mind, like humanity as a universal concept that may be said of many humans. However, it may be conceived independently from both.[460]

[457] Aristotle, *Met*. (IV.1), 1003a21.
[458] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 13, 8–9.
[459] See *Ilāhiyyāt*, 30,3–32,2.
[460] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 31, 10–13.

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This broader agenda guides and frames Avicenna's approach towards individuals: Zayd may be considered as a thing, having a quiddity, or Zayd may be considered as an existent.

Zayd is a thing, and Zayd is an existent. Zayd, as an existent is necessary by something other than himself. Although these primary notions are closely interrelated, they reflect different viewpoints; these simple assertions tell us different things about the individual. This is what Avicenna suggests at the beginning of the *Ishārāt*: there are predicates that the subject needs for the realization of its existence, like being born, being created, and there are predicates that the subject needs for the realization of its quiddity, like being a body for humanity.[461] The conceptualization of the quiddity humanity does not require features that arise from existence, like being created; because the human is not human because it is created or eternal, but it is human, because of its essential parts, like animality and rationality. What the logical notion "individual" implies is a notion that refers to only one instance, a spatio-temporally determined *hic et nunc* object, which may be considered as "a thing" and as "an existent." Everything has its thingness (*shay'iyya*) that is describable as having a quiddity, just like as it is describable as an existent, i.e. as having existence.

This is where logic and metaphysics overlap. Logic offers a conceptual approach that looks on individuals as a bunch of quiddities. Metaphysics, instead, looks on them as existents. First, it clarifies how the bunch of quiddities exist in particulars. Second, it investigates the essential attributes of existence, like being substance or accident, being necessary or possible, being cause or effect, being one or many. Therefore, if it looks upon individuals as existents, it focuses on the question of whether they are necessary or possible, cause or effect, and one or many. This is what I call the existential approach.

Thus, in the following few lines, Avicenna's basics will be shortly considered, to build a firm base on which his theory of individuals may emerge. We shall start with the quiddity approach, that looks upon individuals as quiddities and/or bunch of quiddities. Then we go on investigating the existential approach, and finally, we finish with the hylomorphic approach.

3.4.2 Avicenna's moderate realism

Much ink has been consumed on Avicenna's most famous and influential thesis, the distinction between quiddity and existence.[462] The problem may be framed in different ways, one of these would be its formation in terms of primacy, that is, which element is prior to the other: quiddity

[461] *Ishārāt*, 46.
[462] Wisnovsky, 2003, 160; Bertolacci, 2012; Benevich, 2015. On the criticism of the essentialist reading see El-Bizri, 2001.

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or existence. Scholars mostly agree on the primacy of quiddity. However, this being only a conceptual, not ontological primacy.[463]

As Robert Wisnovsky puts it, the thing and existent are coextensive terms, but they are intensionally different. To be a thing means something else than to be an existent.[464] Everything is existent since this "to be an existent" (*ma'nā al-mawjūd*) necessarily follows it by concomitance (*luzūm*), either in the individuals (*fī al-a'yān*), or in the estimation or intellect; otherwise, it would not be a thing.[465]

These two modes of existence mean that in Avicenna's universe, there are two sorts of existents, mental ones, and existents *in re*. Thus, one should expect Avicenna to distinguish between the individuation of mental and outer existents. Here we have at least two realms, in which the question of individuation arises. First, if there are mental existents, they are things, that is, concepts existing in the mind, and insofar as they are existents, they are individuals. As such, something must explain their individuality. In a similar vein, existents in the outer world are equally individuals. According to the classical reading of Avicenna, quiddities, existing in, either way, are accompanied by accidents proper to that particular kind of existence.[466]

In other words, humanity may exist in individuals – like in Zayd in the outer reality, just as it may exist in the mind, as a universal "human," a notion that may be said of many instances of humanity. What Avicenna practically does is that he elaborates different considerations: humanity may be considered as existing in Zayd, in the outer world: in this case, we took humanity with many other accidents that accompany it, which constitutes Zayd's essence (*dhāt*). Humanity may be considered along with mental accidents as well, insofar as it is in the mind. In that case, humanity plus universality make up the notion of the universal human that refers to many. Apart from these two, Avicenna allows the quiddity to be considered purely in itself without any other condition (*bilā sharṭ shay' ākhar*[467]), human, insofar as human.

It is the quiddity considered in this way that bridges the gap between the outer and mental existence. Universals, inasmuch as universals do not exist in the outer world, as if they were like the Platonic Forms; instead, it is the aforementioned "human in itself" – a quiddity without (further) condition that exists in individuals, as a prior element. It exists as human considered

[463] Wisnovsky, 2003, 160; Bertolacci, 2012, 286.
[464] Wisnovsky, 2003, 53; Bertolacci, 2012, 288: clarifies it more, saying that not every existent is a thing, since God is not a thing - having *māhiyya*.
[465] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 32, 3–5.
[466] *Madkhal*, 15, 2–5.
[467] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 204, 2–3.

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in itself, although many other condition and state accompany it.[468] Its existence is prior to the natural existence, as the simple is former than the composite.[469]

3.4.2.1 The quiddity in the concrete particulars

In this chapter, the main goal is to describe the "structure" of an individual, as it exists *in re*. Following this train of thought, we conclude that the quiddity may exist *in re*, so to say, in concrete particulars (*fī al-a'yān*). However, a quiddity like humanity, insofar as it exists in the natural thing, in Zayd, is Zayd's quiddity, being individuated by his material accidents.[470] In this consideration, Zayd's humanity is not identical to ʿAmr's: Zayd's humanity is taken on the condition that it belongs to Zayd.

On the other hand, humanity in Zayd may be considered as humanity in itself, being without any other condition. In this respect, it is not taken along with what is mixed to it.[471] In other words, Zayd is *a certain human*, but it does not prevent human insofar as human (i.e., humanity in itself) to exist in it. Since *a certain human* is human, the human in itself exists in a *certain human*.

The most intriguing question is this: how the quiddity in itself does exist in particulars? As he insists, Zayd's humanity is other than ʿAmr's humanity; actually, it is different in number. Still, humanity in itself exists in both of them. His realism seems to entail a sort of a contradiction: if humanity in itself is neither one nor manifold, how could it exist as such in its different instantiations? In this case, it must be one in number, but this way, it is already something else than a quiddity in itself: it is quiddity in itself plus "one in number."

Nevertheless, Avicenna is quite straightforward in answering this question: the quiddity in itself exists in the individual as a part; however, he avoids the exact part-whole attribution, he rather articulates it "like the part" (*ka-al-juz'*),[472] or that the quiddity in itself precedes in existence the individual quiddity, as the simple precedes the composite and the part precedes the whole.[473]

As Fedor Benevich hinted at the theory of quiddities, the constitutive elements being parts of the quiddity, may be a possible parallel.[474] It is clear that this part, or "like a part" cannot mean

[468] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 204, 8–11.
[469] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 204, 17–205, 2.
[470] *Maqūlāt*, 39, 15; *Ilāhiyyāt,* 208, 5–6.
[471] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 200, 16.
[472] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 201, 7.
[473] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 201, 10–11. In this chapter there is only one instance where he takes explicitly as a part, where the animal is part of a certain animal. (*Ilāhiyyāt,* 202, 5.)
[474] Benevich, 2015, 121.

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an independent element in the thing *in re* since it would lead to absurd consequences: this, being a part, cannot be predicated of the whole, as it is in the case of universals. That is to say, the universal animal cannot be predicated of the universal human, taking them as independent mental existents, since in this consideration, the universal human is a self-standing concept that cannot be identical to another self-standing concept, the universal animal; nor can it be predicated taken as self-standing part of the latter.[475]

The human in itself then, exists in an individual, in Zayd. Just like it exists in another individual, ʿAmr, however, Avicenna is very careful not understand it as a Platonic Idea; the *humanity* that is in Zayd is other than the one that is in ʿAmr. These "two" humanities are not one in number, because in this case, they would be like the Platonic Forms. As Avicenna answers:

> "[it is] absolute negation, and we meant by this negation that that humanity, insofar it is humanity is only humanity; its being "other than the one in ʿAmr" is something [superadded to it] from outside."[476]

Thus, negation works very well for him since it helps to skeletonize it from any other condition and state. Even if we predicate of it that it is "other than the one in ʿAmr', it is something superadded to it.

When he insists that humanity in itself, insofar as humanity actually exists in an individual, the fact that it exists *in* something, directs our attention to the same criticism. However, to understand it more fully, we shall translate the crucial passage in question:

> The animal [considered in terms of] pure animality, exists in the individuals, but it does not render it necessary for it to be separable. Rather, it is that which in itself is devoid of any conditions that accompany it, and it exists in particulars. It has already been encompassed by conditions and states from outside. Within the bounds of its unity by virtue of which it is one in that whole, it is animal, in abstraction, without any condition of another thing. Even though this unity is superadded to its animality, it is other than the other accidents.[477]

If animality in itself exists in an individual, devoid of any superadded condition or state, it means that it may be singled out from among its additional properties. Avicenna is well aware that in this case, it must have at least one superadded feature, namely "one" due to the unity which accompanies it.

It is in harmony with the following, where he reformulates the aforementioned structural considerations, however, this time, he stresses that it is existence, namely, the existence of the

[475] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 241, 1–2.
[476] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 198, 12–13.
[477] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 204, 8–13; Tr. by Marmura, 2005, 155–156.

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quiddity in itself that precedes the natural existence, that is the existence of an individual, as the simple precedes the composite.[478] This is called divine existence since it is the providence of God that causes its existence as that quiddity. Fedor Benevich thinks that it must be interpreted as identical to the *wujūd khāss* of a thing.[479] In other words, if the quiddity in itself (humanity) exists in the particular by its existence by providence (*wujūd bi-al-ʿināya*), it must also be one, since unity and existence are correlational terms.

To reformulate the problem: Avicenna insists that the quiddity in itself exists in the compound (the individual) as a part; thus, its existence is prior to the existence of the compound (the individual), and it is like the priority of the existence of the simple element in the existence of the composite. The mere fact that it exists in the composite entails that it must have something superadded to the quiddity in itself – at least unity since it is one element in the bundle of properties on an ontological level. Thus, it is not only an epistemic examination, but it is actually a part, being an ontological part of the compound. However, it contradicts to the previous idea that the quiddity in itself is devoid of any condition; it is neither one nor many in itself.

That is why we should turn to unity in Avicenna's philosophy. As we saw above in the logical context, Avicenna approaches individuality from different angles. One of the formulas that he proposes recourses to unity: the quiddity in itself and unity make up the individual. However, it does not seem to mean that unity would be the principle of individuation. As Avicenna writes, *if unity is attached to humanity in an aforementioned way, the individual human originates [from them]*.[480] This formula has no obstacles on the mental level, but it is still a question whether it reflects an ontological prerequisite of becoming an individual.

Avicenna is adamant in holding that unity is an accidental notion to the quiddity. To pinpoint his realism, he adduces his famous argument on predication: the quiddity, like humanity, cannot be one by itself, because in this case, humanity would be one in number, that is, humanity would be the same in Zayd and ʿAmr.[481]

However, as Avicenna underlines, if we consider an individual, like Zayd, as a quiddity that is encompassed by accidents, that quiddity is indeed in the assemblage, but unity must be attached to it, to be one in the whole.[482] Although he mysteriously adds that this unity is other than the

[478] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 204, 17–205, 1.
[479] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 205, 2.
[480] *Madkhal*, 72, 2–3.
[481] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 198, 3–16.
[482] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 204, 10–13.

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rest of the accidents, the quiddity is no longer the quiddity in itself, but "that quiddity" or a "certain quiddity" that is, quiddity plus unity.

It is well known that in Avicenna's system, unity and existence are coextensive terms. The most famous passage that clarifies the relationship between unity and existence is the following:

> Moreover, the *one* and the *existent* may be equivalent in being predicates of things, so that everything that is said to be an existent from one consideration is, from a certain consideration, correctly said to be one. [Now,] everything has one existence.[483]

In other words, unity and existence mutually imply each other. However, they are not the same: "to be one" means something else than "to be existent."[484] The coextensiveness with existence implies that just like existence, "one" is a modulated term (*mushakkak*) as well.[485]

The modulation of the term "one" means that it may be predicated of things with respect to priority and posteriority.[486] It resembles the term *existent* that has the same meaning, but there is a difference in a way in which it is predicated. The substance is before accidents, not temporarily but ontologically; therefore, its existence is more deserved (*aḥaqq*). Alternatively, the existence of some accidents, namely the firm ones, like quantity and quality is stronger than that of the infirm, like time and passivity.[487] Not to mention that the existence of God is nobler than that of the possible existents. As Alexander Treiger labeled it, these are two layers of modulation of existence: the predicamental and transcendental level.[488] However, in case of unity, the modulation of the term seems to refer to the different kinds of unity, (accidentally one, essentially one, and one in genus, species, in number) where there is indeed a difference between the strength of unity. As Avicenna himself puts it, the one by continuity (*bi-l-ittiṣāl*) is more deserved (*awlā*) of unity than that of contiguity (*bi-l-iltimās*).[489]

In other words, unity seems to be modulated, indeed on a predicamental level. At the same time, it seems to be so even on the transcendental level: God is one,[490] and he is one in itself, not due to a unity inhering in it.[491]

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[483] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 303, 6–7, Tr. by Marmura, in Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, 236.
[484] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 103, 7–9.
[485] *bi-tashkīk*: that is, one may be predicated by priority and posteriority that corresponds to one accidentally, and one in itself.
[486] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 97, 5–6.
[487] *Maqūlāt*, 60, 17–61, 1.
[488] Treiger, 2012, 358–362.
[489] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 99, 56.
[490] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 343, 10; *Ilāhiyyāt-i Dānishnāma*, 45.
[491] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 344, 3–4.

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To understand the relation of unity to a quiddity while being in the compound, we can take existence as an example. Since some accidents are firmer than others, there are elements in the compound, whose existence is firmer than the existence of others.

The other problem here is about the meaning of unity. As the text implies, it is about to explain the quiddity's distinctness from the other features (*fa-huwa fī ḥadd waḥdatihi allatī bihā huwa wāḥid min tilka al-jumla hayawān mujarrad bilā sharṭ shay' ākhar*).[492] However, the classical interpretation of unity rests on indivisibility: the one is said by modulation of concepts being the same in that there is no actual division in them, insofar as everything is what it is. [493] Thus, this understanding of unity is other than the one presented here.[494] Rather, it seems to correspond to a negative understanding of unity that Avicenna applies to God: God is one since He does not share at all with others the existence that belongs to Him. By this unity, God is single.[495] This is actually a negative assertion predicated of God, to safeguard his absolute unity. However, this understanding of unity means something else: that the existence is unique, in the sense that it is not shared by anything else. This sense of unity may be applied to the quiddity in the particular. However, the difficulty is still there: if it exists, it exists as one, and it is no longer the quiddity in itself.

If an individualized quiddity exists, its unity might be explained as a concomitant accident of that thing, just like existence. However, if this process is understood as an abstraction in the mind, the process seems to work, but it endangers Avicenna's realism: the quiddity in itself seems to be only a mental construction, and its distinction from all the other elements in the compound is nothing else than the result of a mental analytical process.[496]

3.4.2.2 Avicenna's accidental individuation

Avicenna in chapter 5 of the *Ilāhiyyāt* seems to use a language that highlights the inner distinctness of the quiddity in itself in the compound. Whenever he writes about a particular concrete thing, like Zayd, he takes it as a quiddity, for example, humanity along with (*ma'a*) its accidents, being the natural human.[497] While talking about the accidents, Avicenna, as it seems, consciously uses the verb *iktanafa – yaktanifu* (to surround, enclose) for the accidents: as if the

[492] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 204, 11–12.
[493] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 97, 4–6.
[494] The indivisibility reading of one may go back to Aristotle, *Met*. (V.6), 1016b 23–25. It is interesting to note that it echoes the late-antique perception of individuals, insofar as they are labelled as *ἄτομα*: as Ammonius articulates it, they are indivisible, because they cannot be divided into similar species - or non-similar species, but they perish if divided. See Ammonius, *in Isag.*, 63, 17–19
[495] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 373, 9.
[496] It runs parallel with Fedor Benevich's version. See Benevich, 2015.
[497] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 200, 14.

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accidents and states would embrace the quiddity.[498] Avicenna willingly uses the term *qārana – yuqārinu* (to associate), which echoes the same idea.[499] These verbs serve only to depict the relation between the quiddity and accidents, and they all highlight the relative distinctness of the quiddity, which is easily understandable since Avicenna's goal is to underline his realism, that is, how quiddities really exist in particulars in either mode of existence. However, there is another term, namely *khalaṭa* – to mix up – to represent this relationship.[500] In the *Categories* of the *Shifā'*, Avicenna simply calls the individual thing – that is the quiddity in itself with accidents in the outer reality, the quiddity on the condition of mixing (*māhiyya bi-sharṭ al-khalṭ)*.[501] These two ways of articulation, in my opinion, clearly shows the dilemma above: whether the quiddity in itself in the thing exists as quiddity in itself on the one hand, however, it is another quiddity, i.e., an already individuated quiddity on the other. The use of the term *khalṭ – khālaṭa – yukhāliṭu* reminds us of the mixture, as Avicenna's model suggests. To be more precise, he uses this root to denote apposition as opposed to the complexion. The latter means the mixture as a homeomer (*mizāj*), whereas the former indicates that the juxtaposed elements do not affect each other, like wheat and barley in the pot.[502] Although we cannot draw decisive conclusions from such a terminological consideration, it is still interesting to see Avicenna's usage.

3.4.2.2.1 The role of accidents

What we saw is only a linguistic representation of the accidents-quiddity relation. One articulation mirrors realism more than the other, but they should not be taken on their face value. Avicenna was usually credited with the accidental reading of individuation, namely that accidents individuate.[503]

In Avicenna's system, the quiddity is the starting point, at least conceptually; what is more, it enjoys an ontological priority as it is like a simple element in the composite.[504]This picture implies a derivative way of individuation, since an individual is not primary, in the sense that a quiddity needs something else which renders it an individual. In this formulation, the accidents indeed play a role in the process in which a quiddity becomes an individual:

[498] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 204, 10; 212, 12; 208, 18.
[499] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 211, 14.
[500] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 200, 16.
[501] *Maqūlāt*, 39, 9–10.
[502] *Kawn*, 127, 1–3; Stone, 2008, 102.
[503] Pickavé, 2012.
[504] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 201, 10–11.

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> Then we say: it is inevitable [for the quiddity in itself] to become another by the accidents (*bil-aʿrāḍ*) that are with it (*maʿhā*) because it does not exist but with (*maʿa*) accidents.[505]

This passage underlines that it is the accidents by which a quiddity in itself becomes "another," that is, an individual instance of a quiddity. Even if the author consequently articulates that the quiddity is "with" (*maʿa*) the accidents, highlighting that it is actually in the compound, he changes the preposition to *bi*, by which the quiddity becomes another quiddity.[506] The passage continues in this way:

> Then, it is not taken insofar as it is only humanity. Since the humanity of ʿAmr is another humanity (*ghayr insāniyyat-in*) by the accidents. Therefore, these accidents have influence on the individual of Zayd, by the fact that it is a compound of the human or humanity and the concomitant accidents, as if they were parts of [the individual of Zayd], and they have an influence on the human or humanity, by the fact that they are related to it (*mansūba ilayhi*).[507]

Here, Avicenna clearly distinguishes between two perspectives. The accidents have an influence on the individual on the one hand, and the quiddity on the other, rendering it a particular quiddity. In contrast to the first part of the passage, this text mentions only the concomitant accidents; however, one would expect all sort of accidents, especially material accidents, as Avicenna mentions it elsewhere. Alternatively, a possible interpretation might be that the accidents are concomitant in relation to the quiddity's existence: although they are not part of the quiddity, the quiddity cannot exist without them; thus, several accidents concomitantly follow the quiddity in itself if it exists. However, concomitant accidents are those that may not be separated from their subject, only in estimation.[508]

The most important addition is that these (concomitant) accidents are as if they were parts of the individual, just like the quiddity in itself is like a part in the compound. As Avicenna articulates it, the compound of humanity and accidents are parts in Zayd, that is, accidents "have an influence" on the individual essence. However, he is not saying that only accidents individuate: he only asserts that individuals are the collection of quiddity *and* accidents. Nevertheless, there are other passages, where he is more unequivocal: as we learn at the end of the second chapter in book 5 of the *Metaphysics* that individuals are indeed constituted (*al-ashkhāṣ [...] tataqawwam*) of every nature (*ṭabīʿa*) that might be universal while existing in the intellect, and of the nature (*ṭabīʿa*) of accidents that they embrace along with matter.[509] This

[505] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 200, 8–9.
[506] Compare the use of proposition "bi" with *Ilāhiyyāt*, 201, 10.
[507] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 200, 9–12.
[508] *Madkhal*, 87, 1–4.
[509] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 212, 11–12.

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articulation clearly seems to echo the Porphyrian tradition, according to which individuals are constituted by properties the assemblage of which cannot be found in anything else.[510]

In other words, Avicenna distinguishes between two considerations of an individual: the individual qua individual thing and the individuated quiddity. In the first case, the accidents are like parts of the individual, because the accidents, along with essential features, constitute the individual. This gives the impression that every accident, everything that might be predicated of it builds up the individual. On the other hand, he highlights a more realist approach, when not the individual itself, but the individual quiddity (a certain humanity) is in focus: the accidents have an influence on it by the very fact that they are related to it, in virtue of which this humanity is other than that humanity. In this latter approach, the starting point, the subject of the inquiry is the quiddity. In the former consideration, the starting point is the individual essence (*dhāt*), Zayd as Zayd.

This double approach seems crucial to understand how Avicenna treats individuals. Since individuals are not the proper object of demonstrative science, what matters more is the quiddities in themselves and the unchangeable, necessary statements about them. In this sense, the significance of individuals lies in the fact that quiddities may exist as individuated quiddities. In this respect, we might speak about the individuation of the quiddity. In other words, what really matters here is the particularization of the quiddity.

On the other hand, and this is our former approach, individuals may be taken as individual essences (*dhawāt*): this consideration reflects the individuation of the individual. Although it might sound tautological, here we have in focus the individual essence that might constantly change, insofar as being a subject of contingent accidents and events.

3.4.2.2.1.1 Accidental reading of individuation

As we saw above, [511] many passages suggest a causative reading of *bi* – where a quiddity is individual in virtue of its accidents.[512]

In the second chapter of *Ilāhiyyāt* V, Avicenna divides quiddities into the material and immaterial ones. Echoing the Peripatetic, but mainly Themistian opinion that matter is the cause of multiplicity, to which we will return later, he insists that immaterial natures are the unique instantiations of a species. They cannot be multiplied, since the principle of their multiplicity is

[510] Furfūriyūs, *Īsaghūjī*, 1071, 22.
[511] On the problems arising from the accidental reading see Pickavé, 2012, King 2000, 164–167; Gracia, 1984, 40–42.
[512] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 201, 10.

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either the essential and concomitant properties that are the same for the given nature; or the matter and material accidents. However, it is not the case because they are separated from it. As for the material natures, Avicenna writes:

> [The one] among these [natures] that requires matter would exist only in conjunction with the existence of matter rendered ready [for its reception]. Its existence would thus have been affiliating external accidents and states with it, through which it is individuated.[513]

Here Avicenna again, uses the preposition *bi* – (*yatashakhkhaṣ bihā*), seemingly in the causative sense. At the same time, he uses the participle *mustalḥiq-an* (affiliate), which clearly implies the ontological posteriority of the accidents. In the *Maqūlāt* of the *Shifā'*, he states similarly that the condition of the mixture (*sharṭ al-khalṭ*) for an individual means the accidents that are attached to the subject as specializing (*munawwi'a*) and individualizing (*mushakhkhiṣa*) properties.[514] However, the reading of the individualizing properties – *khawāṣṣ mushakhkhiṣa* – is not entirely clear; since it might be read as *mushakhkhaṣa* as well. In this case, it would be a more Peripatetic reading, in the sense that they would be individuated by something else, namely, their subject. However, it runs parallel with *munawwi'a*, that is, the *differentiae*, and some lines later we read that about the same elements as the difference that specializes and particular accidents that individuate (*wa-'awāriḍ juz'iyya tushakhkhiṣ*).[515] Here, there is no doubt that the accidents individuate. However, in this passage, Avicenna talks about natures, quiddities in the considerations above; thus, this is about the individuation of quiddities taken on the condition of the mixture (*khalṭ*).

3.4.2.2.1.2 Essential reading of individuation

On the other hand, there other passages that suggest a non-causative reading. The following text highlights the contingent nature of accidents: in contrast to essential features, they are not part of the essence, they do not constitute it. In this context the issue is about the genus, like color, that cannot exist without other elements that make it a designatable color. Such a thing as color without any addition, does not exist, unless as supplemented by differentiae as a species, like white, for example.

> [The colorness] has been specialized by accidental things/affairs from outside, [so that] it may be imagined as staying the same (*bāqiyan bi-'aynihi*) while the accidents may go one by one, [just] as it is the case with the specializing factors of the nature of the species.[516]

[513] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 208, 4–6; Tr. by Marmura, 2005, 158.
[514] *Maqūlāt*, 39, 9–10.
[515] *Maqūlāt*, 39, 15.
[516] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 218, 13–15.

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The adverbial *bi-ʾaynihi* (in itself, or in its instantiation) suggest that the color once particularized, does not depend on its accidents: they may come and go. This tenet reflects the logical distinction between accidental and essential features: the accidental features, like properties and concomitant or separable accidents, may be cut off the subject which will stay the same.

In the later works, like in the later *Manṭiq al-Mashriqiyyīn*, the *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*[517] we consistently find the same idea, namely that the individual is the same, even if opposite accidents adhere to it, and accidents are by which Zayd is differentiated from ʿAmr. [518]

3.4.2.2.1.3 Logical outlook

The similar dichotomy appears in Avicenna's logical writings. On the one hand, it is accidents that render a certain quiddity subsistent as an individual, which seems to attribute an individuating role to accidents. On the other hand, in logical contexts, where the distinction is being made between essential and accidental features, the contingency of accidents is usually emphasized. Accidents have no role in the subsistence of the substance, in the sense that if their opposites have adhered to it, the substance would have been the same. Instead, accidents only distinguish one individual from another.

To resolve this tension, the solution offered by scholars working on Porphyry may be an option: there, the same tension appears between the description of individuals in the Eisagoge, as they are constituted (συνεστήκεν) of accidents and the essential features. The secondary literature offered a twofold approach: Socrates as a substance is not constituted of accidents, but Socrates, as an individual is indeed constituted of them, like this, is short and that is tall, this is white, and that is black.[519] As we just saw, Avicenna suggests a similar twofold perspective: one considers the quiddity – accidents relationship, and the other the individual – accidents relationship.

It also appears in the Eisagoge (*Madkhal* of the *Shifā)* here Avicenna consistently stresses that accidents play no role in the individual. He enumerates the essential properties of the human, following the *Tabula Porphyriana*: the human is a substance, an extended body, ensouled, able to acquire knowledge. Then he says,

[517] *Ishārāt*, 54.
[518] *Manṭiq al-Mashriqiyyīn*, 16.
[519] See Chiaradonna, 2000, 330–331; Brumberg-Chaumont, 2014, 77.

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> If all this is combined, from this assemblage one essence (*dhāt*) comes to be, the essence of the human. Then concepts and other causes are getting mixed to it, in virtue of which (*bihā*) every single of the human individuals comes to be, and an individual is differentiated from the other. None of them is such that if it would not be existent for the individual and another would be there in its place, it would follow that it be corrupted because of this, but these are things that follow and concomitantly join it.[520]

However, later he insists that they are not indispensable for the individual qua individual: even if other, what is more, contrary accidents have adhered to it, it would not be corrupted. The verb corrupted is in the masculine,[521] which implies that the subject must be the *shakhṣ* (m), not *dhāt* (f) – the only masculine element in the sentence.

The text follows in this way:

> The reality of its existence is by its humanity, but its individual *anniyya* (*anniyyatuhā al-shakhṣiyya*) comes to be from quality and quantity and so on.[522]

Here, Avicenna differentiates between quiddity (*māhiyya*) and *anniyya*. There is extensive secondary literature on *anniyya*.[523] First, it stands for particular existence in metaphysical context besides *māhiyya*,[524] but in the *Posterior Analytics,* it is contrasted to *limiyya*.[525] Although Amos Bertolacci's idea that in some logical contexts the term *anniyya* might have been misspelled for *ayyiyya* – meaning special difference, as an answer to the question which one is it, is appealing in this case too,[526] here, *anniyya*, taken as individual essence,[527] or particular existence seems to be also a tenable option. Whatever may be the case, this is a clear distinction between the two approaches: the quiddity of Zayd constitutes the individual, and the accidents are only in its *anniyya*, which is not a static feature in this reading because it encompasses all the accidents that may come and go.

[520] *Madkhal*, 29, 6–11.
[521] Although the feminine singular is already plausible, taken the fact that punctuation is often omitted in manuscripts.
[522] *Madkhal*, 29, 11–12.
[523] Van den Bergh 1986; Bertolacci 2012, Goichon 1938, 9–12; D'Alverny, 1959.
[524] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 344, 10; *Mabda'*, 15; *Ilāhiyyāt-i Dānishnāma*, 75.
[525] *Burhān*, 158, 9–10.
[526] Bertolacci, 2012, 304–305. The author highlights that the this is the only one instance in the *Madkhal* where the Latin translator did not read *ayyiyya*. however, to read *anniyya* as *ayyiyya* in this passage, seems to be quite in line with the general intention of the passage: in this case, the translation would go: "but its individual "whichness" gets realized by quality and quantity and others." Avicenna anyway, a couple of lines before asserts that to humanity other concepts and causes get attached, by which every single individual gets realized and by which they will differ from each other. (*Madkhal*, 29, 7–8).
[527] Goichon, 1938, 10.

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Among the *māhiyya – anniyya* distinctions in Avicenna's writings the most interesting for our purposes is the one found in the *Burhān*, where Avicenna investigates the relation of definition and its causes:

> However, we have to tell the truth and know that the definition of the thing in virtue of its quiddity (*min jihat māhiyyatihi*) is completed by the parts of its constitution, which is not outside of it. [The definition of the thing] in virtue of its existence (*min jihat inniyyatihi*) is completed by all the causes in such a way that its quiddity becomes conceptualized as it exists. Everything that precedes its quiddity in existence is realized by it [i.e., the causes], then its existence becomes completed by it, and that quiddity comes to be by it.[528]

Although this passage is not about individuals qua individuals, it is about the definition of the "thing," like "human." What is important is that Avicenna again, offers a parallel twofold approach:[529] the thing may be defined in virtue of its quiddity, which is a static one – since it is only of the constitutive elements. On the other hand, a thing may be defined in virtue of its existence, where the quiddity is grasped by its causes that are indispensable for it to come to be as that quiddity. Avicenna carefully distinguishes between the separate causes that precede the quiddity, which cause its existence, and between the consequent ones, which comes after it as proper and common accidents. Sometimes, he stresses, things may be defined by an accident they have, if that accident encompasses the final or efficient cause, like the "taking on" (*labs*) in the definition of the ring, or wrap.[530]

In the *Madkhal*, the *māhiyya – anniyya* relates to individuals: the quiddity of Zayd is by his *humanity* – and accidents are contained in his individual *anniyya*. This latter is dynamic because accidents may come and go. A certain set of accidents may not be true during the whole lifetime of the individual. Therefore, a description of this sort cannot grasp the complete essence of the individual; it is good to distinguish it from other individuals. Nevertheless, since *anniyya* stands for individual existence, as such, it may be described in terms of causality, by the enumeration of all the causes that happen to have an effect on it.

All these texts underline Avicenna's double approach that we referred to above: the individual, with a quiddity in focus, and the individual with the *anniyya*, particular existence in focus. The former approach is in line with the logical essential – accidental distinction, whereas the latter corresponds to the individual essence understood as an existent, including all the accidents and events that may be predicated of it.

[528] *Burhān*, 301, 1–3.
[529] See also *Ishārāt*, 46.
[530] *Burhān*, 301, 7–12.

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3.4.2.2.2 Avicenna's hesitation regarding the role accidents play in individuation

If we compare these two considerations, the individual quiddity and the individual essence (*dhāt*), we find ourselves in a dilemma regarding the accidents. As we saw above, Avicenna, when it comes to the particularization of the quiddity, assigns a causative role to accidents. On the other hand, he sometimes seems faithful to the more Aristotelian tenet that accidents may easily come and go having no part in the constitution of substances. This leads us to the following problem: if Zayd is indeed individuated by his accidents, like snub-nosedness, boldness, then any change in these features would entail a certain change in his individuality. This seems to be even more problematic in case of the easily separable accidents, like sitting, whether the very act of sitting does individuate Zayd or not?

At first glance, it seems obvious that non-separable accidents have a more effective role to play. As we saw above, accidents have indeed influenced both the individual and the quiddity; especially concomitant accidents are such as if they were parts of the individual,[531] that is, as if they were like the essential features to the particular essence.

Nevertheless, many questions follow these tenets: all the non-separable accidents do have an influence on the individuality or not? To which extent might one say that they exercise influence? In other words, even non-separable accidents, like the scar on the face that may last until the death of the person, do contribute to individuality? If we take it off from someone's face by plastic surgery, would the person in question be the same person?

There is some evidence that Avicenna was aware of this sort of questions. In the *Metaphysics* of the *Shifā',* he divides the specifying accidents into two sorts: they are either relations that adhere to the simple elements and accidents or those that may be superadded to these simple relations. It is worth quoting the whole passage:

> Then, there would occur to [the species] necessary concomitants, consisting of properties and accidents through which the designated nature becomes specified. These properties and accidents would be either relations [1] only, without being at all a meaning [inherent] in the essence – these being the things that [accidentally][532] occur to the individual instances of simple things and to accidents – because their individuation consists in their being predicated of what they describe, whereas their being individuated through the subject is accidental (as is the case with natural forms, such as the form of fire).[533]

[531] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 200, 9–12.
[532] My addition.
[533] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 228, 8–12; Tr. by Marmura, 2005, 174.

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The first subsection of accidents consists of only relations (*iḍāfāt*) that have no meaning in themselves; that is, they are not like whiteness or blackness. Being merely relations, they seem to be the very relation of inherence in the subject.[534] Then, Avicenna admits that their being individuated by the subject is accidental: although, at first sight it seems to contradict to the former passage, however, if we take it as referring to the quiddity in itself, like fire in itself, or, the spatial relation in itself, then on this level, its individuation is indeed accidental, not a p*er se* feature. Alternatively, another interpretation may be that the subject is indeed accidental in the sense that it is one of the pairs of the relation (*muḍāf ilayhi*, to which it is related), which is indeed not the relation itself, which describes their inherence in the subject.[535] It is interesting to note that for Mullā Ṣadrā, this relation is the same as the existence in the subject – which is clearly in line that for him the principle of individuation (here: *mā bihi al-tashakhkhuṣ*) is existence, whereas accidents are the signs of individuation (*'alāmat al-tashakhkhuṣ*). Thus, he is in an easy position to interpret the passage that the individuation by the subject is accidental: everything that inheres in the subject, namely the other qualitative and quantitative accidents, are indeed accidental. [536] Be that as it may, Avicenna makes clear that simple forms and accidents are specialized by their inherence relation to the subject.

On the other hand, these relations might be interpreted as the primordial spatial relations that pick up the subject from among many. The features linked to the spatial extension are there as long as the subject exists, but they are continually changing. So long as the substance exists, being a materially extended object, its spatial relations, concomitantly exist with it, although changing. We will return to this question later, in the hylomorphic approach.

After this passage, Avicenna goes on to the other accidents, admitting that this issue is still obscure for him.[537] As he writes:

> [2] [There are] states additional to the relations, some, however, being such that it would follow necessarily that, if imagined removed from this designated thing, then this designated thing which differs from others would not exist but would have become corrupted in accordance with its concomitant difference [from these others]. [3] Some [on the other hand] are such that, [3a] if imagined [as being] removed, it would not be necessary through [this removal] that its quiddity, after existence, would cease to exist, [3b] nor [that] the corruption of its essence after it has become specified [would follow]. However, its being other than and

[534] This is how Mullā Ṣadrā understands it, although he seems to see in the light of his own teaching, the *aṣālat al-wujūd*. Mullā Ṣadrā*, Sharḥ-i Ilāhiyyāt*, II, 915.
[535] Until the new edition of the *Ilāhiyyāt, al-Shifā'*, we are not in a position to give a decisive answer. This idea appears in Yazdī, *Sharḥ-i Ilāḥiyyāt*, III, 549–550.
[536] Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ-i Ilāhiyyāt*, II, 915.
[537] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 229, 4–5.

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different from others would have ceased to be in order to become some other difference without any corruption [of its essence].[538]

This passage clearly shows Avicenna's doubts on the issue.

> [2] States the removal of which entails that this designated thing which differs from others would not exist and this designated thing would have become corrupted in accordance with its concomitant difference (*naḥw mughāyaratihā al-lāzima*)
>
> [3] States the removal of which does not necessitate
>
> > [3a] the *buṭlān* of its quiddity (*buṭlān māhiyyatihā baʿd wujūdihā*)
> >
> > [3b] the corruption of the [individual] essence after it has become specified [*fasād dhātihi baʿd takhaṣṣuṣihā*]

First, Avicenna raises this discussion on a mental level – it is about estimating (*tawahhum*) the role of accidents. It is reminiscent of the classical approach to essential and accidental features – whether the removal of it would entail the removal of the subject, either *in re* or *in intellectu*.[539] However, this time, the subject is not the quiddity, but the designated thing, the individual. It is as if Avicenna indeed would have distinguished between Zayd as a quiddity and Zayd as an individual.

He distinguishes between those states the removal of which [2] entails the corruption of the individual quiddity along with its difference to others. In this paragraph, Avicenna examines accidents in two respects: constitution and distinction. By the first, we mean the accidents the removal of which entails the removal of the subjects, being somehow essential in the individual essence. By distinction (*mughāyara*), we mean the differentiating role of accidents, which seems to be emphasized here. In other words, he follows the well-known scientific method regarding individuals: if something cannot be defined, it may be described, that is if the essence cannot be grasped, the only possibility left is to explore how does it differ from others (*tamyīz*).[540] This is like baldness if Zayd becomes bald, whereas ʿAmr does not. Although earlier, when both of them had hair, this difference was not tenable, now it is. In other words, their difference has been changed. As we saw above, the constitution-distinction debate already appears in the commentary tradition, as David reports it, and, al-Fārābī highlights only the

[538] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 228, 12–229, 3. Tr. by Marmura, 2005, 174–175.
[539] *Madkhal*, 34, 4–37, 5.
[540] *Manṭiq-i Dānishnāma*, 25.

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distinguishing role of accidents.[541] It also appears in *Madkhal* of the *Shifā'* in the context of general difference (*al-faṣl al-'āmm, διαφορὰ κοινῶς*)[542] in virtue of which things might differ from other things, and from itself in different moments, like the easily-separable accidents, sitting and standing.[543] Among these accidents, Avicenna highlights those that adhere to the substance early, like at birth. They, if distinguish one individual from another, will be impossible not to distinguish it after. In other words, they have a long lasting differentiating role.[544]

In Avicenna, these accidents seem to have a twofold role: constitution and distinction. If their removal entails the removal of the subject, the subject must depend on them. In this sense, it is as if they were parts of the designated individual.

In some cases, Avicenna distinguishes between two types of accidents: accidents, whose existence is firm, and accidents, whose existence is not firm.[545] An example of the first option is quantity (*kammiyya*) and position (*waḍ'*) in the black: if quantity or position ceases to be in it, *it cannot be said that its essence (dhāt) remains, but it becomes indivisible and indesignatable (ghayr mushār ilayhi). Thus, the black parts that we supposed in the blackness would not exist anymore*."[546] This idea appears in the context of the modulation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*), and in *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt*. From the latter, we learn that

> the parts that have position must have firm existence in actuality, to be some of them in a certain position towards the others, and continuity, and arrangement.[547]

This reading of position does not mean the quickly separable accident, the position towards something else, which constantly changes, but the inner position of parts to each other, deriving from divisibility and continuity.[548] However, quantity, that is, the continuity of the body is a concomitant accidental notion, in the sense that there is no body without being continuous; it follows from the definition of the body, just like oddness is a concomitant of the number "two."[549]

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[541] David, *In Isag*., 168, 19–169, 17; al-Fārābī, *Manṭiqiyyāt*, I, 37; *Madkhal* (al-ʿAjam), 84.
[542] *Porphyry*, Eisagoge, 8,8.
[543] *Madkhal*, 73, 1–4.
[544] *Madkhal*, 74, 6–10.
[545] *Maqūlāt*, 60.
[546] *Mubāḥathāt*, 346 [1069].
[547] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 107, (M) 304 [534].
[548] This question will be explored later.
[549] *Madkhal*, 34, 12.

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The question is, that on the analogy of position and quantity, are there accidents that play a similar role, not for the quiddity, but the individual? Avicenna leaves us without an answer.

In the second case [3] there are states the removal of which [3a] does not entail the corruption of the quiddity (*buṭlān māhiyyatihi baʿd wujūdihā*), [3b] nor the corruption of the individual essence (*fasād dhātihi baʿd takhaṣṣuṣihā*), but only the distinction from other individuals will change.

Here again, Avicenna distinguishes between the quiddity (*māhiyya*) and the specialized essence (*dhāt*). As it seems, they indicate separate things: Zayd's individual quiddity on the one hand, and Zayd's essence, on the other. The first depends on Zayd's humanity, the latter on the accidents.[550] However, what really matters is that none of them perishes – only the difference changes towards other individuals. It implies that Avicenna after having eliminated the possibility that a given feature is not part of the essence – since its removal does not entail the removal of the whole, put the question in the framework of difference–similarity.

Nevertheless, in the end, Avicenna himself admits that he does not understand the problem from all of its aspects.[551] Thus, we might not even expect a clear-cut theory for it.

The question is, whether all the accidents that happen to adhere to Zayd constitute his individuality or only some of them? For example, does sitting in a chair during dinner has the same effect on his individuality than his scar on his face? They, indeed have a different role in distinguishing him from ʿAmr: sitting may distinguish him for a while, whereas the scar may accompany him during his whole lifetime.

The thing that Avicenna does not talk about a supposed "constitution of individuality" is, however, not without reason. It would imply, then, that Zayd has a definable quiddity – which he does not have in Avicenna's system because individuals *qua* individuals cannot be defined. On the other hand, if there had been such a thing, it would mean a "frozen individual,"[552] which would not allow it to be changed in that respect. It would be something like the modern nucleus-theory among tropes; where the compresence of certain tropes builds up the core of the particular.[553] What is to be underlined, however, is that Avicenna was well aware of problems that bother even modern-day philosophers.

[550] *Madkhal*, 29, 11–13.
[551] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 229, 4–5.
[552] The expression is borrowed from Arlig, 2009, 140.
[553] See, Simons, 1994.

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3.4.2.2.3 Substance – accident dichotomy

Although the accidental individuation raised many problems throughout the history of philosophy,[554] we shall restrict ourselves to two questions only. The first is practically a question a Peripatetic thinker would ask: how does a primary substance like Zayd, depend on contingent accidents, if we bear in mind the famous Aristotelian dictum, according to which the substance is that is not in a subject, and the accident is that which is in a subject.

For Avicenna, existents (*majwūdāt*) are to be divided into two subcategories: substances and accidents. Substances do not exist in a subject at all, whereas accidents exist in a subject. As Fedor Benevich has shown in a recent article, Avicenna has quite a sophisticated view on substantiality and accidentality. In response to problems posed by some people from the Baghdād school, he distinguishes between substance and substantial, on the one hand, and between accident and accidental on the other.[555] Avicenna consistently turns against those who, following Porphyry, holds that a thing can be both substance and accident.

What is important for our purposes is the following: he holds that only the criterion of being a substance is that it cannot be in a subject at all; [556] whereas for something to be part of a subject does not entail that it must be a substance. Thus, heat is not substance, although it is part of the fire, and it cannot be removed from it without the removal of fire itself. Heat is an accident, because it is an accident in itself, because there is at least one case, for example in the iron, where heat is an accident. Thus, heat is an accident in itself, but it is a substantial accident for the fire; and this is because it is part of its existence.[557] In other words, it would be labeled as substantial, regardless of whether it is an accident or substance by itself.

This theory entails that in Avicenna's universe, there are substantial accidents, that is, accidents that are accidents in themselves, but at the same time that may be substantial (*jawharī*) for their subject. As he articulates it:

> Then, the accident that is not like not-a-part in something, rather, that is like-a-part [in the subject], being constitutive for it, is substantial in it, but it is not a substance.[558]

[554] Pickavé, 2012, 341–342, King 2000, 164–167; Gracia, 1984, 40–42.
[555] Benevich, 2017.
[556] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 57, 7–11. Actually, this is what Avicenna reiterates on the second chapter of the *Metaphysics* of the *Shifā'*: substance is that in which the accident exists, it is constituted in itself and in its species, its existence is not like the existence of one of the parts of the subject, and its separation from the thing is not possible.

[557] *Maqūlāt*, 50, 5–11.
[558] *Maqūlāt*, 50, 10–11.

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In other words, the main difference between substance-accident and substantial-accidental is that a thing (i.e., a quiddity) is either substance or accident in itself if it happens to exist. Human, if exists, is substance because it is not in a subject. Alternatively, a thing is an accident, if it needs a subject in order to exist, like baldness. On the other hand, something is substantial or accidental in relation to the subject: if it exists in something as its part, it is substantial, if not, it is accidental: heat, which in itself is an accident, is substantial for fire but is accidental for the iron.[559] This latter consideration (*i'tibār*) is always in relation (*bi-al-qiyās ilā*) to the subject.

The first substance-accident distinction is on the level of the quiddity; it tells us something about the quiddity itself. It shows whether it needs a subject to exist, or not.[560]

The second, substantial-accidental distinction is another level of examination, that is, in relation to the subject: even Avicenna sometimes articulates it along these lines: for something to be accidental means that it is in relation to *this* subject, that is a designated subject, not constitutive for it, nor is a part of its existence (*sic*!).[561] To answer the question of whether heat is accidental or substantial while being related to a subject, we should look into the subject, whether it is constitutive or whether it is part of it.

In other words, being substantial or accidental are characteristics that depict the relation to the subject: whatever is in the subject as a part, is substantial, and whatever is not, is accidental. This distinction might bring us closer to our second question about the role accidents might play in individuality.

As we saw above, Avicenna sometimes insisted that accidents are like parts of the individual quiddity[562] – just like here. This relational consideration would allow something, which is an accident in itself to be part of a primary substance, being a constitutive part of it. However, Avicenna refrains from using this tool, because, as we saw above, it is not clear which accidents would be "substantial," or "accidental" for the individual – if not for the substance. However, even if he does not do it, his attempt at the end of the *Ilāhiyyāt* V.5 seems to be something similar.

In Avicenna's mind, the tension between the quiddity + accidents and substance + accidents approach reflects the two sides of the same coin. The substance depends only on the quiddity: "human" is a substance because of its quiddity, which is not in a subject at all, regardless of its

[559] *Maqūlāt*, 49, 19–50, 4.
[560] *Maqūlāt*, 49, 13–14.
[561] *Maqūlāt*, 50, 2–4.
[562] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 200, 10–11.

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actual mode of existence, that is, whether it exists in the particulars or in the mind.[563] He says the following:

> If it is substance because it is human, then what adheres to it from the accidents, I mean like individuality and generality, and also like the becoming/existence (*ḥuṣūl*) in particulars or the existence (*taqarrur*) in the mind, then these are things that adhere to a substance. What adheres to a substance are concomitants and accidents. Its substantiality does not perish along with their [corruption], [rather] its essence (*dhāt*) perishes. It already had adhered to another substance, because the essence (*dhāt*) of the substance has perished.[564]

Avicenna is quite clear that accidents, including existence, do not render anything to be a substance. Thus, a certain human individual is substance because of humanity only, since the quiddity "human" is a substance, that is, it is true of it that it is not in a subject at all if it exists in particulars.[565] The quiddity "human" is accompanied by accidents, but these accidents have no role to play in its substantiality. If we remove them, its particular essence (*dhāt*) is that which is getting removed, not its substantiality, that is, its being not-being-in-a-subject-at-all. The same is true of existence as well: being a concomitant feature of the quiddity, that is, it is accidental. Thus, even existence has no role to play in substantiality: that is, "human" is a substance, regardless of its actual existence, whether it exists in the mind or in the particulars; because everything is a substance that may exist in particulars as not in a subject at all.[566]

Thus, Zayd is a substance, but this is because his quiddity (humanity) is a substance in itself, since humanity exists in particulars as not in a subject at all. Zayd's substantiality does not depend on his individuality. Therefore, it does not depend on the accidents Zayd has.

"Zayd is a substance" and "Zayd is an individual" mean different things: the first sentence means that Zayd is an existent that is not in a subject at all; in this case, Zayd is the ultimate subject of everything that may be predicated of him. Secondary substances, universals are universals in relation to particulars, regardless of whether they exist in actuality, or not, in other words, a substance is universal if it may be predicated of many. Primary substances, individuals need no such relation to be individuals. Taking the Prophyrian definition of the individual, Zayd is an individual means that Zayd has a concept (*ma'nā*) that may not be shared by anything

[563] *Maqūlāt*, 94, 13–15.
[564] *Maqūlāt*, 94, 16–19.
[565] *Maqūlāt*, 95, 1–2.
[566] *Maqūlāt*, 95, 2. A particular individual, like Zayd, is a substance, and this is because of his humanity. However, the more pressing question relates to the secondary substances, like the universal human that exists in the mind, because it seems to be an accident, as a sort of knowledge that is in a subject, that is, in the mind. This is why Avicenna stresses that the quiddity, if it exists in particulars as not in a subject, is a substance.

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else, or as Avicenna rearticulates it in this context, its concept cannot be predicated of a multiplicity either in an existential, or an imaginary utterance.[567]

The substantiality of Zayd is because of his quiddity, and his individuality is because of the accidents that are in his essence (*dhāt*), or (*anniyya*).

Thus, these two approaches are not in contradiction, but they tell us different things from the same object. In other words, they reflect two different aspects of the same thing: substantiality and individuality.

It does not mean, however, that substantiality and individuality would be distinct parts in the individual. Although the substance is ontologically prior to accidents, it does not necessarily precede them in time. So it is not such that first, the substance comes to be, and after a while, accidents adhere to it; the priority of the substance and its essential constitutive elements is the result only of mental analysis. [568] Avicenna is very clear in maintaining that the substance is not constituted by accidents, and actually, accidents exist in it in a sort of existence that their existence is not part of it. Practically, the substance enjoys a specific sort of priority. This is the famous Avicennan modulation of existence, *tashkīk al-wujūd*,[569] according to which, in a predicamental sense,[570] existence may be predicated both of substance and accident, but differently – in terms of priority and posteriority. Thus, a substance cannot ontologically depend on an accident that is posterior to it.

3.4.2.3 Summary

As we saw, Avicenna in some passages endorses an accidental reading of individuation, and at the same time, he holds to the Peripatetic essential-accidental distinction, where the substance cannot depend on accidental features.

Throughout his opus, there are two main considerations of individuals: individuals taken as particularized quiddities, and taken as individual essences. The first represents a derivative reading of individuation, where accidents encompass the quiddity, rendering it different from another quiddity.[571] What is at stake here is the particularization of the quiddity. If individuals are taken as individual essences, accidents are indeed part of the individual essence, but Avicenna is reluctant to go further in classifying the individuating and non-individuating

[567] *Maqūlāt*, 96, 10–11.
[568] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 58, 3–4.
[569] See Treiger, 2012.
[570] Treiger, 2012, 358.
[571] This tenet corresponds to (3) and (3a) in our theoretical approach. See chapter 1.1.1.

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accidents.[572] He confesses that this is a problematic issue.[573] If a certain set of accidents were to count for the individual essence, excluding others, it would freeze individuals; and all the individuals were the same. That is to say, in this respect, all the accidents that happen to inhere in an individual are like parts of the individual essence, and they serve to distinguish one instance from another. The frozen reading of individuals would also entail that we would be entitled to categorize and classify individuals: this is such, and that is such, which could equally end up in absurd consequences when it comes to ethical judgments.

Nevertheless, Avicenna's hesitation regarding the role of accidents in individuality is not a wrong move. In this respect, this hesitation is in accord with modern-day discussions which stresses the changeability of the self.

In the quiddity – existence approach, on the other hand, it is existence that seems to count for the identity of an individual. This solution is proposed by Allan Bäck, who attributes to existence an individuating role, concluding:

> Existence is a necessary condition for something to be individual. The act of existence itself individuates, but itself depends on the presence of a quiddity in itself coming to be a substantial form, that is, a quiddity in the category of substance materially receptive of other quiddities.[574]

However, this is what – to my knowledge – Avicenna never says explicitly.

It seems that Allan Bäck has both distinction and identity in mind when he talks about individuation: once, he insists that

> Individual substances of the same species differ from one another not in virtue of having the quiddity in itself proper to that species, for example, humanity for Socrates and Plato, but in virtue of that quiddity's having a material existence.[575]

Here, by material existence, Allan Bäck seems to mean something like the Avicennan *anniyya*.[576]

Later on, Allan Bäck highlights the role existence plays in identity, saying that

> it is material existence of the individual substance, the presence of the substantial form in matter that provides the active principle of persisting through time with a unique, though constantly changing, set of accidents.[577]

Although we incline to accept the last sentence, still, it seems that the re-evaluation of existence in individuation is still in order.

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[572] An exception to this is the role of self-awareness in the identity of the human rational soul, see *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 147–148, (M) 438–443 [803–809]; (B) 160–161, (M) 480–483 [880–887]. However, as I will argue, it rather explains the identity of the individual.
[573] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 229, 4–5.
[574] Bäck, 1994, 58.
[575] Bäck, 1994, 45.
[576] Bäck, 1994, 44.
[577] Bäck, 1994, 50.

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3.4.3 Existence and individuation

If we look at an individual as an existent, we can distinguish between different aspects that the term existence implies. In this subsection, we will focus on the role existence plays in distinction, unity, and causality.

To answer the question, whether existence individuates in Avicenna's system, we should clarify what we intend by individuation in this context. The threefold consideration of quiddities along with the modal ontology entails that whenever something exists, it must be necessitated by something else. Therefore, the necessitated existence seems to render the quiddity an actual thing. However, Avicenna does not seem to attribute an individuating role to existence, although he may have had many occasions to do that. If existence individuates, it has a causal nexus to individuation. The question may be framed as the reconsideration of the relation between existence and individuation. Indeed Avicenna seems to address this question.

Before turning to this problem, we have to understand what is meant by individuation here, that is, which aspect of individuation may be caused by existence. As we saw above, Allan Bäck understood it as a distinction, on the one hand, and as persistence, on the other.

The main argument in favor of existence as an individuator is probably in the context of the individuation of the human rational soul, a question, which lies beyond the scope of this dissertation. According to Jari Kaukua, it is self-awareness that explains the individuation of the human rational soul.[578] Some passages in the *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt* indeed equate existence and self-awareness, [579] implying that it is a constitutive feature of the particular essence (*dhāt*).[580] There are, however, other additions where the *Ta'līqāt* admits that the perception of the *dhāt* and its existence are concomitant features (*mutalāzimān*),[581] mutually implying each other. I agree with Jari Kaukua that self-awareness is the missing link in the individuation of the human soul, even if Avicenna seems reluctant to draw such a conclusion.[582]

As we shall see, in the *Kitāb al-Mubāḥathāt* Avicenna attributes an individuating role to self-awareness, but it is not individuation (*tashakhkhuṣ*) *stricto sensu*, but only an aspect of it, namely identity. We will turn back to this question when we treat the role of form in individuation.

[578] Kaukua, 2015, 51–55.
[579] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 147–148, (M) 438–443 [803–809]; (B) 160–161, (M) 480–483 [880–887].
[580] Kaukua, 2015, 41; 54.
[581] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 147–148, (M) 438–443 [803–809].
[582] Lánczky, 2013.

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3.4.3.1 Does existence distinguish individuals from each other?

Our starting point is Allan Bäck's assertion here, according to which individuals subsumed under the same species are different from each other in virtue of their material existence.[583] For the author, material existence means the existence the quiddity having material accidents.[584] In other words, it means the existence of the quiddity in the extramental world as encompassed by or mixed with material accidents.

Material accidents exist in the subject –they are actually constituted as existents by the substance.[585] In other words, their actual existence is ontologically dependent on the subject, being posterior to it. Moreover, this is the *anniyya*,[586] the particular existence of an individual that encompasses all the accidents, including features and events the individual has so long as it exists. It is undoubtedly true that existence is particular for each individual.

First, let us consider what Avicenna says about existence. As we saw it above, for him existent, just like the thing, and the necessary are impressed in the soul in a primary way.[587] As he articulates it in the *Kitāb al-Najāt*:

> The existent cannot be explained by another name since it is the first principle of every explanation itself having no explanation. Instead, its form is constituted in the soul without the intermediary of anything (*bilā tawassuṭ shay'*), while itself is divided into substance and accident.[588]

Avicenna is quite explicit that the term existent is one of the most general terms in the sense that its concept cannot be explained by anything else that would be more known than itself. In other words, there is nothing that could define the concept of the existent qua existent. Even if it could be articulated in another language or be indicated by a designation that existent is that under which everything comes, it is not a proper definition nor description.[589]

With this in mind, in Avicenna's system, the quiddity in itself bridges the gap between mental and extramental existence. Everything that has quiddity may be conceptualized apart from its existence; which means that everything can be conceptualized as devoid of existence.

Thus, on the epistemic level, a quiddity, and in consequence, the quiddity of an individual as well, can be conceptualized without taking into account whether it exists in the extramental

[583] Bäck, 1994, 45.
[584] Bäck, 1994, 44.
[585] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 58, 3–4; *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 65, (M) 164–165 [242].
[586] *Madkhal*, 29, 12–13.
[587] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 29, 5–6.
[588] *Najāt,* 496.
[589] *Ilāhiyyāt-i Dānishnāma*, 8–9.

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world, or not. This approach foreshadows that existence, understood as the *wujūd ithbātī* does not have a distinguishing role on the level of mental existence: I can picture Zayd in my mind regardless of the fact whether he is alive or dead.

Actually, in the *Maqūlāt* of the *Shifā'*, Avicenna makes it explicitly clear that existence has only one meaning (*al-wujūd fī jamī'ihā ma'nā wāḥid fī al-mafhūm*.)[590] He insists that the actual existence (*thubūt*) and existence (*wujūd*) have one determinate meaning in the mind that is shared by all things.[591]

However, Avicenna's modulation of existence presupposes a certain kind of difference between existents. Modulated terms form a subcategory of equivocal terms, where the meaning (*ma'nā*) of the term is one, but it still differs in a certain respect. Either in priority and posteriority, like the substance, which is prior in existence to the existence of accidents; or in the degree of being more deserved or appropriate, like that which exists in virtue of itself, in contrast to others that exist in virtue of something else, as it is the case of the Necessary of Existence and the possible existents. The third way of modulation is the differentiation in degree encompassing those which are different in strength and weakness, like the whiteness may be different in the snow or the ivory.[592]

Even though the term existence as applied to different things may differ in priority – posteriority, or in deservedness, and the like, it does not seem to differ in individuals conceptually so that a certain individual existence would differ from another individual existence. Thus, one could hardly say that Zayd exists more than ʿAmr, or Zayd's existence would be stronger than that of ʿAmr. Actually, Mullā Ṣadrā would be entitled to say that. [593]

The difference in deservedness might differentiate between the existence of the Necessary of Existence and that of the others, namely the Possibles of Existence. Nevertheless, among the mere Possibles of Existence, to my knowledge, we have no data in the Avicennan corpus that would prove that some difference would be attestable there. This idea is corroborated by a passage from the *Mubāḥāthāt*:

> As for his question that is about existence, what unveils [the truth about] its modulation is that he should know that existence in existents (*fī dhawāt* existence) is not different in species, rather, even if there is a difference, then [it is] in strength (*ta'akkud*) and weakness. Rather, quiddities of things reaching existence, differ in

[590] *Maqūlāt*, 60, 11–12.
[591] *Maqūlāt*, 60, 7–8.
[592] *Maqūlāt*, 10, 4–18.
[593] See Mullā Ṣadrā's *tashkīk wujūd*, Mullā Ṣadrā, *Asfār I*., 503–506.

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> species, and what they take on from existence is not different in species. The human differs from the horse in species because of its quiddity, not because of its existence.[594]

Here Avicenna makes it entirely clear that existence does not differ in species – not being a genus of course – and, in consequence, the difference between things subsumed under different species is due only to the quiddity. Existence seems to be the same. This idea also appears in the Metaphysics of the *Dānishnāma-yi ʿAlāī*:

> [However], all wise people know that whenever we say "a substance exists' and "an accident exists' we intend by "existence" the same meaning, just as "non-existence" has one meaning. Indeed, once you start particularizing existence (*chūn hastī rā khāṣṣ konī*), the existence of everything will be other [my correction for "different" - *dīgar*], just as the particular substance of each thing will be other [my correction for "different" - *dīgar*]. [...] Yet, though this is so, existence does not apply to these ten [categories] [univocally], because only that is called univocal which applies to multiple things without any difference (*bī hīch ikhtilāf*). Existence, on the other hand, first belongs to substance, and only through the mediation of the substance, to quantity, quality, and relation, and through the mediation of these, to the rest [of the categories]. [...] Therefore, existence applies to these things according to prior and posterior (*pīsh wa–pas*) and more or less (*kamābīshī*), though it applies to one meaning. This [kind of predicate] is called modulated (*mushakkik*).[595]

This passage corroborates the former view that existence, although it is qualitatively different in substance and accidents, is not so in individuals. If we particularize existence, that is we take existence as belonging to Zayd, Zayd's existence is, of course, other than that of ʿAmr. However, on the epistemic level, taken as conceptualized, the existence has the same meaning.

Thus, even on the level of individual quiddities, existence does not count for their difference, being conceptualized in the mind.

However, if we turn back to the *Madkhal* of the *Shifā*, where Avicenna treats individual concepts, insisting that even in the mind no matter how many universal concepts are predicated of a subject, their aggregate will be still universal. Thus, only the existence (*wujūd*) and the indication to an individual meaning (*ishāra ilā maʿnā shakhṣī*) can single it out (*yuʿayyinuhu*).[596] Accordingly, right in the next sentence, Avicenna brings up examples: as you might say: he is the son of so and so, the existent this and this time, the tall, the philosopher, and then it turned out that no other [existent] shared these properties that time.[597] As it is

[594] *Mubāḥathāt,* 41 [9].
[595] *Ilāhiyyāt-i Dānishnāma*, 37–38; Tr. by Morewedge, 2001, 30–32.
[596] *Madkhal*, 70, 15.
[597] *Madkhal*, 70, 16-17.

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described here, Zayd the individual is circumscribed: the enumeration of the different aspects he has, only if in a given moment nothing else shares these properties, identifies Zayd.

If we bear in mind Avicenna's discussions about the modulation of existence, that is, existence is a non-categorical, vacuous concept, as such, it cannot single out Zayd from other concepts on an epistemic level. Therefore, this is the task that the indication to an individual element performs.

In other words, existence as such does not have any distinguishing feature on the mental level, if it is understood as the existence of instances subsumed under the same species. When it comes to differentiating concepts, it acts like "white." Nevertheless, the act of existence of mental existents is something else. It is not the conceptualized meaning of existence, but the very act by which a certain concept exists in my mind. If I think on Zayd, it is in my mind so long as I am thinking about it. If I stop and start thinking on him again, in virtue of which are different the two instances of this mental concept? In this regard, mental existence, the very act of thinking seems to be a good candidate.

3.4.3.2 Does existence individuate mental existents?

To put it otherwise, in all these cases, Avicenna insists that mental concepts are principally distinguished by their contents. However, what about those mental existents that are identical, like numbers? In an equation like 2+2=4, in virtue of what do the two instances of 2 differ?

Avicenna insists that even in case of mathematical objects, numbers differ in virtue of something like "matter":

> Thus, mathematical things in their natures are necessitated in their existence through other things. Their natures do not separate from matter. And, even if they are stripped away from matter in the estimative faculty, there would necessarily adhere to them, in the faculty of estimation, [characteristics] by way of division and configuration that are due to matter. It is almost the case that quantities are [instances] of matter close to [being] quantitative figures, [and] unities are also [instances of matter close] to [being] number, [and] number is [instances of matter close to] being the properties of number.[598]

If mathematical objects, that is, numbers, are abstracted from their objects, they must have matter in the mind also. Avicenna stresses that it is the faculty of estimation (*wahm*), where these objects are to be placed; just like in the example of the squares: two identical squares as represented in the mind, are distinct only because they are in a divisible organ, that is, in a spatially distinct substrate. For geometrical shapes and numbers, the issue is the same: if they

[598] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 299, 11–14; tr. by Marmura, 2005, 235.

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have multiplied instances, they are not in the intellect, and they must have matter *stricto sensu*. Remember, that geometrical figures, if they are represented in the mind, they must be represented as spatially distinct shapes.

Numbers, on the other hand, must not necessarily be imagined in such a way, but Avicenna applies the same criterion for them also: they must have a matter-like substrate in the estimation, but in this case, unities act like matter. Since any number consists of unities, that is, ten is the aggregate of ten units, it indeed seems to play the role of something like matter. Besides, Avicenna asserts that numbers are not a mere aggregate of unities, but they have a proper, formal unity, by which they are what they are:

> Hence, for each of the numbers, there is a reality proper to it and a form in terms of which it is conceived in the soul. This reality is its unity, by virtue of which it is what it is. The number is not a plurality that does not combine [to form] one unity, so as to say, "It is [simply] as an aggregate of ones." For, inasmuch as it is an aggregate, it is a unit (*wāḥid*) bearing properties that do not belong to another.[599]

This passage is interesting for two reasons. First, because it asserts that numbers are aggregates of unities, and as such, they form a multiplicity, but this multiplicity has a (formal) unity, in virtue of which it is what it is. This unity is the tenness, in the number of ten; and insofar as it is one, it has distinctive characteristics. That is to say, numbers as existing in the mind indeed have something like matter and form: the aggregate seems to stand for matter, and the unity seems to stand for the form.

Two instances of the number two, in an equation like 2+2=4, must be differentiated somehow. Avicenna's theory of discursivity helps in clarifying this problem. Since this is a discursively fragmented proposition, it involves time, and it has multiple objects, and in consequence, the whole process is propositionally structured.[600] Thus, it must happen in a psychic faculty, not in the intellect;[601] where the main difference is that the psychic faculties are placed in a divisible organ. If we bear in mind Avicenna's account of mental representation, it needs to be placed in a material organ – just like in case of any other kind of discursive thought.[602]

In other words, the multiple instances of mental existents do not depend on existence, on the act of thinking only. It is possible only because the soul is in an extended organ, and it is materiality that makes it possible. It is true that the existence of 2 is other than the existence of 2 in the equation 2+2=4, but the cause of the multiple instances is not existence *stricto sensu*.

[599] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 120, 1–4; Tr. by Marmura, 2005, 91.
[600] On this, see Adamson, 2004, 90–92.
[601] *Nafs*, 215, 12–13.
[602] *Nafs*, 217, 2–5.

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Divisibility and material differentiation are the necessary conditions of such a discursively structured proposition.

On the other hand, this is not to rule out that existence plays a role in the formal part of mental existents, namely that existence is the principle of their persistence, is another issue to consider.

3.4.3.3 Existence, unity, and individuation

In the following, we will turn to extramental individuals, and to the role, existence plays in the outer reality. The main goal of this subsection is to determine the exact role existence plays in individuation. Since quiddities exist only as individual things, existence seems to be a necessary condition for an individual to *exist* as an individual. Probably this reasoning lead scholars, like Allan Bäck to the conclusion that existence actually individuates. It is plain and evident that the existence of everything is particular and proper to it. Nevertheless, the question is the following: is it existence that particularizes an individual, or is there something else that particularize the existence of an individual?

To answer this question, we shall first turn to the relation between existence and individuation. In which sense can we say that it is a causal relation? In another word, what is the relationship, between the "individual" (*shakhṣ*) and "existent" (*mawjūd*) and unity (*waḥda*), or between "individuation" (*tashakhkhuṣ*) and "existence" (*wujūd*), unification (*tawaḥḥud*)?

To reiterate Avicenna's famous view on quiddities, a quiddity in itself may exist either in the mind or in the particulars. Existence is not constitutive for the quiddity, instead, it is a concomitant accident in it, in the sense that it may be removed from it in the estimation, but never in the external existence.

Concomitance (*luzūm*) is a key motive in Avicenna's quiddity-existence distinction. Accordingly, the spurious *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt* admits that it is the concomitant feature of the species that it does not exist but as an individual.[603] That is, the quiddity that may be characterized as a species in the mind may exist only as an individual.

Avicenna consistently divides concomitant accidents, namely those features that are not constitutive for the thing but follow it, into those that follow the quiddity by themselves, or from "outside." The example for this is the existence of the world.[604] In other words, there are features that always follow the quiddity, as not being a part, either in virtue of the quiddity, or

[603] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 58–59, (M) 145–146 [200].
[604] *Manṭiq al-Mashriqiyyīn*, 18.

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in virtue of its existence.[605] Existence and individuality fall into the latter category; because the quiddity "human" does not exist because of humanity in itself, but its existence has another set of causes. Concomitance, in our view, only describes the relation of quiddity and existence/individuality on the conceptual level; but in Avicenna's system, there is another range of causes that explains it. This is what we will see later, in our chapter on the particularity of existence.

In other words, existence, unity, and individuality are concomitant accidents of the quiddity. We are in a better position to clarify their relation in case of existence and unity than in case of existence and individuality. In the *Madkhal*, we have already seen that the "individual human" is somehow the effect of unity added to humanity, at least in the mind (*fa-idhā iqtaranat al-waḥda bi-al-insāniyya 'alā al-wajh al-madhkūr, ḥadatha minhumā al-insān al-shakhṣī alladhī yashtarik fīhā kull shakhṣ*).[606]

In this passage, individuality is subsumed under unity. "One" is a simple term, it is in a way more known than individuality, since, as we saw above, it denotes a logical classification that its concept cannot be shared by anything else.

On the other hand, existence and unity are coextensive terms; that is, they are extensionally common but intensionally different.[607] Everything of which existent is predicable, also one is predicable, but to be existent and to be one means different things.

Although to my knowledge, Avicenna does not admit it, the same issue holds of existence and individuation: everything that exists is an individual, and everything that is an individual, is existent. However, to be existent, and to be individual means different things: the former means that something has actual existence, and the latter implies that it has something that cannot be shared by anything else.

Especially in Avicenna's later works, there are passages where individuation is placed besides unification (*tawaḥḥud*) as if these terms have been synonyms. In the *Mubāḥathāt*, *tashakhkhuṣ* and *tawaḥḥud* stand in a position where usually existence used to stand:

> The individuation (*tashakhkhuṣ*) and unification (*tawaḥḥud*) of the thing is either because of the quiddity, and this is that the existence of which is necessary in its quiddity, or [the individuation (*tashakhkhuṣ*) and unity (*tawaḥḥud*) of the thing] is by concomitance of its quiddity like the quiddities of the intellects after Him, if it

[605] *Madkhal*, 30, 8–9.
[606] *Madkhal*, 72, 2–3.
[607] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 103, 7–9; 303, 5–12; Wisnovsky, 2003, 153.

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> is so, or, for example, the quiddity of the sun. (…) Alternatively, [the individuation (*tashakhkhuṣ*) and unification (*tawaḥḥud*) of the thing] is by an adhering accident at the beginning of the existence or after.[608]

Here we see a brief and simplified version of Avicenna's modal ontology: everything, in which existence and quiddity are the same is necessary of existence in itself, and its individuation and unification is due to its quiddity. Individuation and unification, if they are due to the quiddity, are the quiddity itself – which refers only to the Necessary Existent. In this place, usually, existence used to stand: its quiddity is existence, nothing more. It is as if individuation and unification would be another two aspects of the thing that exists. In consequence, the individuation and unification of God are in itself, not due to an external cause.

The other existents, the celestial ones, namely those that are the unique instantiations of their species, are individual and one, but their individuation and unification concomitantly follow from their quiddity. Existents subsumed under the same species are individual and one due to an accident. Besides the three-level structure of individuation among the different sort of existents, what is of more importance here is that Avicenna deals with individuation as a synonym for existence.

Alternatively, consider another passage from the *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt*:

> The *huwiyya* of the thing, and the *'ayn* of the thing, its unity (*waḥdatuhu*) and its individuation (*tashakhkhuṣuhu*) and its special singular (*khuṣūṣiyyat wujūdihi al-munfarid lahu*)[609] existence are all one. Our saying, "it is it" (*innahu huwa*) is an indication to its *huwiyya*, and to its special singular existence which is not shared.[610]

These passages are all late in Avicenna's carrier, and they are not easy to interpret.[611] Even if this *Ta'līqāt* passage was written up by his pupils, it reflects the same consideration, namely that all these terms are coextensive but intensionally different. If we bear in mind Avicenna's former discussions about the coextensivity of unity and existent, this might equally apply to all these features enumerated in this passage. In other words, this reading implies that these features are different aspects of an individual, which is otherwise an indefinable "this": it may be approached from different routes. On the other hand, the fact that the author of the *Ta'līqāt* takes them as one suggests that they are epistemically distinct predicates.

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[608] *Mubāḥathāt*, 341 [1067]. A parallel passage: *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 98; (M) 274 [465].
[609] Notice that the term equally appears in *Ilāhiyyāt,* 47, 4–5.
[610] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 145, (M) 431 [784]. See al-Fārābī, *Ta'līqāt*, (M), 42 [91].
[611] First of all, this passage is included to the other *Ta'līqāt*, attributed to al-Fārābī. Its authenticity is still an open question: al-Fārābī, *Ta'līqāt*, (M), 42 [91]; Gutas, 2014, 162; Janos, 2012, 389.

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To understand this passage, we have to consider all these aspects enumerated here. As far as *huwiyya* or *huwahuwa* is concerned, the passage adds shortly after that they are identical with unity and existence.[612] That is, a thing has *huwiyya* – *'ayn* – *waḥda* – individuation – *khuṣūṣiyyat wujūdihi al-munfarid lahu* – special singular existence, being all one. As we just noted, these concepts can hardly be understood as being paronyms, in the sense that with the difference of the expression, they mean the same thing. Rather, they seem to refer to one and the same thing, which may be described with many features – all these features that these expressions signify.

Second, what is of crucial importance, is that in the passage, the personal pronoun *huwa* is an indication of *huwiyya*, and the special, singular existence (*khuṣūṣiyyat wujūdihi al-munfarid lahu*), which cannot be shared. Here, the author of the *Ta'līqāt* explicitly insists that existence is a particular, unshareable feature. It is indeed a tempting suggestion to equate this particular existence with the existence of the *Madkhal* I.12, the criterion of individuality. However, here, what is unshareable is a special and singular existence, not existence taken absolutely. That is, there is something, a sort of specialization superadded to existence that renders the absolute existence a particular existence. In the following, we will see that Avicenna has much to say about the particularization of existence.

Nevertheless, from this conceptual triangle – individuation – existence – unity – the investigation of unity is missing; therefore, in the following, we will turn our attention to it.

3.4.3.4 Unity

The topic of unity is of crucial importance in the Islamic theological and philosophical discussions. To mention only the most significant, the Islamic creed (*shahāda*) asserts the absolute oneness of God (*tawḥīd*), which is the very base of Islam. Therefore, it must have been proved and defended on theological and philosophical grounds as well.

Philosophically speaking, the discussions about unity, not in the theological sense, seem to be inspired by Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, the Delta 6 and Iota 1 on the one hand, where the Stagirite discusses the different senses of the one, and the opposition of one and many, and the *Neoplatonica Arabica* on the other, with special emphasis on the *Kitāb al-Khayr al-Maḥḍ*.[613] However, instead of examining Avicenna's tenets against the background of this broader

[612] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 145; (M) 431 [784].
[613] On this see Janos, 2017, 107–110.

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philosophical context, we will direct our attention to his predecessors in the East. We shall rather briefly summarize the main philosophical tenets that may have influenced him.

3.4.3.4.1 Predecessors

We will start with al-Kindī (d. 870) and al-Fārābī (d. 950). For al-Kindī, unity is an accidental notion, except for God, who is the true one.[614] God is one by essence, whereas every other existent receives unity, and they are said to be one only metaphorically.[615] This theory somehow foreshadows Avicenna's distinction of essence and existence, although not entirely.[616] What is more important is that for al-Kindī unity is accidental for all the created existents: as we briefly noted earlier, this idea has its roots in the *Neoplatonica Arabica*, namely, in the *Liber de Causis*.[617] Avicenna similarly subscribes to this view; in his system, the indifference of the quiddity presupposes that unity is superadded to the quiddity, in both sorts of existence. This tenet raises philosophical severe problems, the investigation of which lies out of the scope of this chapter.[618]

The other main source is certainly al-Fārābī (d. 950), who has an independent treatise on the topic, the *Kitāb al-Wāḥid wa-l-waḥda*.[619] To summarize his main point: for him, the broadest sense of "one" refers to which is set apart by its quiddity (*al-munḥāz bi-māhiyyatihi*).[620] This notion applies to both mental and extramental existents, that is, this sense of unity accompanies the existent and the thing:

> The "one" (*wāḥid*) is also said of that which is set apart by its quiddity (*al-munḥāz bi- māhiyyatihi*)— whichever quiddity that may be, divisible or indivisible, conceived [by the human soul] or [existing] outside the soul. This is [the thing] set apart in its having a share of existence (*al-munḥāz bi-mā lahu qisṭ al- wujūd*) and [the thing] set apart in its share of existence (*wa-l-munḥāz bi-qisṭihi min al- wujūd*). It is in the nature of "the one" said in this sense to accompany the existent (*an yusāwiqa l-mawjūd*), like the thing (*al-shayʾ*), and there is no difference between saying "all things' (*kull shayʾ min al-ashyāʾ*) and saying "each one" (*kull wāḥid*). Likewise, it is said of all the categories, of the particular thing that is designated (*al- mushār ilayhi*), and of other things— if they exist— outside the categories (*khārija ʿan al- maqūlāt*).[621]

That is to say, the expression "isolated/set apart in quiddity" applies to all existents, to everything that has a share of existence, that is, which simply exists. Everything that exists is

[614] Adamson, 2007, 49–50; Adamson, 2002, 302.
[615] *Rasā'il Kindī*, 105.
[616] Adamson, 2002, 309–311.
[617] *Aflāṭūniyya*, 31–33; Thillet-Oudamiah, 2001–2002, 337.
[618] On this see Menn, 2012.
[619] See Janos, 2017, 115. As Janos has shown, this tenet has no clear precedent in the Aristotelian Corpus.
[620] al-Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, 116, 6–7. The other meaning of existent, mawjūd is the "true".
[621] al-Fārābī, *Wāḥid*, 51. Quoted by Janos, 2017, 116–117.

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one, and this sense of unity accompanies all existents. As we will see, Avicenna comes very close to this formula where he asserts that unity and existence refer to the same thing but from different aspects. This sense of unity is linked to the particular existence: everything that has a share of existence is one. It is in virtue of the share of existence that something may be called one.

In the *Kitāb al-Wāḥid wa-l-waḥda* another passage approaches unity from a different angle:

> The one is said of those whose quiddity is not shared [in such a way] that some two things would resemble each other in respect of it.[622]

This approach resembles the logical notion of individuality, the unsharebility criterion. As we saw above, one of al-Fārābī's formulations about individuals rests precisely upon the similarity-dissimilarity criterion.[623] Everything that has an unshareable quiddity is also one. This leads back to the Prophyrian tenet that such a concept cannot be predicated of more objects, as al-Fārābī admits.[624]

This is the point that paragraph [25] reiterates:

> The one is said also of that which has no partner (*qasīm*) in its meaning (*ma'nā*) by which it is described, be it any meaning. In such a way that that is a quiddity for it, to be delimited (*munfarid*) in existence. The quiddity that it has is not shared by anything else; then it is delimited (*munfarid*) in the meaning.[625]

In this passage, al-Fārābī extends the unshareability criterion to the concept of the thing, saying, without mentioning any causal relation, that whatever is delimited in meaning is delimited in existence also.

This reflects the former idea of *munḥāz bi-māhiyya*: that is, everything that exists, also has unity, and it is its proper existence. The relation of thing – existence – one is other than that of Avicenna; as Damien Janos noted, in al-Fārābī proper existence, actual existence, the quiddity and unity somehow overlap.[626]

The clear example of this is God's unity, as it is elaborated in the *Mabādi' ārā Ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*:

> In light of this, His existence [i.e., of the First], by which He is distinguished from all other beings, also cannot be other than that by which He is existent in Itself. Therefore, His distinction from everything else is through a unity that is His being. One of the meanings of "unity" is the proper existence (*wujūd khāṣṣ*) by which every existent is distinguished from another, and it is by virtue of this that each existent is called "one," in the sense that it has an existence proper to it alone, and this particular connotation [of the term "unity"] goes along with

[622] al-Fārābī, *Wāḥid*, 51–52.
[623] al-Fārābī, *Tawṭi'a*, 60.
[624] al-Fārābī, *Wāḥid*, 52.
[625] Fārābī, *Wāḥid*, 55–56.
[626] Janos, 2017, 117 n.6.

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> existence. In this respect, the First is also One, and more deserving of that name and connotation than anything else.[627]

Al-Fārābī here applies his unity–isolated in quiddity theory to God. In this articulation he equates unity with the proper existence (*wujūd khāṣṣ*), admitting that it is a unity that delineates it (*yanḥāz*) from another. This meaning of unity is simply coextensive with existence. It applies to God and every other existent. It is a positive feature that may be predicated of God so that it still does not hurt His perfect unity.

What is of particular interest for us is that Avicenna seems to have been aware of these positions in his works, even if he does not accept it. Instead, he is adamant in holding that unity is accidental, in which he clearly confronts Aristotle, al-Fārābī, and Averroes.[628]

3.4.3.4.2 Avicenna on unity

In some places, Avicenna's theory of unity is quite reminiscent of the Fārābian discussions, and it is not unlikely that he may have been influenced by al-Fārābī, as it is already have been noted.[629] On the other hand, the idea that unity is an accident in everything other than God is clearly not a Fārābian doctrine.

If we look at a theological problem, namely, God's unity, Avicenna seems to echo al-Fārābī's views, but he differs from him as well:

> He is one in all respects because He is not divisible—neither in terms of parts in actuality, [nor] in terms of parts by supposition and estimation (as with the continuous), nor in the mind in that His essence is composed of varied intellectual ideas from which an aggregate becomes united; [and] that He is one inasmuch as He does not share at all [with others] the existence that belongs to Him. He is thus, by this unity, single (*fard*). He is one because He is perfect in existence; nothing in Him awaits completion, this being one of the aspects of the one. The one is only in Him in a negative manner. [This is] unlike the one belonging to bodies—by reason of connection or combination—or to some other thing among [things] where the one is in it through a unity which is an existential meaning that appends itself to an essence or essences.[630]

Avicenna reiterates that God is one inasmuch as He does not share (*ghayr mushārik*) at all with others the existence that belongs to Him, and by this sense of unity, he is a single existent (*fard*). However, Avicenna also admits that God is one only in a negative manner; that is, unity is not superadded to His Essence. His existence, being identical to His essence is that which renders it individual and one. This sense of unity resembles al-Fārābī's unshareability criterion, but then Avicenna quickly adds that it is not a positive feature. It is still negative in the sense that the phrase "He does not share the existence with others," is actually an apophatic statement. Still,

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[627] al-Fārābī, *Mabādi*, 46; Tr. by McGinnis-Reisman, 2007, 89.
[628] See Menn, 2012, 51.
[629] Janos, 2017, 102.
[630] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 373, 8–12; tr. Marmura, 2005, 299.

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"the existence as not shared by others' encompasses the individuality criterion as elaborated in the *Madkhal*. It is not surprising at all. For al-Fārābī, this sense of unity is not accidental; it actually overlaps with the quiddity of the thing. [631] Taken in this sense, it is not a negative feature, neither for the created existents, neither for God. Nevertheless, as we will see, it is accidental to the other existents. Therefore, it cannot be a positive, superadded feature in God's essence because it would have entailed composition in Him.

That is, the main difference with the Second Master, is that unity is superadded to the quiddity in every existent other than God. Actually, for Avicenna one is a number, and the number is a real accident that inheres in its subject both *in mente* and *in re*.[632]

As we saw above, in the logical context, Avicenna elaborates on individuality in different manners. One of the formulas that he proposes recourses to unity: the quiddity in itself plus unity make up the individual. As Avicenna writes, *if unity is attached to humanity in the aforementioned way, the individual human originates [from them]*.[633] It is evident in the mental level, but it is still an open question whether this formula reflects an ontological prerequisite of becoming an individual?

Avicenna is adamant in holding that unity is an accidental notion to the quiddity. To pinpoint his realism, he adduces his famous argument on predication: the quiddity, like humanity, cannot be one by itself, because in this case, humanity would be one in number, that is, humanity would be the same in Zayd and ʿAmr.[634] Avicenna almost consistently insists that unity is concomitant of the "thing" (*shay'*).[635] In another place he links it to the substance (*jawhar*),[636] and in the *'Uyūn al-ḥikma* to the existent, insofar as existent, being among its essential accidents (*a'rāḍ dhātiyya*).[637] This means that for Avicenna, unity follows the quiddity just like existence; however, it is not entirely explicit whether unity should be subordinated to the existence, or not? The passage from the *'Uyūn al-ḥikma* seems to suggest this reading.[638]

Avicenna, in another passage, where he shows that unity is not a substance but a concomitant accident (*lāzim*), and therefore an inseparable accident, seems to understand it as an indivisible existence:

[631] As opposed to „unity as truth". Menn, 2012, 61.
[632] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 119, 3–4. Here Avicenna speaks about numbers, and one is clearly a number. The problems arising from this tenet see Menn, 2012, 79–83.
[633] *Madkhal*, 72, 2–3.
[634] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 198, 3–16.
[635] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 109, 10; *Najāt*, 514;
[636] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 106, 13.
[637] *'Uyūn ḥikma*, 47.
[638] Actually, this is how Michael E. Marmura interprets it, see Marmura, 1992, 64.

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> (...) Unity was not only indivisible but an indivisible existence so that existence is included in unity, not being a subject of it.[639]

In this sentence, unity is a specialized form of existence, but Avicenna is careful not to treat it as inhering in the substance (the subject). This implies that it is neither a constitutive nor an accidental element of existence if there is such a thing at all. Thus, it is not a concomitant accident of existence, even though it is among the essential accidents of existent qua existent, which forms the subject matter of metaphysics.[640]

The most famous passage that clarifies the relationship between unity and existence is the following:

> Moreover, the one and the existent may be equivalent in being predicates of things, so that everything that is said to be an existent from one consideration is, from a certain consideration, correctly said to be one. [Now,] everything has one existence.[641]

Unity and existence mutually imply each other, but they are not the same: to be one means something else than to be existent. Therefore,

Every S[subject] which is an existent [either *in mente* or *in re*], is one

Every S[subject] which is one, is existent [either *in mente* or *in re*]

For Avicenna, "one" is a modulated term[642] that may be predicated of notions that accepts indivisibility in actuality insofar as they are what they are.[643] A thing is one if it cannot be divided insofar as it is what it is. It is interesting to note that it echoes the late-antique perception of individuals, insofar as they are labeled as *ἄτομα*: as Ammonius articulates it, they are indivisible, because they cannot be divided into similar species – or non-similar species, but they perish if divided.[644] Thus, Socrates is not like an animal, which may be divided into human or horse.

In this sense, unity reflects one aspect of individuals – their being indivisible, and their being one among individuals.

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[639] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 108, 4–5.
[640] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 13, 12–19.
[641] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 303, 6–7; tr. Marmura, 2005, 236.
[642] *bi-l-tashkīk*: that is, one may be predicated by priority and posteriority that corresponds to one accidentally, and one in itself.
[643] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 97, 4–6.
[644] Ammonius, *in Isag.*, 63, 17–19.

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Actually, for Avicenna one is a number, and the number is a real accident that inheres in its subject both in mente and in re.[645] What concerns us most, is the one in number that covers individuals: in a very Aristotelian tone, Avicenna insists that something is one in number by continuity (*bi-al-ittiṣāl*), or by contiguity (*bi-al-iltimās*), or because of its species, or it is one in itself.[646] Those things that are one because of their species are the unique instantiations of the species, as the celestial intellects and souls. The only existent that is one in itself, beyond doubt, is God. However, all the other existents are one, so that unity is superadded to the quiddity: it is accidental, but a concomitant feature.

In the *Ta'līqāt*, there is a passage that links unity to the subject, and to form:

> Every single subject (*al-mawḍū'āt*) like a human, for example, exist as a unity, not that unity would cause its reality, but that it exists as a concept (*ma'nā*), and that concept is itself a unity.[647]

Although these passages are to be dealt with great care – it suggests that the subject, the substance human, exists as a unity. If this passage may be attributed to Avicenna, then unity, just like existence, is linked to the substantial form. Taking into account the passages above, it is a unity that means the indivisible nature of existence that it is one among the existents. In God's case, it means indeed that He is unshareable. However, this unshareability does not depend on the existence itself; instead, it is due to unity. It is a unity that explains its unshareability. Unity, at the same time, is a coextensive term with existence, and their intensional difference means precisely this: existence means the act of existence, and unity its being one.

To sum up: unity and existence are integral features of the individual, but they mean different things: existence that it actually exists, and unity that it has an indivisible and unshareable existence. Since existence ultimately derives from God, unity should seem to be similar in this respect. Nevertheless, Avicenna, in his authentic and extant works, seems reluctant to assert such a view. The accidentality of unity sounds very Neoplatonic in tone: the Liber de Causis proposes a similar view: the Real One emanates (*mufīd*) unity (*waḥdāniyya*) to all the beings. Avicenna, however, does not explicitly supports this idea. Unity is superadded to the quiddity in itself, which is not like all the other accidents on the one hand, and it is coextensive with

[645] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 119, 3–4. Here Avicenna speaks about numbers, however, one is clearly a number. The problems arising from this tenet see Menn, 2012.
[646] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 98, 1–2.
[647] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 90, (M) 247 [404]. Here, I relied on Mūsawiyān's punctuation, but in one place I preferred the Badawī reading - *waḥdatan* for *waḥdatahu*. Mūsawiyān's reading would sound as follows: Every single subject, like the human, produces its unity, not that unity causes its reality, but it produces a concept and that concept in itself a unity.

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existence on the other. In this reading, it is a unity that means indivisibility and unshareability, but it is not the same as existence. This latter reading is also corroborated by Avicenna's logical formula (quiddity + unity produces the individual quiddity),[648] although this latter means a mental construction. Although Avicenna does not explicitly write in his authentic works that unity, as emanating from God renders a thing individual, this is what the semantic aspect of unity just explains. Existence in itself does not mean particularity; instead, as being correlational terms with unity, it is the latter that seems to explains its distinctness.

In the following, we turn to Avicenna's view on the particularization of existence. The key term, ʿayn – taʿayyun, has already appeared among the synonyms of the individual.

3.4.3.5 Particularized existence: ʿayn – taʿayyun

As I showed it earlier, one of the synonyms for individuals that Avicenna, and in general philosophers writing in Arabic used, was *ʿayn*.[649] The fifth form of the root *ʿ - y – n*, *taʿayyun* may be found in *kalām* discussions as well, at least in some works of Avicenna's contemporary, Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār.[650]

However, in the Avicennan corpus, *taʿayyun* – and its ergative form – *taʿyīn*, is usually mean a certain degree of definiteness. *ʿAyn*, for Avicenna, means individual, hence his *fī al-aʿyān* is a synonym term for *fī al-wujūd* or *fī al-khārij*.

The term *taʿayyun* in the Avicennan corpus may be found in various sciences, such as logic, physics, and metaphysics. In the following, we will focus only on the last. However, in a physical context, although not exclusively, it occurs mostly in connection with the motion, meaning "to single out."[651] In a logical context, it may be translated again as ("to single out something") either in mental existence, as Zayd's individuality may be singled out in the intellect.[652]

As for the *Ilāhiyyāt* of the *Shifāʾ*, the term *taʿayyun*, occurs in several places. In the broadest meaning, it seems to mean determinacy or being singled out. Sometimes it is the subject – *mawḍūʿ* – being the subject of the verb *taʿayyana*, where a certain accident, quality, or color becomes determined by its subject.[653] Sometimes it means a certain determinacy when you

[648] *Madkhal*, 72.
[649] Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Manṭiq*, 12.
[650] ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, IV, 191.
[651] *Samāʿ*, 92 (singling out the starting point and goal of motion); 199 (as running parallel with designation); 255 (singling out direction for a motion); 321 (singling out).
[652] *Madkhal*, 70, 13; *Ilāhiyyāt,* 239, 4: for universal notions as existing in the mind.
[653] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 137, 6–7; 77, 15.

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single out the rear in the circle or a direction for motion.[654] It may work on the mental level too when a certain nature becomes determined either in the mental, or outer existence.[655] Moreover, last but not least, existence – *wujūd* – may be determined: the existence of the possible might be singled out by something else, namely, a cause.[656]

Thus, Avicenna applies the term to existence. As we saw above, existence is imprinted in the soul in a primary way; nothing is more obvious and known. A particular existence, just like in this expression, is something more: on the conceptual/mental level, there is something superadded to it that makes it a particular.

This kind of particular existence equally applies to God. God is the Necessary of Existence in itself, perfectly simple, lacking any composition. It does not have *māhiyya–wujūd* composition; rather, its quiddity is His existence.[657] Everything that *has* a quiddity is caused. God has no quiddity; it is not caused; rather, every existence ultimately emanates from him.[658]

God, however, as we just saw, is also one. One of Avicenna's arguments for divine oneness *tawḥīd* is the following:

> He is one by himself. His reality, by which he is what he is, is by himself, and he is this determined thing – *hadhā al-mu'ayyan* – by himself. In consequence, nothing may share this reality.[659] Then, his reality would come from something else, which, of course, might lead to a contradiction, saying that God has a cause. Thus, the reality of the Necessary is the One Existence.[660]

Avicenna then goes on saying that multiplicity is always due to a meaning, a *ma'nā*: it is either only a meaning, or the bearer of that meaning, by the causes of position and place, or time.[661] Since none of these conditions applies to the Necessary of Existence, it cannot be multiplied.

This issue is articulated a bit differently in the *Ishārāt*. Quite in line with what we have found above in the *Shifā'*, Avicenna reiterates this argument: God is determined – *muta'ayyin* – in itself. The contention that God is one entails that God is *like* an individual if you bear in mind the logical formulation of individuality that the individual is the one the meaning of which cannot be shared. Avicenna, however, seems to reject to use this term. The reason is quite obvious: individual, being a logical intelligible, is understood as something superadded to the

[654] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 61, 17; 384, 6; 385, 1; 386, 1; 3; 5.
[655] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 239, 4–5; 228, 7–8; 223, 6.
[656] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 39, 7–10.
[657] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 347, 10.
[658] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 347, 10.
[659] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 349, 17–18.
[660] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 350, 3. Unlike Marmura's emendation, see Marmura, 2005, 279, 7.
[661] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 350, 4–6.

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quiddity in the mind, (reflecting the outer existence) which means a composition that can be no way imaginable in case of God.

God's pure existence is also determined, however, as we saw it in this brief sketch above, this cannot be something superadded to the existence taken absolutely – since this would mean a derivative approach. Actually, this is what Avicenna shows in these lines.

In a difficult passage, Avicenna proves that *ta'ayyun* is not something extrinsic for the Necessary of Existence, rather it is a *per se* feature. The method Avicenna uses is a simple analysis: *ta'ayyun* is either by the Necessary of Existence itself or by something else. Since he showed that it is by something else, the only possibility left is that the Necessary of Existence is determined by itself.

The way he proves this is the following: if the Necessary of Existence is a concomitant accident of its determinateness, then its existence would be a concomitant accident of something else. Alternatively, if it would be an accident of determinateness, then it would be due to some cause; or if determinateness were an accident in it, it would be due to some other cause. Besides, it would entail other absurd consequences. In every case, the accident accedes to the subject due to a cause. Even if the determinateness and the Necessary of Existent together would form a quiddity, the cause of its specialty would be a part of its quiddity – and this would be the cause of its uniqueness. Thus, it is also absurd.[662]

Then he goes on to investigate the lower beings, celestial and sublunar existents:

> You should know from this that the things having one specific (being species) definition, differ by other causes. If one of them has no potentiality to receive the influence of the causes, which is matter, is not getting determined (*lam yata'ayyan*), unless if it is by nature of its species to exist as one individual. [On the other hand], if it is in the nature of its species to be predicated of many, every single one of them is getting determined by a cause. In consequence, there is no two blacks or two whites in the real thing (*fī nafs al-amr*), if there is no difference between them in their substrate/position, and what is similar to it.[663]

In this passage, Avicenna *expressis verbis* asserts that it is matter – the potentiality to receive – that is the condition of *ta'ayyun*. Among the things that may be characterized as species in the mind, there are such that has no potentiality to receive the influence of the causes, namely the celestial beings. In themselves they might be predicated of many, but for other – outer – reasons they have only one instantiation, like the sun and the moon.[664] On the other hand, there are such

[662] *Ishārāt*, 270–271.
[663] *Ishārāt*, 271.
[664] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 190, 15.

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quiddities that by themselves may be predicated of many, and this manifoldness has a cause; what is more, every single one of them is getting determined (*yata'ayyan*) by a cause.

Here, Avicenna makes it clear that every particular existence is due to a cause. Of course, this issue is the central part of his modal ontology: the existent is either necessary in itself, or necessary by something else, that is, possible in itself.[665] So, it is beyond doubt that the existence is caused in a quiddity that is possible of existence in itself; and this framework offers a good opportunity to explain how existence becomes, in a concrete particular, particular. In other words, the particularity of existence is also explainable to a certain degree. Sometimes Avicenna simply admits it: the special, singular existence of something (*khuṣūṣiyyat wujūdihi al-munfarid lahu*) has a cause, that is, it is an effect.[666]

Thus, we would expect from Avicenna to give an answer to the particular existence problem, in his teaching on causality. As we shall see, in his later works, this is what he actually does.

On the other hand, he talks about the difference (*ikhtilāf*), in this framework as well. The source of differentiation of two similar objects is the difference in the substrate (*mawḍū'*) – or spatial extension (*mawḍi'*). This point will be explored later in the hylomorphic approach, but it is worth to note that spatial accidents that occur throughout the Avicennian corpus concerning individuation, as in the epistemic approach (differentiation of individuals), also appears here. The importance of position/location (*mawḍi'*) will reappear in the argument on the spatial position in explaining that matter is never devoid of form.

3.4.3.6 Causality

In Avicenna's modal ontology, a quiddity is either necessary or possible (or impossible) in itself. The only necessary being that is necessary in itself is God, the *wājib al-wujūd*, while all the other quiddities are possible in themselves, that is, they are necessary by something else. This something else is their cause.

The four causes, the material, formal, final, and efficient causes are divided into those of the quiddity and those of existence. Matter and form, thus, the material and formal causes produce the quiddity. Actually, they are parts of the quiddity's particular existence.[667] The final and efficient causes, in turn, are the causes of existence.[668] According to Avicenna's famous

[665] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 44, 7–8.
[666] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 47, 4–5.
[667] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 258, 1–8.
[668] *Ishārāt*, 265–266.

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interpretation, the final cause is both prior and posterior to all the other causes. It is prior in thingness (*shay'iyya*), but posterior in existence.[669]

The formal and material causes are those that take part in the constitution and existence of the individual.[670] The formal cause of Zayd, the form of humanity (that somehow encompasses the rational soul) informs the matter prepared for receiving it. What individuates here is matter, and, so to say, the preparation of matter. Matter in itself is an empty concept; it is not distinguished from another piece of matter by itself.

Thus, in this respect, there are four principles to be investigated:

1. Matter, the material cause
2. Form, the formal cause.
3. The efficient cause[671]
4. Preparation, the preparatory or non-real causes

Matter in itself is only the potentiality to receive something external. In itself, it is not ready to cause the individuality of Zayd; rather, it is the ultimate principle of a quiddity, if it requires the matter to be multiplied. Avicenna sometimes *expressis verbis* admits it that it is the body that causes the multiplicity of the soul.[672] Thus, in an abstract sense, the matter is the reason why are there multiple instances of the quiddity "human." It does not explain why Zayd is Zayd, nor does explain why Zayd is this individual; rather, it explains the multiple instances of a certain quiddity.[673] Therefore, the matter is necessary, but not sufficient condition of multiplicity.

This idea has its roots in Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda 8, where he shows that the First Principle, the Unmoved Mover is one. He admits that those things that are many in number, [all] have matter.[674] In the commentary tradition, the same issue appears several times: the most explicit example is Themistius commentary on the Metaphysics – extant only in Arabic and Hebrew – that those things that have one form, the cause of their multiplicity (*kathra*) are the matter and the element.[675] However, we shall talk about the role matter plays later again, in the hylomorphic context.

[669] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 292, 6–10; *Ishārāt*, 265–266. Wisnovsky, 2002, 106.
[670] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 258, 1–8.
[671] We will not deal with the final cause here, because it seems irrelevant for particularization.
[672] *Mabda'*, 108.
[673] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 58, (M) 144 [197].
[674] Aristotle, *Met.,* 1074a 33–34.
[675] *Arisṭū 'inda 'Arab*, 19; Themistius, *in Met.*, 29, 2–5 (Latin translation).

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Second, the formal cause is that by which the compound is what it is. It actualizes the matter, although it is not its proper form, qua matter, rather it is the form for it, by which a form-matter compound actually exists.[676] Form and matter mutually individuate each other, as we shall see later.

Third, in Avicenna's system, it is the efficient cause that gives existence to something else, which does not have this existence by itself.[677] In other words, the existence of every single thing ultimately derives from God, the Necessary of Existence. It actually emanates from the separate causes. Although Avicenna admits that the form is like the part of the efficient cause – as two engines[678] of the same ship, it is the efficient cause that emanates existence into the thing: it is eternal, thus, it is with the effect necessarily, the temporal created thing.[679]

Fourth, and finally, Avicenna talks about the preparatory, or non-essential causes that do not last until the effect, the thing exists, but cease to exist at the generation of the effect.[680] Avicenna has pretty much to say about these preparatory causes because the effect of these – the matter in a state prepared to receive the form – causes a particular instance of a certain material quiddity.

The real causes – material, formal, efficient, and final – explain how an instance of a certain quiddity becomes and persists as an existent (*mawjūd*). Of course, it is the material cause that provides the ground to receive different accidents and forms; thus, in this, very Aristotelian sense; it is the principle of diversity. On the other hand, it is the formal cause, the form that explains why a certain individual is the same individual through a certain amount of time.

However, in itself, it does not define an individual. Given Avicenna's emanationist scheme that ultimately everything derives from God, he has to explain somehow the multiplicity of the sensible world. Moreover, this is where we arrive at the problem of particularization.

3.4.3.7 Particularization

In Avicenna's system, derivative individuation means that individuals are posterior, being ontologically dependent on more primary elements, as the quiddity in itself. It is the quiddity, which, while existing, always exists as a particularized quiddity. There, our starting point was the quiddity. Now, it is existence.

[676] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 259, 9–10.
[677] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 259, 11–12.
[678] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 259, 7–8. The translation is anacronistic, of course.
[679] Bertolacci, 2002, 152. Amos Bertolacci also notes that the formal and efficient causes have a curious relation.
[680] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 265, 1–5.

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Since existence is also derived, according to Avicenna's general emanationist scheme, existence emanates from the separate causes, and ultimately from the Necessary of Existence, God. God is absolutely simple; there is no multiplicity in any way in Him. This is what the principle of one attests that circulated in the later Eastern tradition as *qāʿidat al-wāḥid*. In the *Ishārāt* Avicenna writes:

> The comprehension of a certain cause inasmuch as (a) necessarily follows from it is other than the comprehension of a certain cause inasmuch as (b) necessarily follows from it. If that which is one necessarily produces two things, this is in virtue of two aspects different in comprehension and in reality. These two aspects are either among the constituents of that which is one, its necessary concomitants, or [its] division [into different instances]. If these two aspects are assumed to be among the necessary concomitants of that which is one, once again the search goes back to the original case. Thus, you are led to two different aspects among the constituents of the cause, owing either to [its] quiddity or to its existence or to [its] division. Therefore, every being that necessarily produces two things simultaneously, of which neither is mediated by the other, has a divisible reality.[681]

One thing produces only one in one thing;[682] second, every effect must have a cause. If one thing causes more effects, it must be due to different aspects (*ḥaythiyya*): either in its quiddity, or essence or in its existence. That is, only those things may cause multiple effects, whose reality is divisible, either in essence or in existence.

The instauration (*ibdāʿ*) of celestial intellects and souls is due to the type of existence the First Intellect enjoys: existence emanates from God, and this is the First Intellect. The First Intellect intellects God, insofar as He is necessary of existence, and from this act, the second intellect originates. At the same time, the First Intellect intellects Himself, from this act, the form of the celestial sphere, and from its perfection, the soul of the sphere comes to be. He also intellects Himself as possible of existence, and from this aspect, the body of the outmost sphere comes to be, and so on.[683]

The multiplicity that derives from the intellects is due to the multiplicity of concepts (*maʿānī*).[684] These meanings are existential relations: either to the First Principle or to the thing itself, being an actualized possible existent. Thus, the first level of multiplicity derives from here.

[681] *Ishārāt*, 287; Tr. by Inati, 2014, 139–140.
[682] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 411, 1; 404, 1–3; 405, 13–14.
[683] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 406, 15–407, 3.
[684] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 407, 5–6.

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However, from these principles, things different in number cannot derive.[685] Because, as Avicenna admits, there is no material divisibility in them.[686]

3.4.3.7.1 Particulars cause the particularity

Along the same lines, Avicenna is adamant in holding that particularity cannot derive from intellectual activities. This seems to be so even in causality: at the origination of the human rational soul, Avicenna insists that *the universal thing is caused by a universal thing, and the particular thing is caused by a particular thing*.[687] Since the particularity of the human rational soul is not in virtue of its form – the form that emanates from the Active Intellect is still in a non-particular and non-universal status – it derives from the receptacle, the prepared matter that receives it. Thus, particularity comes from the different material accidents (especially the dimensions) in virtue of which one piece of matter differs from another.

In another context, it is providence in which the same idea appears, where Avicenna, like Alexander of Aphrodisias before him, asserts that the goal of Providence is only the permanence of the universal species, like "human," not a particular human being.[688] Avicenna in a very similar vein distinguishes between universal, and particular nature. This latter means the force (*quwwa*) that especially manages one individual, whereas the former is a force derived from the celestial substances as one thing, which manages universally all that comes to be in generation.[689]

In other words, the object of providence is the vague individual, not the particular. Thus, this is another clear example that for Avicenna, particularity has another set of causes, distinct from the universal ones.

As we saw above, these particular causes derive from the psychic imagination of the celestial soul, and this is what transforms the universal will to the particular, and this is what causes the actual circular motion.

3.4.3.7.2 Positional motion and the particularization argument in the *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt*

We have seen in the chapter on Physics that the celestial motions move by positional motion. Particularity and diversity derive from this source. This tenet, however, and its implication on the physical causality received much stronger attention in the later, bit spurious *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt*. Therefore, in this chapter, we will rely on this latter book, even though its authenticity still needs to be verified. Nevertheless, what we read there, perfectly completes what we read

[685] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 409, 4–5.
[686] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 409, 8.
[687] *Mabda'*, 108.
[688] Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Traité de la Providence*, 21.
[689] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 291, 1–3.

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in the authentic works. If Avicenna wrote it, there are no questions. If it was compiled by one of his pupils, we might consider it as the result of their discussions, still being the part of the Avicennian corpus.

In this book, the author talks about the difference between sublunary rectilinear and supralunar celestial motions.[690] The former strives to its end point, from position to position – what makes it possible is Avicenna's idea of dynamic instant – and in every position, in an instant, a new impetus pushes it towards the next. On the other hand, celestial motion is not like that. It is not the different positions that generate new alteration in the moving thing, but the renewed imagination of the celestial soul.[691]

In this context, the so-called particularization argument equally appears. It usually starts from an epistemic consideration, as we have seen above: from a universal, no particular can derive. That is, there is no act happening more likely (*awlā*) than another act. For an act to happen, a specializing factor (*mukhaṣṣiṣ*) is needed. In the case of the spherical motion, the particular specializing factor is the renewed will.[692] The similar argument appears many times in the *Ta'līqāt*.[693]

So far, this is quite in line with what we have seen before. However, the *Ta'līqāt* gives us more details about the process:

> The cause of the celestial motion is the concept-formation of its soul, [producing] concept-formation after concept-formation. This concept formation and imagination that it has with (*ma'a*) a certain position is the cause of the second imagination, that is, it is prepared for the second [imagination] by the first [imagination].[694]

That is, every reached position in virtue of imagination means a different state from which the next imagination to the next position comes to be. This combination, I mean the imagination at a certain position is a sort of preparation to the next "step" during the celestial motion.

In this reading, the concept-formations are one in species, but different in individuals. The text implies something like Leibniz's identity of indiscernibles: if two items are similar (in every aspect), they are identical. These imaginations are individually different, like different acts of the imagination: in the process of motion, they are different in virtue of being in different positions at different instants. Thus, the position is the only variable at the conceptual level that represents the difference between the different phases.

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[690] Compare Aristotle, *On the Heavens* (I.2), 269a19–29.
[691] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 105, (M), 296 [517].
[692] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 54, (M), 133 [175].
[693] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 104–105, (M), 295 [516]; (B) 105–106, (M) 298, [520]; (B) 110–111, (M) 312, [561]; (B) 112, (M) 322 [572].
[694] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 105, (M) 297 [518].

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Therefore, what is at stake here is the differentiation between the positions. The celestial soul forms concepts – using its imagination, or estimation – which are the proximate cause of circular motion. When a motion comes to its end, the soul renews its will, and supposes or estimates – imagines a new position, which will serve as the end-point of the motion. Thus, in the particularization process, we have the particular will on the one hand and spatial position on the other.

Apparently, it is in this conceptual unity – if one is entitled to consider several passages a "conceptual unity" in the *Ta'līqāt* – where the author differentiates between the specializing (*mukhaṣṣiṣāt*) and individualizing factors (*mushakhkhiṣāt*). There are two passages of crucial importance that run parallel to Avicenna's distinction between quiddity and existence – saying that individualizing factors are in the constitution of the thing, whereas specializing factors affects its existence. In this context, the specializing factors correspond to the secondary, preparatory causes:

> The individualizing factors end up in a thing that is individuated in itself, and this is the place and the position because they are individuated in themselves. The specializing factors end up in [a thing] specialized in itself, and that is the motion by will. Just like as in the relation there is something related in itself, which is the relational relation (*al-nisba al-iḍāfiyya*), there must be a thing that is individuated in itself. The position is individuated in itself, and the place is individuated in itself. Every circular motion has a specialized position.[695]

Or:

> The individuated [thing] is that which has no similar until it exists. The human has a similar, inasmuch as it is a human; but not inasmuch as it is individuated. Because, by which Zayd is individuated – that is, place and position – is not by which ʿAmr is individuated.
>
> The specializing [factor] is by which existence is getting singled out for a thing, and by which it is distinguished from a similar [thing]. The specializing [factor] enters the existence of the thing, whereas the individuating thing enters its constitution and its actually becoming an individual.[696]

As we have seen, on the epistemic level, an individual always must be related to something already individual. To avoid circularity, an ultimately individuated element is needed: this is spatial position and place. Although, as we shall see later, the *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt* not entirely consistent, because there are indeed Avicennan arguments that the spatial position is the individuated in itself, not the place, the author sometimes mentions them together.

This passage clearly shows that the "existential approach" has been well distinguished from the conceptual one, at least in Avicenna's later discussions with his pupils.

[695] *Ta'līqāt*, (B), 106 (M), 300 [524].
[696] *Ta'līqāt*, (B), 107 (M), 303 [529–530].

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As we reiterated several times, term *mukhaṣṣiṣ* already appears in the Muʿtazilī circles of Avicenna's time.[697] It is not quite significant in this context in the Metaphysics of the *Shifā'*, but, as we have seen, it equally appears. Later on, the secondary, physical causes are called equally *mukhaṣṣiṣāt* in the context of the generation of simple elements. These preparatory causes prepare the underlying matter to correspond to a certain form; this preparation indeed preponderates (*murajjiḥ*) one form against others.[698]

On the other hand, the author picks up an ultimate specializing factor: the particular will of the spheres. This is what specializes and particularizes the existence. This is the factor that ultimately explains the particularity of the existent. Because this is what necessitates that matter gets prepared, to receive the existence, and this is the ultimate reason for this. What Avicenna has in mind here, is particularization, that is, what explains the multiplicity of the world in general.

In other words, the feature that is individuated in itself is spatial position, because it is unshareable, and this enters into the constitution of the thing – that contributes to the material individual's being distinct from others. On an epistemic level, indeed, in his logical works, Avicenna has been looking for the already individuated element, and this is what it seems to be. On the other hand, there is the other approach, the one from existence: every particular existent – apart from God – has a cause, and the particular existence has a cause as well. These are the *mukhaṣṣiṣāt*, the specializing factors that prepare the underlying matter, as we shall see. However, at the very beginning of this process, there is the celestial motion. Not only in the sense that it is the ultimate source of multiplicity in the world but, celestial motions, spheres have indeed an influence on the sublunar world: the proximate cause of this process is the celestial will.

The other, and even more significant feature of these passages that the author talks about a twofold approach to individuation: something may be specialized in its existence, and something may be individuated as an essence. The specialization of existence relates to the existence, and this specialization process runs from one specializing factor, namely, a preparatory cause to another, until they in a specializing factor in itself, which is the celestial will. When it comes to the other approach, namely, that of the quiddity or essence, the individuating factors need an individuated factor in itself, and it is a spatial position taken on the condition of time.

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[697] ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, IX, 29; 30: in case of the theory of motion and impetus; ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*, 96.

[698] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 410, 5–9.

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3.4.3.7.3 The role of preparatory causes

Avicenna in his authentic works attributes to the celestial spheres an important role in the generation of the simple elements: since their matter is common, it is only their forms that differ. The source of this difference is the difference in the states of the celestial spheres, while the fact that their matter is common is due to what is common in the states of the celestial spheres.[699]

What is more, the sort of relations that follow from the common and different natures in the supralunar realm, because of motion, is the principle of changing and alternating states in the sublunar realm.[700]

Avicenna is adamant in holding that the celestial bodies indeed influence sublunar substances. At first sight, their motion is the source of diversity in the world, and their souls influence earthly souls as well.[701]

In the context of the generation of the elements, Avicenna even calls these causes specializing (*mukhaṣṣiṣāt*), or preparing factors (*mu'iddāt*).[702] These factors prepare the underlying matter so that its aptitude (to receive the form) will correspond to something more than to something else. This preparation preponderates (*murajjiḥ*) the existence of what is more likely, from the *Dator Formarum*.[703]

What we find in the *Ta'līqāt* is quite in line with this rough outline. The preparing causes are infinite in number, they follow each other, whereas the real causes are finite. The celestial motions are the source of the preparatory, accidental causes.

There are two interesting points that the author of the *Ta'līqāt* adds to the discussion. Firstly that when the preparatory, specializing causes end up in prepared substrate able to receive the form, the place and position of that thing is getting individuated:

> The individualizing causes for human seem to be infinite, not existing at the same time in actuality, and, necessarily, motion is in it. If not, causes must have been infinite altogether, but the motion is adhering and perishing. Necessarily, from it being an element until its becoming food, for example, then becomes dead, and so on, until its matter becomes specialized for receiving the form, and then, it becomes individuated by its position and place. All these things are particular individuating features, which individuates another particular, but none is individuated in itself. What is individuated in itself is the position and place, in which [this process] ends.[704]

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[699] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 410, 8–10; *Najāt*, 317; *Mabda'*, 83; *Ilāhiyyāt-i Dānishnāma,* 158, 10–159, 10.
[700] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 412, 10–12; *Najāt*, 318; *Mabda'*, 83–84.
[701] *Mabda'*, 84, *Ilāhiyyāt*, 412, 13–14; *Najāt*, 318.
[702] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 411, 6–7.
[703] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 411, 5–9, *Najāt*, 317.
[704] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 106, (M) 300 [525].

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The text suggests that spatial position has a decisive role in generation. However, the text is not entirely clear. Mūsawiyān's critical edition prefers another reading, (*fa-yatashakhkhaṣ 'inda dhālika waḍ'uhu wa-'aynuhu*), but in a manuscript, there is a variant: (*fa-yatashakhkhaṣ 'inda dhālika bi-waḍ'ihi wa-'aynihi*).[705] However, since the author right after this sentence asserts that it is position that is individuated in itself at the end of this process, it seems more likely that he meant to attribute an individuating role to these categories.

However, this thesis is rather strange. It is clear that spatial position plays a role in multiplicity as the source of differentiation, but here, as a point that closes up a process that goes back in time ad infinitum, it only describes the result, the prepared subject in terms of its spatial "coordinates." However, it is at this very moment that the substantial form emanates from the Dator Formarum. Suppose that at the same moment two, otherwise identical pieces of matter/substrate gets prepared to receive the substantial form – in this case, their spatial position is that *necessarily* differentiates between them. In this way, spatial position indeed plays a differentiating role, which indicates a determined spot in space. If we take the time into the picture, that it happens at an instant, where the process bounded by motion ends, the space-time features to single out a certain substrate – at least conceptually. (It does not seem to be a real temporal priority, as we shall see later.)

The second point that the author reiterates is also to be found elsewhere in the Avicennian corpus: that individuals are the causes of individuality, whereas universals are causes of what corresponds to the species in the mind.[706] Thus, they are only accidental causes, but they affect the quiddity's being an individual, actually individuating it. What is important here is that these features must be individual as well: they are spatially and temporally distinguishable elements that contribute to the individuals special and unique features. Again, every individual element in Avicenna's cosmos starts from the particular celestial will, and the individual position. In the universe, the spatially and temporally distinguished causes are responsible for the changing individual features of any individual.

3.4.3.8 Summary

Whereas the quiddity is individuated by the accidents, the existence also becomes particularized. In itself, it is an empty, extra-cathegorical concept. On a conceptual level, it is unity that describes the particularity of existence, not existence in itself. Both are coextensive features, they are concomitant features of the quiddity, but denote different intentions.

[705] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 106, (M), 300 [525], n.10.
[706] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 40, (M), 88 [89].

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If we look at particular existence as a result of the process of becoming, something else is needed to explain its particularity. The existence of Zayd is indeed particular. Existence has a real cause, the Separable Intellects and ultimately, God that emanates existence, but what is emanated is still not particular. Its particularity is due to a chain of the secondary, preparatory causes. Both ends of the chain are described by spatial position. It starts with the singular imaginations of the celestial soul, which moves from a spatially distinct position to another spatially distinct position. At the very end of the chain, it is also a spatial position where the underlying matter gets prepared to receive the substantial form. Here, spatial extension or position is a necessary condition of the particularity of the given form, being a *sine qua non* of generation. Thus, the spatial position is the utmost principle of particularity.[707]

Particular existence has a bunch of causes. Its particular aspect is not explained by the existence in itself. It has another principle, spatial position, or spatial differentiation.

Nevertheless, the quiddity in the particular overlaps with its existence. Humanity in Zayd may be considered as quiddity-humanity, substance-humanity, and form-humanity. These are three distinct approaches to understand the same object. Especially in case of the latter, the substantial form of humanity actualizes matter. As we will see shortly, form and existence will have another role to play, not to explain distinctiveness but identity.[708] As such it has a role in individuation, but the statement that "existence individuates," is too general, it needs specification.

3.4.4 Hylomorphic approach

Hylomorphism is one of the "classical" approaches, where individuation was addressed in the Western philosophical tradition. According to the well-known Peripatetic interpretation, the *principium individuationis* is matter. According to some scholars,[709] Avicenna is among the first thinkers who used this technical term. It is actually in the context of the individuation of the soul, where he applies the term *mabda' al-tashakhkhuṣ* (principle of individuation).[710]

The hylomorphic method is also part of our existential approach. As we saw above, the material and formal causes are parts of the existence of the thing. [711] In another words, they just construct

[707] This is (1b) in our theoretical approach. See chapter 1.1.1.
[708] That is, it corresponds to (1e). See, chapter 1.1.1.
[709] Popper, 1953, 97, n.1.
[710] *Nafs*, 199, 17.
[711] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 258, 1–8.

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the existent. Therefore, if Zayd is understood as an existent, these are the very parts of his particular existence.

3.4.4.1.1 Secondary literature

According to the traditional interpretation, the matter is the principle of individuation for Avicenna. This the view in which almost all the scholars agree, both earlier and contemporary.[712] Goichon highlights that individuation of material substances has a twofold principle – both matter and form playing a role in it, but the main actor is matter since it is the incommunicable element.[713] Allen Bäck also admits that matter plays a prominent role in individuation: it provides the base that the different features be connected for the individual.[714] Although he acknowledges that Avicenna's conception of individuality has a place to many different notions, he does not differentiate the question; rather, he ends up attributing a syncretist reading of individuality to Avicenna.[715]

Other scholars highlighted the role of spatial accidents and features.[716] Abraham D. Stone has an extended account on the role of place in individuation:

> Now, place individuates because no body can be in more than one place at the same time; it is necessary for individuation because neither the substantial forms of a body nor any of its other accidents, uniquely determine what place it will occupy, so that otherwise identical things can always exist in different places. So A, once it becomes a body, must be in some particular place, but nothing about A qua body can determine which place that will be. A cannot, therefore, simply acquire a place in the instant in which it becomes corporeal.[717]

To sum up: both the material and spatial individuation appears in the secondary literature. Material individuation is the traditional reading of the Aristotelian "matter is the principle of individuation" tenet. As we saw above, the role of place in individuation also appears in the Neo-platonic commentary tradition, and it has a central place in Avicenna's system as well. In the following we do not want to refute these assertions, because it is obvious; our aim is to complete it with some additions: following a close reading of the relevant passages, we will focus on the spatio-temporal reading of hylomorphism.

[712] Bäck, 1994, 58–59; Goichon, 1937, 479–480, McGinnis, 2006, 58.
[713] Goichon, 1937, 479.
[714] Bäck, 1994, 58–59: Again, in a way, it is the matter that individuates, for the matter is just the ability or potency for quiddities in themselves in different categories to come into connection. Thus matter makes it possible for there to be a unique collection of accidents, for there to be numerical difference and a direct intuition of individuality.
[715] Bäck, 1994, 59.
[716] Bäck, 1994, 58.
[717] Stone, 2001, 110–111.

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3.4.4.2 Avicenna and the principle of individuation

As we noted several times, the main question about individuation goes back to the intension of the term: namely, what medieval philosophers understood by it. We mentioned in the introduction based on Alexander's and Themistius' legacy, the matter was the principle of multiplicity and distinction, whereas form was taken as the principle of persistence. As we shall see, Avicenna offers similar solutions.

Avicenna applies the term "principle of individuation" in the context of the origination of the human rational soul. It is here that Avicenna speaks about multiplication in the general sense. Now it is worth to quote the passage in its entirety:

> [This is so] because things are multiple either because of the essence and form or because of the relation to the constituent and matter. [The constituent and the matter] are themselves made multiple by the places that contain each matter in a given direction as well as the times specific to the origination of each thing and the causes that divide them. Now, [souls] are not distinct from one another by essence and form, because their form is one. Therefore, they could be distinct from one another only on account of what receives the quiddity or that to which the quiddity is properly related, and this is the body.[718]

Here Avicenna treats the source of multiplicity in an analytical way: it slightly echoes the Aristotelian tenet that Socrates and Callias, sharing the substantial form "humanity," differ in virtue of this flesh and these bones.[719] The basic question is about what counts for multiplicity, form, or matter? Since the substantial form is shared by all the members of a certain species, its individuals, that is, individuals subsumed under a certain species differ in virtue of their matter. However, he is more precise: instead of "this matter," which seems to stands for proximate matter in an Aristotelian context, Avicenna highlights the relation to the matter (*al-nisba ilā al-ʿunṣur wa-l-mādda*). Since he talks about an immaterial and separate substance, the human rational soul, which is not imprinted in matter, what makes it multiple is its relation to the body which it governs; relation to the matter is a broader notion, applicable also to the human rational soul.

However, matter in it itself is not multiple. The source of its multiplicity that differentiates between different pieces of matter are places covering all the matter (*al-amkina allatī tashtamil ʿalā kull mādda*) [1], the time of the origination [2], and the dividing causes (*al-ʿilal al-qāsima*). This is actually what we have seen in the previous chapter: the secondary, accidental causes are those which prepare and delineate a certain piece of matter: as we will see, its being in a certain

[718] *Nafs*, 198, 13–17, tr. McGinnis-Reisman, 192. With my modifications: direction

[719] Aristotle, *Met.* (Z 8), 1034 a 5–8: *When the whole has been generated, such a form in this flesh and in these bones, this is Callias or Socrates; and they are different on account of their matter (for it is different), but the same in species* (for the species is indivisible). On a broader, historical account see McGinnis, 2006, 58.

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direction (*jiha*) is practically its position in the finite cosmos – that is, its place is related to directions, which divide the material universe. This spatial feature is still not enough, because the same spatial position in the universe may be occupied by something else at different times: but if it is taken on the condition of time, that is, at a certain instant, it is an unshareable feature. This is the well-known spatio-temporal reading that we have seen in the epistemic context as well: what ultimately differentiate two individuals as conceptualized in the mind, are place and time.

In other words, Avicenna does not talk about the prime matter, but about something like the proximate matter, or the body. In *al-Mabda' wa-l-ma'ād* he put the same issue – still in the same context – rather simply:

> The multiplicity of the souls is caused by the multiplicity of their bodies. This is so at the universal and the particular level: in the abstract sense, the cause of the multiplicity of absolute soul, is the absolute body, whereas the cause of the multiplicity of this soul is this body.[720]

In other words, in these texts, Avicenna clearly follows the Aristotelian tradition. The matter is the principle of individuation, where individuation means numerical distinction, that is, multiplicity. This is also quite Aristotelian, as it is elaborated in the Metaphysics Lambda: the universe is one because its matter is one. As we mentioned above, it was Themistius' commentary that explicitly articulated the issue along these lines: *Those things that have one form and are many in number, the cause of their multiplicity is the constituent and matter*.[721]

Thus, Avicenna clearly attributes a role to matter in individuation, but it is *expressis verbis* multiplicity (*takaththur*). If we return to the theoretical approach, matter explains why a certain species has multiple instances.[722] The prepared matter, taken on the spatio-temporal condition, namely, spatial position explains why a particular individual is a particular individual. Thus, it is the source of particularity.[723]

3.4.4.3 Form and matter in Avicenna

Avicenna's account of hylomorphism involves a great variety of problems. Thus, after summarizing his main tenets, we shall turn to the specifics.

Regarding individuation, Avicenna's notion of body and corporeal form is of crucial importance: as we just saw, prepared matter, endowed with bodily qualities is the principle of multiplicity. This tenet involves at least two difficulties: what does it mean to be a body, and

[720] *Mabda'*, 108.
[721] *Arisṭū,* 19. It is interesting to note that in this very context also Themistius' Arabic translation use *'unṣur wa-l-mādda*, like a *hendyadyoin*, just as Avicenna does.
[722] That is, (3c) in our theoretical approach. See chapter 1.1.1.
[723] That is, (1b), (3a) in our theoretical approach. See chapter 1.1.1.

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how could a spatio-temporally defined bodily object serve as the receptacle of the emanation of form? This second question entails another range of problems, namely the relation of matter and corporeal form, and matter and substantial form. In the chapter on substance, after having defined what substance is, what kind of things are substances, he goes on to the body and corporeal form. Then he shows that matter is never devoid of form, and at the end, he elaborates on the very relation of form and matter.

Avicenna offers many arguments in favor of the idea that matter is never devoid of form, and no material form could exist without matter. As it seems, the underlying statements upon which he builds his argumentation are elaborated in the Physics:

1. There is no actual infinity, therefore, the universe is finite.
2. A material existent cannot go through another material existent (because of its dimensions).
3. Every material existent, in other words, every form-matter compound occupies a certain spatial position in the universe.

3.4.4.3.1 Body – the corporeal form

Avicenna accepts the Aristotelian concept of body that body is a three-dimensional magnitude, that is, three-dimensional continuous quantity.[724] He takes sides against atomism, the atomic conception of time, place and body; probably his criticisms were directed towards the theologians of his time, the mutakallimūn, who endorsed a certain kind of atomism.[725] Avicenna's account of continuity is very Aristotelian in tone: in the Avicennian cosmos, motion, time, space, and body are all continuous. In other words, continuity is his solution against the current, mainly theologically-inspired world-view.

For Avicenna, the description of the body is the following: it is a substance, in which one may posit the three dimensions.[726] That is, this is the necessary condition for something to be a body.

In consequence, the body is divisible. Every other aspect that a body may have, like its actual dimensions, shape, and spatial position are non-constitutive features for it, but only things that concomitantly occur to the substance.[727] Corporeal form along with matter builds up the subject,

[724] For a historical perspective see Stone, 2001, 81–90.
[725] Marmura, 2004; McGinnis, 2010, 53.
[726] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 63, 5–9.
[727] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 63, 13–17.

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in which the several, spatial and quantitative accidents inhere. In other words, corporeity is the form of continuity able to receive the supposed three dimensions.[728]

The dimensions are accidental then; they are either the continuities themselves, or things adhering to continuity; not vice versa, that is, they are not subject of continuity in such a manner that continuity would adhere to them.[729] In this latter case, there would be a non-continuous dimension, or, if continuity were an accident in an underlying subject that is in a continuous body, the body would be the same, even if the continuity has ceased to exist.[730] Therefore, the dimension is not the underlying subject of continuity, but it is continuity itself, or something adhering to continuity. In other words, the dimension is the name of the continuous quantities, or it just denotes things having continuity.[731]

Why is it important? As we saw above, dimensions have another role to play: they are the criterion that excludes interpenetration. As we will see, this idea plays an essential role in particularization.

3.4.4.3.2 The matter is never devoid of the form: arguments based on spatial location

Corporeal form means that in a body, three dimensions may be posited. It means continuity, which has concomitant attributes: finiteness, and in consequence, shape and spatial position. Starting from here, Avicenna has several arguments to show that matter is never devoid of form and vice versa. One of the arguments is the following.

The body is finite. Avicenna's argument for this runs in a *via negativa*; showing that the body cannot be infinite since no actual infinite dimension could exist. If it were the case, it would lead to absurdity.[732] Therefore, every dimension is finite. Here, instead of engaging in the analysis of Avicenna's syllogism, we rather note that his argument in favor of the inseparability of form and matter is built on the dimension. Since it is evident that the bodily extension is finite and, in consequence, has a shape, he explores the reason for this: it is either due to the bodily extension itself, or to a concomitant accident, or an agent or to the bearer (*ḥāmil*) and what is attached to it. To put it simply: by eliminating all the possibilities, he ends up holding the last option that finitude cannot be there but in virtue of the bearer.[733] If finitude and shape

[728] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 64, 6–7.
[729] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 66, 17–67, 1. *Najāt*, 501: says something else: the corporeal form is either the continuity itself, or a nature, where continuity is a concomitant accident.
[730] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 67, 2–3.
[731] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 67, 1–2.
[732] *Ishārāt*, (al-Ṭūsī), II. 183–191.
[733] *Ishārāt*, (al-Ṭūsī), II. 191–195.

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were by the corporeal extension itself, that is, a corporeal extension *per definitionem* has a shape, then every corporeal extension would be the same, which is clearly not true. If the corporeal extension had it from an agent, then the corporeal extension must have served as a receptacle that receives shape, and it must have the potentiality for passivity – which is equally absurd. Then, only the third option is left open that shape or the possibility for being shaped is due to the receiver, that is, matter. In other words, this is the classical Aristotelian tenet that matter is the potentiality to receive the different shapes and forms.

3.4.4.3.3 The argument on spatial position

Avicenna introduces another argument for the dependence of form and matter, which is built on the need for a spatial position.[734] It is corporeal form in virtue of which the form-matter compound is allocated. The discussion starts from a supposition according to which matter is separated from form. Then matter either would have a spatial position or would not have. If the matter in itself has a spatial position, then other concomitants would follow: it will be divisible and will have measure – however it was supposed not to be measured. Therefore, this option is absurd. If it has a position but is not divisible, then it is a point, which cannot exist on its own, as an actual existent. The other way sounds like this: if the formless matter has no position, it will not be designatable, like the intellectual substances. Since it exists somewhere in the world, the dimension would either inhere in it all at once (*duf'at*^{an}) or strive towards it by motion. Both options are untenable. In the first case, if the measure or dimension inheres it at once, it will be in a determined extension (*ḥayyiz makhṣūṣ*), and not measure in itself, but an extensionally determined measure would adhere to it. Here Avicenna adduces again the particularization argument that was well-known in *kalām* circles: there is no extension to be in more likely than in another. If measure adheres to it without a specific extension, and it means that it has no extension at all, or it will be in every extension, which is equally absurd.[735] In other words, if an intellectual, indeterminate matter needs to exist in the material world, it necessarily must have a location, but in this case, something else is needed to single it out, but, on this supposition, there is no such thing, because our matter is devoid of the corporeal form.

Then Avicenna comes up with the example of clod: if its matter was separated from a form and the form of clodness comes to be in it, it cannot be there unless it is in a certain extension. If it has no extension, nothing singles out this piece of matter from that one. Nor the form of clodness chooses it, even if it implicates the extensions universally suitable for the clod: however, it is

[734] This argument has already been ananlyzed by Abraham Stone: Stone, 2001, 108–110.
[735] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 72, 13–73, 7.

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not specific, and there is no aspect in the form of clodness that indicates this or that piece of matter for it. As Avicenna admits, it does not come to be in a certain direction if it has no specializing (*mukhaṣṣiṣ*) factor. Thus, this specialization needs a cause, it cannot happen out of nothing: it must have a specializing cause that singles out the location, a cause that compels it in a certain direction or spatial position. It happens either by rectilinear motion or by origination there.[736] It is here where the hylomorphic and causal approaches cross each other: what ultimately singles out a certain location, a spatio-temporally defined *hic et nunc*, is the chain of secondary causes, the specializing factors. Avicenna admits that this specialization is not due to the matter, nor to form in itself:

> Moreover, the form of being a clod is not in any [specific] direction unless it has an appropriate relation to that direction. It is due to this relation—not, first of all, to its actually being matter, nor, secondly, to its actually acquiring form—that it became specified with [the direction]. And that relation is a position.[737]

What he stresses that it must have a certain relation – a relation to a certain direction. This relation is actually a spatial position. Thus, what singles out one substrate from another is its location, and the relation to this location is indeed a determined spatial position. The same, particularization-like argument is to be found in the *Kitāb al-Hidāya*:

> Then, none of the positions – from the universal position – is more likely than the other. If the form is attached to the matter which has no position, and [it is the form that] renders it in a position (*dhāt waḍ'*), then it is not necessary that the form specialize it in a determined position from among the positions, in which it may be by its nature. All locations (*mawāḍi'*) of the Earth is for the clod, then it is necessary [for the form] to be in all locations or not in a location at all. And this is a contradiction.[738]

Here Avicenna reiterates the afore-mentioned argument, and he consistently uses the *waḍ'* – *mawḍi'* pair of terms (position-location), which implies that the latter is the derivative of the former. That is to say, on terminological bases we can say that it is here, where the causal and hylomorphic readings cross each other. If we remember the phrase from the *Ishārāt* that the things under the same species differ by a cause, and there is no difference between them if there is no difference in their locations.[739]

This determination is a *sine qua non* of generation. Prime matter in itself, being a pure potentiality, is completely formless. To serve as the receptacle of the form, it needs to be determined, in terms of its spatial position. It practically means that it is a designatable piece of

[736] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 73, 8–74, 2.
[737] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 74, 3–5; Tr. by Marmura, 2005, 59.
[738] *Hidāya*, 236.
[739] *Ishārāt*, 271.

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matter, where designability is due to its spatial position. However, having a spatial position is due to the corporeal form: if a matter is such that one may posit the three dimensions in it, it means that it has three dimensions, that is it is a continuous mass. Then it necessarily follows that it is spatially located, based on the other Peripatetic tenet that two bodies cannot interpenetrate. In other words, it is a concomitant accident of every Avicennian body that they are spatially located. Spatial location is not the cause of the individual: it is the cause and condition of its being distinct from the other individual. That is, the fact that material individuals subsumed under the same species are distinct in virtue of their spatial location. Although they may be distinct in any other feature, if they are not distinct in spatial location, they must be the same material existent.

Again, Avicenna's principle of the one (*qā'idat al-wāḥid*) applies also here: from one thing in one aspect, only one thing follows. Spatial location does not explain why Zayd is Zayd; it does not constitute Zayd's essence, because it constantly changes. However, it explains Zayd's distinctness from ʿAmr, because they necessarily must be spatially distinct: they cannot occupy the same space.

Turning back to the initial problem: Avicenna shows that matter is never devoid of form because it must be spatially determined in itself. However, from this supposition, several impossible outcomes arise – thus, the thing that makes possible its spatial determination is corporeal form. As one concomitant feature, bodies are always describable by spatial position, even if this relation constantly changes.

3.4.4.3.4 Mutual individuation of form and matter

Finally, Avicenna turns to the interdependence of form and matter. Since form and matter presuppose each other in existence, neither of them can be the absolute real cause of the other.

As saw above, matter and form are parts of the composite substance; they enter the subsistence (*qiwām*) of the individual. In the case of the material substances, they depend on each other: there is no matter without form, and there is no form without matter. Their case is similar to the relation – like being a son and being a father, because neither of them may exist without the other. However, Avicenna quickly omits this parallel, leaving only a specific case of it: matter, insofar as being prepared for a form is related to it, but only given their preparedness. In themselves, form and matter may not be represented in terms of relation.[740] To put it simply: they are related to each other either as cause and effect, or as homologous elements in existence,

[740] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 80, 7–13.

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where neither of them is the cause of the other, but at the same time neither of them may exist without the other.[741] Avicenna rules out this possibility and shows that form is part of the cause of the subsistence of matter.[742] After a long discussion,[743] he ends up saying that form is the cause of matter but is not constituted by the matter, even if it cannot exist apart. Instead, it is constituted by its giver of existence that emanates it into the matter.[744]

The form is prior to matter, but essentially, not temporally: it does not exist as an individual before getting attached to the matter. However, it is essentially prior because of its actuality. Matter, as considered in itself, is a pure potentiality, even if it never happens to be so: it is never devoid of form in its existence.

As Olga Lizzini also notes, the sublunary form-matter compound is reminiscent of the celestial form-matter relation.[745] During the process of emanation from God, the celestial body – celestial matter needs an intermediary: it cannot be directly emanated from the Necessary of Existence. What primarily is emanated is the First Intellect, which is a separate substance, that is, a form in itself. Celestial matter emanates by the intermediary of the intellect: insofar as it intellects itself as Possible of Existence, this second intellection produces a relational multiplicity, which ends up in the coming to be of the celestial body.[746]

The form also in the sublunary realm plays an intermediary role, but in another way:

> [In the case of] forms that separate from matter to be succeeded [by other forms], that which places [the successive form] in [matter] perpetuates it by rendering that form the successor. In one respect, then, form becomes the intermediary between [this] retained matter and that which perpetuates it, and [in another respect it becomes] the intermediary in substantiation (*taqwīm*). For its essence is first rendered subsistent, then another is rendered subsistent by it in an essentially prior manner—[the latter] being the cause that is proximate to the thing retained in existence. If the [first form] is rendered subsistent by the cause that perpetuates matter through [the form's] mediation, then subsistence, deriving from the [celestial] first principles, belongs to [the form] first, then to matter. If the form is not subsistent through that cause but [is subsistent] in itself—matter becoming subsistent through it thereafter—then [form's priority to matter] becomes more evident.[747]

Here Avicenna attributes a twofold mediator role to form. In case of material composites that come to be and cease away, there is always a succeeding form that substitutes the former one – since no matter stays formless. In a sense, the former is the intermediary form, because, I think

[741] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 81, 2–3.
[742] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 405, 5–6.
[743] On the details of the argument see Lizzini, 2004, 179–183.
[744] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 88, 13–89, 5.
[745] Lizzini, 2004, 180.
[746] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 406, 17–19.
[747] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 87, 14–88, 3, tr. by Marmura, 2005, 69.

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it determines to a certain degree, which forms may come after it. If a human being dies, the form humanity ceases to be in that piece of matter, and it is no longer a human, but a deceased body, which slowly becomes something else, like the rotting elements of the corps, all having a proper substantial form. In this sense, the previous form predetermines the next ones.

The form is an intermediary in the constitution – substantiation of the composite. Here Avicenna envisages two possibilities: form, as part of the efficient cause, is originated by separate causes first, and then it actualizes matter. This is an emanationist reading of becoming. In this scenario, the form is part of the efficient cause, since it endows matter with actuality as if it was one of the engines of the ship.[748] In this reading, existence, and form emanate from the *Dator Formarum*, being the same, but they explain different aspects: existence explains the *in re* existence, and form explains what it is. On the other hand, if form subsisted by itself, then its priority to matter is even more clear.

As to the exact role of form and matter in individuation, the texts are unanimous. In a material composite, form and matter need each other, the matter cannot exist without form, and a material form also needs matter to exist. However, they are not causes of each other, because – to put it briefly – it would entail circularity. In Avicenna's solution, a third thing is their cause, and form is the prior element.

In a passage, where Avicenna shows that matter is not the cause of form, perhaps for the sake of argument, he makes clear that matter may not be the cause of form in any way (*bi-wajh*^{in} *min al-wujūh*).[749] One of Avicenna's argument against matter being the cause of form rests on diversity (*ikhtilāf*). Since matter in itself is not different, if matter were the proximate cause of form, nothing would explain the diversity of forms. If diversity is due to something else, an external factor, then these factors, being material states, are also forms. If it is matter along with something external to matter, in such a manner that if another external factor being with matter caused another form, then the diversity is due to the external factor, while the matter is only responsible for the receptivity.[750]

In this argument, Avicenna seems to understand by matter the prime matter: he denies every positive feature of it. He goes so far as to admit that matter (taken in itself) has no role in the particularity (*khāṣṣiyya*) of the form.[751] Instead, the particularity of the form is due to external

[748] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 259, 6–8.
[749] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 85, 2.
[750] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 84, 3–12.
[751] *Ilāhiyyāt,* 84, 15.

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causes – that is features that prepare and indicate, and in consequence, pick up and delineate a piece of matter. In other words, the matter has no role in the particularity of the form, unless it is needed to receive the form, which is the particular property of the receptive cause.[752] However, as Avicenna makes it clear at the beginning of the chapter, his main aim is to investigate form and matter in themselves, not the already prepared proximate matter, which may be considered as correlative to the corresponding form.[753]

However, in other passages, Avicenna admits that matter indeed has an influence on the form. In brief, even though the material form is the cause of matter in that it actualizes and perfects it, matter also has an influence in its existence—namely, in rendering it specific (*takhṣīṣuhā*) and making it concrete (*ta'yīnuhā*).[754]

Here Avicenna seems to have the determinate matter in mind, which renders the form specific (*takhṣīṣ* – compare it with the *khāṣṣiyya* of the former passage) and concrete (*ta'yīn*). This latter term refers to the *mādda mu'ayyana*, the determinate piece of matter. In this passage, the mutual relationship between form and matter becomes evident: form actualizes matter and perfects it, whereas matter specializes the form and renders it concrete. It is true that what is at stake here is not prime matter, as in the passage above, but the matter endowed with a corporeal form that is endowed with dimensions and in consequence occupies a specific spatial position. Here matter in a sense individuates form. However, Avicenna quickly admits that even though the principle of existence for the form is not matter, both of them is a cause of the other in a certain thing, but not in the same respect.[755] Thus, the matter is responsible for the determination of the form, while the form is responsible for the actualization of matter.

In the *Ishārāt*, Avicenna *expressis verbis* admits that matter and form individuate each other:

> This [priority] is only possible in one if the remaining divisions. That is, matter exists due to a primary cause and a determinant (muʿayyin) of the succession of forms. When these two things unite, the existence of matter is completed. Then, by means of matter, the form is individuated and, by the form, the matter is also individuated in a manner whose evidence merits a discussion beyond this summary.[756]

It is clear that what Avicenna has in mind is the determinate matter – *mādda mu'ayyana* – which owes its existence to the primary cause – celestial intellects and the succeeding substantial

[752] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 84, 16–85, 2.
[753] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 80, 11–13.
[754] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 405, 1–2; Tr. by Marmura, 2005, 329.
[755] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 405, 2–4.
[756] *Ishārāt* II. (al-Ṭūsī), 235–238; Tr. by Inati, 2014, 72.

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forms. As prepared, a new form comes to be in it, and it actualizes – individuates matter, as matter individuates it by determining it.[757]

What we find in the later, spurious *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt* is very similar. Here the author attributes and individuating role to matter, as matter individuates form, whereas form is the cause of matter in its actual existence.

> [252] The form is the cause of matter in its subsistence and actual existence, and the matter is the cause of form in its individuation, even if it is not the cause of its existence. If the form is separated from the matter, its individuation perishes, and itself perishes [as well] because its existence became determined (*ta'ayyana wujūduhā*) in that matter. [758]

Here, the author *expressis verbis* attributes different roles to form and matter in their mutual "individuation." This is clearly in line with what we saw just above: matter and form are the causes of each other, but not in the same respect.[759] Form actualizes matter and perfects it, whereas matter is the cause of the individuation of the form. Here matter is the real cause of individuation, since as Avicenna admits, after the separation, individuation ceases to exist, that is, it keeps to the well-known Avicennian principle that the cause is with its effect. At the same time, the passage echoes the *Ishārāt*, where Avicenna highlighted the importance of the determinacy of existence, which is always necessitated by a cause – which, in this case, is the designated matter. What is at stake here is the individuation of form and matter, not the individuation of form-and-matter, that is, the compound. The author of the *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt* attributes different aspects to form and matter. It is clear throughout these texts – the former, "authentic" ones included – that designated matter is the source of individuation, because it is the principle that receives diversity and it is the source of differentiation. As he makes it clear elsewhere, the matter is the cause of multiplicity, that is, it is in virtue of matter that the individuals of the species human are multiplied on the one hand [760] and that a given individual is other than the other individual.

A similar passage elaborates on practically the same issue:

> [200] (...) (The form is similar to the accident) in another thing as well, that it becomes specified by its bearer (ḥāmil), which means that it is among the essential concomitants of the form that its existence be attached to

[757] Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī admits that matter is not the actual cause of the individuation of the form, only insofar as it is receptive of individuation. The real individuators are accidental features inhering in matter, like position, place, time and so on. *Ishārāt,* II. (al-Ṭūsī), 238.
[758] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 67, (M) 172 [252].
[759] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 405, 2–4.
[760] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 58, (M), 144, [197].

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> matter, but to a matter with a certain property. Because the existence of this form cannot be but in this matter. Then, it cannot be individuated by something else. (...)
>
> [201] This matter is part of the individuality of the form because it is constitutive of its individuality. since the possible existence of the form is in the matter, in such a manner that its existence in itself is its existence in matter, the matter became necessary in the existence of the form, and [matter became] constitutive of its individuality and its determinant (*mu'ayyina*). (...).[761]

These passages elaborate on practically the same thing. Not only matter but this matter that individuates. The indexical "this" clearly implies that it is the designated matter.

Avicenna or the author of the *Ta'līqāt* is clear on the role of matter in the individuation of the form: it is designated matter that particularizes the form. However, the "this matter" or designated matter is more than prime matter, which is pure potentiality in itself. As we saw, the fact matter is designatable is due to the corporeal form. However, this seems to correspond to the Peripatetic proximate matter, which is more than potentiality, it must have actual determinacy, at least an actual spatial position.

Scholars already noticed the problem that matter and corporeal form as a prerequisite of the generation of the substantial form seems to jeopardize the substantial form's actualizing role. It is as if the substantial form would inhere in the designatable matter as an accident inheres in the subject. In the following, we will consider this problem, and what Avicenna has to say about it.

3.4.4.3.5 Form as inhering in matter endowed with corporeal form

The corporeal form is always attached to matter, and it is the necessary actual principle, which explains why matter, taken absolutely does become a certain piece of matter. As its concomitant feature, this matter has a shape and a spatial position in the universe.

For a Peripatetic thinker, however, what immediately leaps in mind here is that in this case, a material substance should have more substantial forms. Avicenna, nevertheless, uses the "form" quite often: he allows forms getting attached to a substance. Forms correspond to the quiddities that are in the individual, and in consequence, as conceptualized in the mind, they might be predicated of it, mirroring the inhering forms. Although it is the substantial form, corresponding to the *infima species* that constitute the subject, other accidents may equally be considered as forms.

[761] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 58–59, (M) 146 [200–201].

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Avicenna admits several times that the corporeal form never stands alone with the matter. Since corporeity means the supposition of three dimensions, prime matter along with corporeal form would mean a simple three-dimensional, continuous mass, which has a shape and limits. However, there is no such, otherwise qualityless body. What is more, even the shape presupposes other inhering features, accidents superadded to the matter-corporeal form compound. In other words, everything that the notion of corporeal form entails presupposes other forms in the composite.[762]

In the *al-Samā' al-Ṭabī'ī* of the *Shifā'*, Avicenna leaves open the question, whether the corporeal form is prior to all the other forms, or it is simply inseparably attached to them.[763]

If the corporeal form is prior to the other forms, in view of the former considerations, it cannot be a temporal priority, as we have seen in the former passage. It may be considered as prior essentially since the body is among the essential features, which are usually enumerated in the *Tabula Porphyriana*; thus, it is like a genus for any kind of animal. As such, it is encompassed in the *infima species*, the substantial form, for example, in the form of humanity. In this sense, it is prior essentially, since theoretically, following the *Tabula Porphyriana*, something must be material and must have a body to be a human.

If this latter is the case, at the moment of substantial change, when a new substantial form emanates from the separate causes a new corporeal form – included in the substantial form – comes to be. The author of the *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt* elaborates more on this possibility: when simple bodies, for example, fire becomes air, the corporeal form ceases to exist when the substantial form, fire perishes. At the next moment, when the form of air is generated, a new corporeal form comes to be with it. What shows this is that dimensions change by thickening and rarefaction, and apparently, the actual dimensions at the moment of substantial change disappear, and new ones come to be.[764]

However, Avicenna's hesitation may be due to the apparent fact that the generation of composite substances is not always this simple. For example, at the generation of humans, when the semen of the father enters the womb, and it becomes a fetus and an embryo, it traverses

[762] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 413, 15–17.
[763] *Samā'*, 14, 1–4. The passage is quoted by McGinnis, 2006, 61: Since the form of corporality is either prior to all the other forms that belong to natural things and their genera and species or is something inseparably joined with them, what belongs to the body as the wood belongs to the bed also belongs to all those other things that possess the forms in this way, since all of them exist in fact together with corporality; and so that [namely, the material] is a substance.
[764] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 71, (M) 185 [272].

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several substantial changes.[765] However, in this case, the underlying matter is actually the same continuous piece of matter, not a numerically distinct one. The only difference is that from that moment on, in virtue of the new substantial form (the form of the fetus, etc.) a new existent comes to be. In other words, Avicenna's theory of instant and spatial position solves the problem.

To underpin this statement, we must take into account Avicenna's theory of substantial change. It was Jon McGinnis who showed that Avicenna's theory of the (quasi-mathematical) limit makes possible that substantial change occurs in an instant. Although it seems to presuppose atomic time that Avicenna openly denies, the limit, which is not part of time seems to resolve the issue.[766] The main move lies in the understanding of instant as the limit of time, which is not part of the time. In this respect, there are infinitely many points that may be posited near the limit, but they all belong to the next substance.[767]

This understanding of limit, as Jon McGinnis has convincingly shown, renders Avicenna's theory of instantaneous substantial change a tenable option. It does not entail the atomic understanding of space and time, and, at the same time, there is no instant at all, when the matter would be devoid of form. Until the time limit of the substantial change, the matter is actual by its previous form, and after the time limit is also actual by the new substantial form.

In Avicenna's theory, time does not consist of actual, indivisible instants – exactly this would be the atomic perception of time.[768] However, in a certain period of time, there is potentially an infinite number of instants that may be singled out: during the motion, there are potential limits (*ḥadd*), indivisible spatial points that have no extremes that the moving thing simply transgresses. However, by supposition, an identifiable indivisible point is a spatial position which the moving thing trespasses in an instant. Thus, to any spatial limit – that may be only described by the category of position – corresponds a temporal instant.

Therefore, it is no wonder that Avicenna highlights the role of spatial position in the process of becoming. It is not only so in the *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt*, but also in the Metaphysics if the *Shifā'*.

In the context of how the new form of the clod acquires its direction, Avicenna also alludes to a spatial position:

[765] As it was convincingly shown by McGinnis, 2004, 52–57.
[766] McGinnis, 2004, 57–61.
[767] McGinnis, 2006, 203.
[768] *Samā'*, 86, 10–11.

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> Moreover, the form of being a clod is not in any [specific] direction unless it has an appropriate relation to that direction. It is due to this relation—not, first of all, to its actually being matter, nor, secondly, to its actually acquiring form—that it became specified with [the direction]. And that relation is a position.[769]

That is, due to the preparation of matter, which occupies a certain spatial position, at the moment of preparation, when at the next supposed instant the new form comes to be. The same idea appears in the *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt*, where Avicenna clarifies what he means by the positional relation (*munāsaba waḍa'iyya*):

> The air, for example, if it changes into earth, it either undergoes [this substantial] change in its [own] extension or the extension of the earth. If it is in the extension of air, it descends by rectilinear motion, and it is towards the spatial position (*mawḍi'*) that the earth faces. This state is the positional relation. Likewise, if the water ascends as vapor, it ascends in a rectilinear motion to [the spatial position] that faces the air, unless if it is hindered by an obstacle, and this is the positional relation. Both of them are specialized by that spatial position (*mawḍi'*) in which it came to be due to the relation which is between it and between that place, and this is the positional relation.[770]

The text is clear: there is a positional relation between the thing and the place it occupies. This process, however, being the limit of motion, cannot be conceptualized but as a spatial position in Avicenna's universe. The text here uses the term *mawḍi',* which we translated as spatial position: it is definitely not *mawḍū'* – substrate or subject. The term *mawḍi'* as a derivative of the root *w-ḍ-'*, in the first sense of the term, means the place or time of *waḍ'*. [771]

In the *Kitāb al-Mubāḥathāt*, similarly to the *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt*, we found numerous passages that highlight the role of spatial position in individuation. Although the passage asks about the material principle of the individuation of the separable potency, intending the human rational soul, the answer highlights position:

> Q: If the individuator of the bodily potencies is the matter in which their existence becomes specified, then how does matter specify the existence of the separable potency, and how does it individuate it?
>
> A: Matter alone is not enough in its individuation until the position is not attached to it, or whatever is specified by a certain position. Either in itself or by a relation in itself, because it is already individuated, and it cannot be shared by anything else in a given instant (*ān*). It is impossible for a similar [thing] to share that one position, and its states and to share its quiddity, then it is something else.[772]

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[769] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 74, 3-5; Tr. by Marmura, 2005, 59.
[770] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 56–57, (M) 139 [186].
[771] *Ishārāt,* II (al-Ṭūsī), 43. The same term appears in the *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, where Avicenna talking about individuals subsumed under the same species attributed a differentiating role to the *mawḍi'*. Tr. Inati, 2014, 126: If, on the other hand, it were possible for the nature of its species to be predicable of many, then the specification (*ta'ayyun*) of every one is due to a cause [other than this nature], for there are no two blacks not two whites int he same thing, if they not differ in place (*mawḍi'*) and the like.
[772] *Mubāḥathāt*, 180 [525–526].

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This passage speaks for itself: the unshareable thing in it is a spatial position. In other words, Avicenna connects his different readings on individuation: the unshareable element, the spatial position is also a necessary condition of individuation. As attached to matter, this is what best describes the *materia signata*. The theory of the instant "attached" to a given spatial position explains that there is no time for the subject devoid of any substantial form.

3.4.4.4 The Argument on Growth: Form as the principle of persistence or identity

So far, we concentrated mostly on the matter, following the classical interpretation of individuation, now, let us turn to the form. We have already treated the question while elaborating on the accidental reading of individuation: we made clear that Avicenna keeps to the Peripatetic essential–accidental distinction. In other words, the essential, constitutive features that build up the definition, are those indicative of the quiddity. As Avicenna admits:

> The reality of its existence is by its humanity, but its individual *anniyya* (*anniyyatuhā al-shakhṣiyya*) comes to be from quality and quantity and so on.[773]

The quiddity in a particularized individual is that builds up the reality of the thing; in the case of Zayd, it is humanity, which corresponds to the form of humanity. In other words, this is what explains the whatness of the certain individual, being responsible for its being that: the form of humanity explains the humanity of Zayd if we look at Zayd as a primary substance. In contrast to these, all the accidental features do not influence the substance qua substance. In this respect, it is the form that accounts for the persistence of the substance.

Nevertheless, the form as the principle of persistence appears best in another particular, physical question: that of the argument of growth.

As to the form, Avicenna follows the Aristotelian position as it was elaborated by the Peripatetic commentators. As we have seen, it was in a particular context, namely in the argument on growth that form was emphasized as the principle of persistence through time. Although with slight modifications, it was held by Alexander and Philoponus.

Avicenna, in the Physics of the *Shifā'*, in the *Fī al-kawn wa-l-fasād*, addresses the question on growth. In the traditional Aristotelian setting, it is form that undergoes growing, whereas matter changes. However, this idea would have endangered the hylomorphic continuity; if the matter gets changed entirely, a new form would have been needed. Avicenna readdresses an issue similar to the Ancient aporia of Theseus' ship. He makes clear that if all the bricks were

[773] *Madkhal*, 29, 11–12.

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removed from a building, the form of the building would not be the same, it would be another, although similar form, even if the shape of the building is the same.[774]

In case of the argument from growth, Avicenna endorses something like Philoponus' and Alexander's gradual growth, in the sense that there is always some part of matter that remains the same:

> If matter changed, then the scars and moles would have changed. The rest of the matter in the individual is what safeguards the first, principal form. Among the forms subsisting in a matter that does not change in their entirety is the form of the species. As far as the forces are concerned, being the second perfections of the specific form, they may be augmented by quantities and increase. The first [form] among them, persists being safeguarded by the safeguarded matter. The increase may adhere to it which is distinguished from the first in subsistence and in solidity, due to its being a later [addition]. Then it resists also the dissolution before the first matter. As to the shape and figure, they belong to the accidental features, be they concomitant, or non-concomitant to the form of the species. What persists in this motion, which is growth, is the form of the species […].[775]

According to Avicenna, then, the substantial form that corresponds to the species in the mind adheres to some piece of matter as long as the individual exists. All the other changes that matter undergoes are due to specific forces in the substance that correspond to the secondary perfections. Growth is among these features. Some of these forces are concomitant, that is, they adhere to all the instances of the species, and some are accidental. *In passim*, Avicenna mentions the scar, and moles that (may) accompany the individual throughout his entire life: it equally appears in Philoponus Commentary on the *De generatione et corruptione*.[776]

For Avicenna, just like for Alexander,[777] it is the substantial form that explains the identity of the individual, but it needs to be attached to a piece of matter without interruption. During growth, this is what safeguards the individual identity.[778]

3.4.4.5 Identity

In the *Mubāḥathāt* material, we find many, rather scarce passages that pertain to this problem: this is about *thubāt*, which I translated as identity although the passages are not easy to interpret: either because they are somewhat elliptic, or because in some cases, they represent only the questions posed by Avicenna's pupils, while the answers are missing from the text. What is interesting for us that later in Avicenna's carrier, a considerable amount of questions were directed to identity. Some problems were related to the problem of self-awareness, which has a

[774] *Kawn*, 142, 1–5.
[775] *Kawn*, 143.
[776] Philoponus, *in de Gen*, 107, 12.
[777] Philoponus, *in de Gen*, 314, 9–22.
[778] That is, (1e) and (3e) in our theoretical approach. See chapter 1.1.1.

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prominent role in Avicenna's psychology. The Flying Man thought-experiment is amongst his very classical arguments.[779] Self-awareness plays a crucial role in the individuation and identity of the human rational soul, the investigation of which lies out of the scope of this dissertation.

Both the *Ta'līqāt* and the *Mubāḥathāt* contain numerous passages that examine self-awareness. The *Ta'līqāt* passages insist that self-awareness (*al-shu'ūr bi-al-dhāt*) is essential, primary, and is immediate for the soul, being independent of any external condition.[780] In the *Kitāb al-Mubāḥāthāt,* we also find passages showing that self-awareness is about the *inniyya*, but it does not pertain to the whole individual; just like in the Flying Man argument, the body has no part in the awareness; even if some bodily parts were cut off, the awareness would be still the same. It represents an individual unity (*waḥda shakhsiyya*).[781]

Accordingly, the *Kitāb al-Mubāḥathāt* deals extensively with the topic.[782] In short: the claim that self-awareness is a constant, primary, and independent, helps to explain the individuation of the human rational soul after death. Since this kind of awareness is immaterial, it continues after the decease of the body and provides one feature that explains the individuality of the soul.

Nevertheless, in the *Mubāḥāthāt* material, other questions are dealing with identity. Avicenna's disciple, Bahmanyār Ibn Marzubān is credited with several questions [36–40] [399–403] [464–474] and there is an unknown fragment, included in the Appendix in Bīdārfar's edition, [1001–1003; 1012], amongst which [1012] seems to be earlier than Bahmanyār's earlier notes found in [462].[783]

Bahmanyār's question and Avicenna's answer is worth quoting. Bahmanyār starts asking for an apodeictic proof for the identity (*ithbāt*) of one individual, because as he sees, material individuals change, along with the change of their mixtures. Eating, digestion, but perception, and intellectual perception is also changing since the healthy person is more adapt to these perceptions than the sick. He also adds that he finds the argument from self-awareness unconvincing and sophistical, then asks Avicenna for another proof to elucidate individual unity.

[779] It has received a considerable scholarly attention: Marmura, 1986, Black, 2008, Kaukua, 2015, 43–51, Alwishah, 2013.
[780] *Ta'līqāt* (B) 79–80, (M) 210–213 [326–327; 329]; (B) 147–148, (M) 440–442 [807–809]; (B) 160–161, 480–483 [882–887].
[781] *Mubāḥathāt*, 59–61 [62].
[782] *Mubāḥathāt*, 58–62 [56-65]; 117–125 [278–298]; 146–147 [399–403].
[783] Reisman, 2004, 248–249.

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Avicenna's answer sounds as follows:

> The *thabāt* of a thing [as] one in number is not its *thabāt* one in number in virtue its quality or quantity; but in virtue of its substance.
>
> Then, my being one (*thabātī anā wāḥid*^{an}) is by my substantial existence (*inniyya*), and the existent yesterday has not perished, it is not non-existent, and no other thing has come into being instead. And I see what I saw yesterday, and I remember what I forgot yesterday, and this is in which I do not have doubt. And I do not come into being today, and my body was not other – being perished yesterday – and I do not cease to exist tomorrow, and my "individual" does not perish if my last day delay tomorrow so that another substance would come into being instead of me.

Here Avicenna refers to a so-called *inniyya jawhariyya* – substantial *inniyya*, which is not an easy task to interpret. The term *inniyya*, as we have seen above, usually means a particular existence. The passage and the usage of the adjective "substantial" indicates that Avicenna has the accidental-substantial division in mind here. That is, only the substance explains my being the same individual, as one in number through a certain amount of time. This is actually the traditional Peripatetic teaching, as we have seen in the introduction. On the other hand, this is what we are aware of in a primary and constant way during our self-awareness.

This answer is clearly in line with the essential – accidental dichotomy as it is elaborated in the logical discussions: only the essential features count for the substance, and it is what explains its being the same through a certain amount of time. What is more, it is clearly in line with Avicenna's insistence that it is the substantial form, as inhering in a certain piece of matter that persists during the process of growth.[784]

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[784] As for the identity of plants and animals, Avicenna himself admits that he engaged in its discussion in his treatise entitled *The Eastern Principles* (*al-Uṣūl al-Mashriqiyya)*. (Gutas, 2014, 120–121.) However, there is a short section entitled *Li-kull hayawān wa-nabāt thabāt* that has preserved as an independent work in the manuscript tradition and was included in the Abū Saʿīd correspondence as well.(Reisman, 2004, 139; Gutas, 2014, 429.) What is of greater importance that, as far as the identity of animals is concerned, Avicenna makes clear that he has raised doubts and then solved these questions at great length (*lī (…) ḥawḍ ʾaẓīm fī al-tashsakkuk thumma fī al-kashf*). (*Mubāḥathāt*, 51 [37].) However, directly afterward also admits that the identity of plants is much harder to solve. This is an anonymous correspondence, probably with Bahmanyār, whose authenticity is incontestable. (Reisman, 2004, 139.)
Here Avicenna does not say anything about the identity of animals; he restricts himself to that of the plants. However, we do not find a conclusive solution, only tentative propositions introduced by "perhaps' (*laʾalla*). At the end of the passage, Avicenna *expressis verbis* admits that these problems are nets and traps, if the intellect gets entangled in them, may only hope that God will grant him salvation. (*Mubāḥathāt*, 53 [41].)

The most crucial point is what Avicenna may have intended by plant – *nabāt*. It gives the impression as if the apples of the apple tree or the new shoots of a plant were numerically distinct individuals.(*Mubāḥathāt*, 52 [40]: „because [the plant] is divisible into parts, every single one of which may be independent in itself.") Then, highlighting that he only expresses his doubts, he quickly eliminates the element, as the permanent feature, and goes on to the form. This is the classical interpretation in the Aristotelian tradition, and as we have seen, Avicenna endorses this view himself. However, he leaves us without an answer. This hesitation is equally attested in other questions and answers, like in [296]. In [354–355] he suggests that the persistent feature is not in a body; however,

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3.4.5 Summary

To sum up: matter is the principle of multiplicity, matter endowed with the spatial position is the principle of particularity, whereas form is the principle of persistence.[785] The idea that matter is the principle of multiplicity goes back to Themistius, whereas the tenet that form is the principle of identity may be linked to Alexander Aphrodisias, as he elaborated it in the argument on growth. This is not to say that these tenets were exclusively held by them. Instead, they were influential thinkers in the commentary tradition, and we only highlight that these authors provide textual evidence about it that was available in Arabic.

Form and matter mutually individuate each other, and both constituents, being parts of the substance, explain different aspects of individuation. In this approach, Avicenna roughly follows the Peripatetic tradition, but he has much to add, especially when it comes to the elaboration of the spatio-temporal reading of particularization.

The spatial position is of crucial importance in the context of coming to be and passing away. It helps to single out a subject, which can be described as having a determinate spatial position in an instant, in the very instant of substantial change. Based on the differentiating role of spatial position, it is the necessary condition of the generation of every particular material thing. Therefore, it is the third principle. Whereas matter is the principle of multiplicity, the form is the principle of identity; spatial position is the principle of particularity.

3.5 Individuation in the Later works

In Avicenna's later works, we find numerous passages on individuation, as if it were a philosophical topic in its own right. What we have seen so far, was that individuation was always treated in a certain context, as a sub-question of a more significant problem, either in logical or in metaphysical discussions. This material, in turn, is of extreme importance: it reflects probably Avicenna's latest discussions with his pupils, offering a systematic approach to individuals. As we will see, it perfectly frames what we have seen so far: it is the unshareable element, the spatial position and time that explains particularity.

The late *Kitāb al-Mubāḥathāt* and the *Kitāb al-Taʿlīqāt* are extremely important for his philosophy, mainly because, as Avicenna himself admits, his latest *opus magnum*, the *Kitāb al-Inṣāf* has been lost at the assault of Isfahan.[786] These treatises most probably are based on

[1012] he indicates that the body must be persistent. *(Mubāḥathāt*, 329 [1012].) These passages, if they represent a reliable material, suggest that Avicenna did not wholly elaborate on this tenet.

[785] For matter (3c), for spatial position (1a) and (3a), for form (1e) and (3e) in our theoretical approach.
[786] *Mubāḥathāt*, 375 [1161].

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Avicenna's later correspondence and disputes with his disciples. However, one has to be extremely careful while studying these books. Although the *Kitāb al-Mubāḥathāt* has undergone a thorough philological study,[787] the authenticity of the *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt* still needs to be verified.[788] What accumulates the problems is the "other" *Ta'līqāt*, attributed to al-Fārābī. All its passages, without exception, may be found in Avicenna's *Ta'līqāt*. Therefore, it either belongs to al-Fārābī himself, or it was mistakenly attributed to him in the manuscript tradition. However, Damien Janos convincingly argued that passages on the spheres are incompatible with the "classical" Fārābian tenets, but they are in harmony with Avicenna's cosmology.[789] As for Avicenna's *Ta'līqāt*, Jules Jansens identified many passages in the Metaphysics of the *Kitāb al-Shifā'*, and concluded that it is not likely that the work would be compiled by second, or third-generation pupil of Avicenna, and it cannot be ruled out that Avicenna himself be the author.[790] What is more, there are passages directly translated from the *Dānishnāma-i 'Alā'ī*,[791] and some other scholars argued that some parts seem to be the extended version of passages found in the *Kitāb al-Mubāḥathāt*.[792] It was Dimitri Gutas, who suggested that the *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt* and the *al-Mubāḥathāt* be the material to which Avicenna referred to as the *Kitāb al-Lawāḥiq*.[793]

Be that as it may, we are not in a position to take a side in this scholarly debate: as long as the *Ta'līqāt* has not undergone a thorough philological study, we cannot arrive at a firm position at all. Nevertheless, we will always strive to compare the passages with Avicenna's authentic works. We think that even if it is written up by Avicenna's pupils, it is equally an Avicennan material that may have been composed during his discussions with his students.

3.5.1 The *al-Budhūr al-mutafarriqa*

In the *Kitāb al-Mubāḥathāt,* we find a lengthy discussion on individuation. It was David Reisman, who showed – based on the marginalia of some manuscripts – that this section belonged to the lost *Kitāb al-Budhūr*.[794] In another passage in the *Mubāḥathāt* Avicenna, or the one who answers, directly refers to a certain *Mubāḥāthāt ṣadīqiyya*, where he *expressis verbis* treated individuation:

[787] Reisman, 2004.
[788] Gutas, 2014, 160–164; Janos, 2012, 389.
[789] Janos, 2012, 389.
[790] Janssens, 2012, 222.
[791] *Ta'līqāt*, (M), (27).
[792] Reisman, 2002, 247.
[793] Gutas, 2014, 160–164.
[794] Reisman, 2002, 257.

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> We have shown in the *al-mubāḥathāt al-ṣadīqiyya* that how is the individuation of the nature of one species. From there, it becomes clear that the individuals of the human soul are not multiplied in actuality until a relation does not fall on an element and position.[795]

As we will see, the following section is clearly in line with what we have seen so far: Avicenna examined the role of spatial position and spatial extension in individuation. Second, the passage suggests another important thing: that Avicenna talked about the individuation of the species, that is, how the individuals subsumed under a certain species becomes an individual. This approach, again, suggests a derivative reading of individuation.

The section to which David Reisman refers as belonging to this passage consists of 38 paragraphs, according to Bīdarfār's numbering.[796] These passages are to be divided into three main subsections, based on their contents: the first [1044–1057] is about the logical approach to individuation, and it examines the spatial position's role; the second [1058–1066], roughly speaking, is about the individuation of the cause, and the third [1067–1072] is about individuation in general, included the individuation of accidents and souls.

The first part starts with the classification of things that may be considered either in themselves or as states. The states may be either relational or inherent. Starting from here, at the end of the *diaeresis,* the author arrives at the unshareable relation and then goes on to investigate what is unshareable in itself.

The second subsection [1058–1066] is a curious one: it contains complicated and rather elliptic passages on whether the causal force is due to the quiddity or to individuation, where, again, individuation seems to be an equivalent of existence. In other words, the question is whether individual existence is a necessary condition for a cause to exercise its force. Then, the author treats the issue of divisibility of the cause as well.[797]

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[795] *Mubāḥathāt*, 319 [896].
[796] *Mubāḥathāt*, 337–343, [1044–1072].
[797] Nevertheless, this section would deserve a whole chapter on its own right Its central question is about the individuation of the cause, that is, whether individuation is necessary for something to be a cause, or a cause owes its causal power to the quiddity alone. To be more precise, the main question is whether the act proceeding from the body is proceeding from its quiddity, while its individuation has no part in the process. In this case, that act would derive from the quiddity due to the quiddity, and every quiddity would exercise its causal power without interruption. After a lengthy discussion, which includes some other side-arguments, the author concludes that it is not possible. Whatever be a cause, it can exercise its causal force along with its individuators – that is, only individuals may be causes. As to the source of this problem, our suggestion leads us to the sixth *namaṭ* in the Metaphysics of the *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, where Avicenna shows that celestial bodies cannot be the causes of each other. No celestial body is a cause of an inferior body or a body that it contains, nor can the contained body be the cause of its container. (*Ishārāt*, II, (al-Ṭūsī), 197–202, tr. by Inati, 2014, 158–159).

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The third subsection is about general considerations of individuation. Now, we will concentrate mainly on the first bunch of passages, because that is what seems to be relevant to all the approaches that we have seen so far.

Translation:

1044: The things are considered either as being essences in themselves or as states. The states are either conceptualized in holding essences without the need of a relation or depending on a relation. [Those] considered in relation, [are such that] their quiddity is either due to their being related to something (*mansūb*) or [their quiddity is] related but the pure statement [describing it] is not in relation to anything (*mansūb*); by statement, I mean the inner statement (*al-qawl al-bāṭin*). This relation may be directed to different things.

1045: The conceptualization of the individual, insofar as it is an individual, rules out that another [individual] be it. Thus, it must be such that its concept cannot be shared.

1046: The conceptualization of an essence and the non-related state do not rule out the shareability in the intellect. Thus, it is not the concept of the individual, insofar as an individual.

1047: The relational meaning is either a relation, depending on extension and sense-perception, or relation not depending on it, but it is intellectual. The intellectual is either that of togetherness or that of diverseness, like the state of the horse and man. The togetherness is either homologous on the sides, or diverse, not homologous, like the relation between the essence of cause and effect.

1048: The relation of diverseness does not make the thing impossible to be shared. The togetherness relation does not rule out that either: the brother [implies at least] two brothers. And the cause-effect relation does not rule it out either if neither nature to which the relation adheres nor the relation rules it out. This type of relational state is such that it does not exclude shareability in conceptualization if it adheres to the essences or non-relational states. Then, the intellectual relation does not render the thing impossible to be shared in conceptualization. Then, [only] the relation to extension remained. Then, it is this that makes it possible.

This relation may be related to the thing primarily, as to bodies, and it may be related secondarily to the souls, the quiddity of which may be shared.

1049: Individuation does not become realized but [only] to those that have that relation essentially, or by a second intention.

1050: Individuation does not become realized by relation to the general universal and the general meaning. Thus, it is needed to become realized in what does not receive generality.

1051: The place is a meaning that receives plurality and its [individual] double [may] exist.

1052: The individual double (*al-mithl al-shakhṣī*) is separated by an existential thing, which is concomitant to the individual or it is a non-constitutive accident to the distributed quiddity. As for the extensional relation, if it exists, it is impossible for it to have an individual double that exists with it.

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1053: If we supposed two extensional relations, with an individual similarity (*al-tamāthul al-shakhṣī*) between them, it is necessary that everything that is in one direction from one of them be in that direction from the other. But this is not possible. Thus, there is no individual similarity between them that has no difference in individual [cases].

1054: Individuation becomes realized by a relational, extensional meaning, and also by a meaning that has been individuated first, and that individuates something else and ends up in something that is individuated in itself, which cannot have a double along with it. And this is the extensional relation.

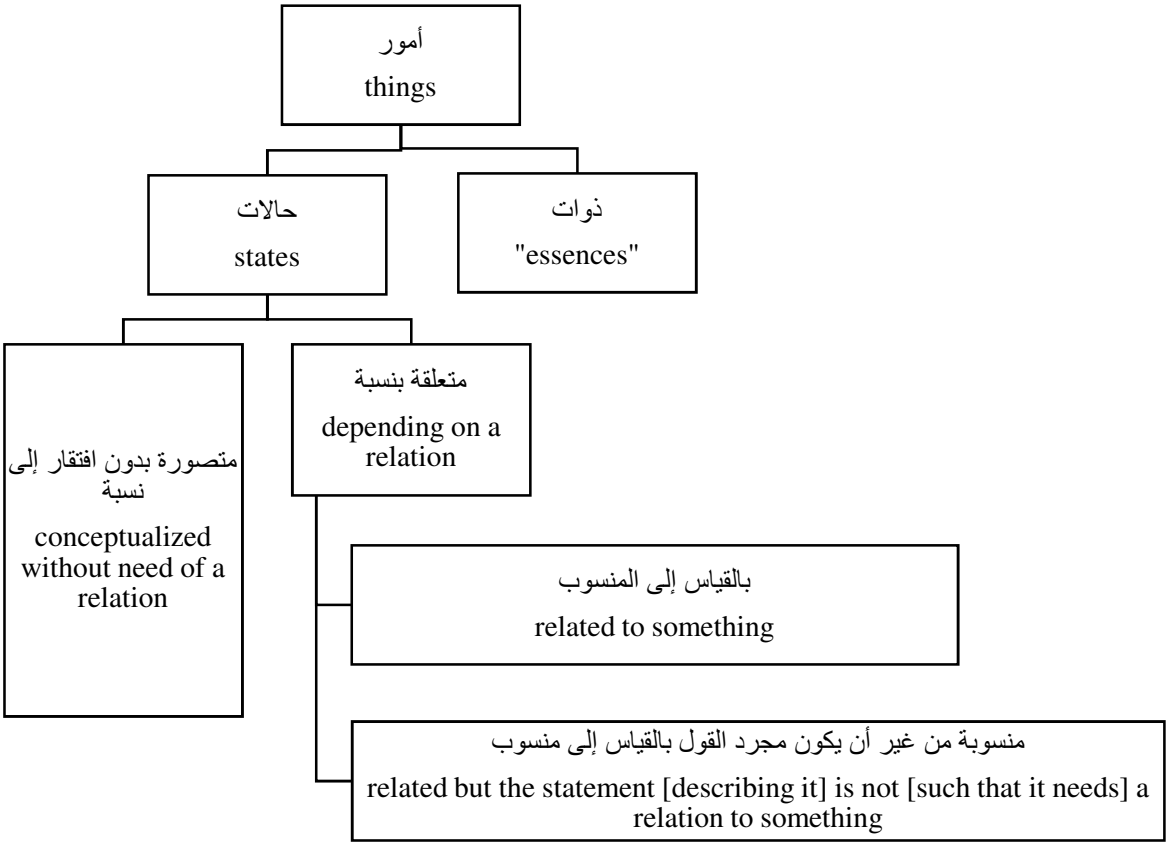
1055: Every existent that has no extension and no relation to an extension, its quiddity is not diversified in individuals in existence at all.

1056: The intellectual meanings cannot be multiplied in individuals after having been unified in the quiddity [as a] species.

1057: One extensional relation may fall on two things in two times. That very relation does not exclude [the possibility of] a double existent until time or moment is not attached to it. Thus, the thing that is not temporal essentially or by a state, its quiddity is not said of many.[798]

3.5.1.1 The role of spatial position in individuation

Avicenna starts with the division of things (*amr–umūr*):



[798] *Mubāḥathāt*, 337–339 [1044–1057].

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This little chart recalls the division of accidents from the *Maqūlāt* of the *Shifā'*. Things are either in themselves (substances), or states (accidents). Accidents may be divided according to a relation. On the one hand, there are accidents the conceptualization of which requires something else, external to the subject, and, there are accidents the conceptualization of which does not. Into the latter category fall the category of position (*waḍ'*), quantity (*kamm*), and quality (*kayf*). It is obvious that quantity and quality are indeed such that they are not related to something else, apart from their subject. The color or being one and the like do not need any external point of reference in their concept formation. However, the position is more curious: it is always related to something, but in this case not to something external, but to itself. Here, it represents the spatial relation of the parts to the whole. In another passage in the *Maqūlāt* Avicenna attributes three interpretations to the category of position:

1. Position may be predicated of everything that may be indicated [by finger] (*mushār ilayhi*). The indication is the determination of direction (*ta'yīn al-jiha*) that specifically falls upon it from among the directions of the cosmos.
2. Position may relate to the quantity[799]
3. The position is the state of the body inasmuch as its parts have a relation to the other parts, but this reading applies only to substances.[800]

The second and third readings are close to each other, it is as if the second was derived from the third: body, subsumed under the category of a quantity means simply that a body, be it a line or a surface is continuous and potentially have parts. According to Avicenna's division in the *Maqūlāt*, the category of position is placed above quality and quantity. In this reading position is taken in meaning (3): insofar a body is potentially divisible and has parts, their parts have a relation to each other. As Avicenna adds, these differences, that is, the differences of their parts adhere to the body in itself.[801] However, in another work, in the *Dānishnāmayi 'Alā'ī,* a similar division may be found, but here, the position is subsumed under relation: taken this way, it reflects meaning (1) that is, position to something else. [802]

This consideration roughly follows the Late-antique commentary tradition. The commentators generally distinguished between those categories that are in themselves (*καθ αὐτό, ἀσχετοί*) and

[799] This is the traditional Aristotelian division that quantity is continuous or incontinuous, and positional and non-positional. Aristotle, *Cat.,* 4b21–22: καὶ τὸ μὲν ἐκ θέσιν ἐχόντων πρὸς ἄλληλα τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς μορίων συνέστηκε, τὸ δὲ οὐκ ἐξ ἐχόντων θέσιν.
[800] *Maqūlāt*, 127, 10–16.
[801] *Maqūlāt*, 84, 6–17.
[802] *Ilāhiyyāt-i Dānishnāma*, 29.

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those that are in relation (*ἐν σχέσει*). [803] For Simplicius, the non-relational accidents are quality and quantity, and relational ones are all subsumed under relation: position is labeled as the relation to the body, which corresponds to the classical interpretation of *κεῖσθαι*. [804] Elias and Olympiodorus held a quite similar view. [805] In other words, the classification of the categories in virtue of relation seems to be a common commentary practice that also appears in Avicenna. In this context, however, this classification helps him to find those features that explain individuality. In this context again, the crucial question is which category means an unshareable element. Ultimately, this inquiry is guided by what he meant by individuation. The answer lies in the passage [1045]:

> The conceptualization of the individual, insofar as it is an individual, rules out that another [individual] be it. Thus, it must be such that no commonness may fall into its concept.[806]

This description of individuation follows the Porphyrian unshareability criterion. This is the so-called logical understanding of individuation, where the starting point is the concept of an individual. As we have seen, this involves the epistemic approach: it raises the issue into a conceptual level, where the question is about which feature explains unshareability. The whole discussion is about the distinction between common and non-common features, and in this respect, an individual element is that which prevents that two things share all the properties.

In the following passages, Avicenna follows this way: he examines all the possibilities throughout the division, whether it may be shared or not. Just like in the *Madkhal*, he insists that all the universals are shareable: thus, substances and the non-relational states (*ḥālāt ghayr mansūba*). As for the relational concepts, he divides them further: there are those that depend on extension and sense-perception, and those that do not: they are the intellectual relations. The latter is either simultaneous (*nisba ma'iyya*) or diverse (*mubāyina*). Simultaneous relations are either homologous (*mutakāfi'a*) or different (*mukhtalifa*), as the relation between cause and effect. The example of the diverse relation is the horse and the human. That is, that they intellectually share some features, like animality, but they are different by their *differentia specifica*. All the intellectual relations, including the simultaneous, homologous ones (the concept of brother that applies to two brothers as well) are common. They are all shareable,

[803] Olympiodorus, *in Cat.,* 54, 7; Simplicius, *in Cat*., 67, 33–34.
[804] Simplicius, *in Cat*., 67, 26–68, 13.
[805] Olympiodorus, *in Cat*., 54, 4; Elias, *in Cat*., 159, 9–33.
[806] *Mubāḥathāt,* 337 [1045].

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because – as all universals are applicable to many, they do not prevent the thing from being shared in any feature. Therefore, the only possibility left is the extensional relation.

Why would the extensional relation be unshareable? The author here comes up with an interesting example:

> 1052: The individual double (*al-mithl al-shakhṣī*) is separated by an existential thing, which is concomitant to the individual or it is a non-constitutive accident to the distributed quiddity. As for the extensional relation, if it exists, it is impossible for it to have an individual double that exists with it.
>
> 1053: If we supposed two extensional relations, with an individual similarity (*al-tamāthul al-shakhṣī*) between them, it is necessary that everything that is in one direction from one of them be in that direction from the other. However, this is not possible; thus, there is no individual similarity between them that has no difference in individual [cases].[807]

Passage [1052] is not easy to interpret, but our proposal is the following: we shall suppose two absolutely identical instances of a quiddity, like two Zayds as if he was perfectly cloned and reduplicated. This is an individual double, which is separated from its counterpart by an existential thing (*amr wujūdī*) that is concomitant to its quiddity, namely, existence.

There is another interesting point here, namely the technical term *tamāthul* – similarity. This is what we have seen in *kalām* texts as well, referred back to as early as Abū Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 319/931). It is also striking that here, the criterion of difference during sense-perception is also extension (*taḥayyuz*).[808] Although the work is written by a later author, Abū Rashīd al-Nīsābūrī, who is a contemporary of Avicenna, as he admits, he is about to report earlier views, actually the debated points between Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī and the Baghdadian *mutakallimūn*.[809] Here, he deals at great length with the question of the similarity of substances.

Turning back to the text, it means that if we suppose that a certain individual exists, it has a double: this is the starting point. On the conceptual level, two otherwise absolutely identical instances may differ only in their spatial relation to each other. However, what Avicenna says is not exactly this. If we suppose two extensional relations, as two identical instantiations of the quiddity "spatial relation," they cannot be but different. If we suppose two points for the sake of simplicity, and posit a third a one, their spatial relations to this third point must be necessarily

[807] *Mubāḥathāt*, 338 [1052–1053].
[808] al-Nīsābūrī, *al-Masā'il fī khilāf*, 29–36.
[809] al-Nīsābūrī, *al-Masā'il fī khilāf*, 28.

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different, because two individual points cannot occupy the same location. In other words, two spatial relations are *per definitionem* different.

As we saw above, this is the same argument that Avicenna used in the argument against the existence of the void and immaterial dimensions. [810] If two things interpenetrate, they have the same relation to an external object. This idea also entails that it is not a place that differentiates, because place, taken in the Aristotelian sense that Avicenna equally accepts, means the inner surface of the surrounding body. In this description, there is nothing that would entail any kind of specificity. If we take two identical instances of a thing, be it a quiddity or an individual, their place, meaning the inner surface of the surrounding body, is the same, even if they are at several spatial points in the universe. However, this meaning is something superadded to the simple concept of place: actually, this is what may be described by spatial position.

However, the story does not end here. As we have seen elsewhere, a spatial position also may be reduplicated at two different moments. Thus, the temporal condition is equally important:

> 1057: One extensional relation may fall on two things in two times. That very relation does not exclude [the possibility of] a double existent until time or moment is not attached to it. Thus, the thing that is not temporal essentially or by a state, its quiddity is not said of many.[811]

This actually is the spatio-temporal reading of differentiation, but here Avicenna or his pupil notes that it is spatial position on a temporal condition, which necessarily differentiates between two instances of the same species. Time is equally necessary because the spatial position does not contain any indication of time in itself: in other words, a spatial relation in itself, between two points, A and B, may be the same at two different instants.

A similar division with the same conclusion appears in the *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt*: [812] there are essences, states, and relations. Every one of them that may be intellectual is shareable; it is only the extensional relation on the condition of time that is unshareable. Then, as the author of the passages adds, it is spatial position that is individuated in itself (*mutashakhkhiṣ bi-al-dhāt*).[813] Just like here, however, the text supplies it with the temporal reading:

[810] *Samā',* 121, 7–10.
[811] *Mubāḥathāt*, 339 [1057].
[812] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 86; 98–99, (M) 233–234 [376]; 275–276 [467].
[813] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 50, (M) 119–120 [158–159]; (B) 86, (M) 233–234 [376]; (B) 98–99, (M) 275–276 [467]; (B) 106, (M) 300 [524]; (B) 107, (M) 303 [529]; (B) 120, (M) 348 [622]; (B) 138, (M) 408–409 [725–728].

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> The individuated in itself is the position. Then, the time is also individuated by position, and likewise all general thing. And position also is not individuated until the unity of time is not postulated in it. Everything that is individuated, it is such that its position is one, I mean that its time is one.[814]

In this spatio-temporal reading, time, and position play a mutual individuating role. It is position that ultimately individuates time, because time attaches to motion, and heavenly motion moves from spatial position to spatial position. On the other hand, time, in general, depends on the movements of the celestial substances. At the same time, spatial position, inasmuch as it is the spatial position of something, is unshareable, only if the unity of time is taken into consideration A spatial position is unique only as taken in an instant time t', which, taken Avicenna's theory of motion, is that which spatially corresponds to a given instant. In Avicenna's physical universe, it is this constellation that is ultimately unique. This clear-cut spatio-temporal understanding equally appears in Bahmanyār's *Kitāb al-Taḥṣīl* [815] and Lawkarī's *Bayān al-ḥaqq*.[816] Bahmanyār goes even further:

> The unity of position, like [in the case of] "the human," from the beginning until the end of [its] existence, is like[817] the unity of time and the unity if continuity of the potentially many positions.[818]

Bahmanyār understands spatio-temporal reading as a unity. From the beginning until the end of existence, all the continuously changing spatial positions are taken as one unity of positions as if it denoted a distinct spatial extension from time A to time B. Bahmanyār admits in the introduction that he relied on Avicenna's works, his discussions with him, but adds his own deductions as well.[819] Therefore, this statement corroborates that the idea of spatial position as the individuated-in-itself feature is indeed Avicenna's tenet. The unity-reading is hard to be found in the *Mubāḥathāt* material; therefore, it easily can be Bahmanyār's addition, but no one can tell it for sure. This idea, however, implies that accidents are indeed spatio-temporally "earmarked."[820] If the spatio-temporal accidents individuate in the sense of distinction, as a cause, they must last until the effect lasts. Thus, this individuating bunch of features should

[814] *Ta'līqāt*, (B) 99, (M) 275–276 [467].
[815] Bahmanyār, *Taḥṣīl*, 505–506.
[816] Lawkarī, *Bayān al-ḥaqq*, 176–177. Lawkarī's chapter follows Bahmanyār's text *verbatim*.
[817] This is Bahmanyār's reading, whereas the Lawkarī edition offers another reading: *fa-li-waḥdati l-zamān*, is because of the unity of time.
[818] Bahmanyār, *Taḥsīl*, 506; Lawkarī, *Bayān al-ḥaqq*, 177.
[819] Bahmanyār, *Taḥsīl*, 1.
[820] This is Jari Kaukua's term and suggestion that he made in his review of this dissertation. This is actually a tenable option, but, in light of this I cannot but add that it appears in Bahmanyār and probably it might have appeared in Avicenna's discussions with his pupils.

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accompany the subject and should not change as such. [821] It is only possible if we take it to form a unity, a temporally defined spatial extension.

3.5.2 Individuation in general

The third subsection [1067–1072][822] contains passages that treat the individuation of all kind of existents, starting from God:

> 1067: The unification and individuation of thing are either by its quiddity, and this is the one whose existence is necessary in itself. Or, they [i.e., unification and individuation] are by concomitance from the quiddity, like the quiddities of the intellects after it, if it is like this – or the quiddity of the sun for example. And these two [i.e., unity and individuation], is such that what has them, cannot be shared by anything else. Or, [individuation and unity] is either by an attached accident (*bi–'araḍ lāzim*) at the beginning of the existence or after.

We have already quoted this passage: here, Avicenna follows his "essential" approach, in the sense that the starting point in treating individuation is the quiddity. This is the so-called derivative reading of individuation: individuals derive from something. The first option is the quiddity; the second is the concomitant accidents, that is, things that always adhere to a quiddity not being part of it. Thirdly, the contingent accidents that distinguish one individual from the other, under one species. God is individual in and by itself, individuality is not superadded to his essence. The separate substances, the unique instantiations of their species differ in virtue of their quiddities. Individuation and unity are concomitants of their quiddities, and because there is no other individual apart from them sharing that quiddity, their individuation follows from their quiddity by concomitance. Those existents that are subsumed under a certain species are individuated by their unshareable feature, spatial position.

Accidents

There are two passages [1068–1069] that deal with the individuation of accidents. There is nothing new here: their individuated subjects individuate accidents. The text reads as follows:

> 1068: The accidents and forms are individuated by their subjects that are individuated by what we mentioned.[823]

Nevertheless, this passage raises several doubts regarding the accidental reading of individuation: it seems to involve circularity that accidents are individuated by their subjects and subjects by their accidents. Actually, just the former passage [1067] makes clear that

[821] Bahmanyār, *Taḥsīl*, 505; Lawkarī, *Bayān al-ḥaqq*, 176.
[822] *Mubāḥathāt*, 341–343 [1067–1072].
[823] *Mubāḥathāt*, 342 [1068].

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"[individuation and unity] is either by an attached accident (*bi–ʿaraḍ lāzim*) at the beginning of the existence or after." The solution lies in two points: first, on the intention of individuality and second, on the different approaches: the substance-accident approach other than the quiddity-accident approach.

As we have seen above, when in these later works Avicenna speaks about individuation, he follows the Porphyrian logical tradition that understands by individuation something like the Boethian *incommunicabilitas*: by raising the issue on the noetic level, its concept prevents it to be applicable to another. Thus, it must be such that its concept cannot be shared by anything else.[824] This meaning, as applied to an accident, for example to a particular whiteness, gives the impression that this white cannot be shared not by itself, but by its inherence in an already individuated element. Secondly, it is not accidents that individuate the subject in the sense that they render it an existent individual, but in the sense that they help to distinguish it from another and identify it.

Second, as we have shown above, the subject-accident and quiddity-accident approaches are different. The first method entails mereological considerations, namely that which features are part of the subject and which features are not: accidents do not constitute the subject, they are not in it as parts. The quiddity-accident approach has another focus. The threefold division of quiddities means a derivative reading of individuation. A quiddity in itself becomes another by having accidents, where accidents again play a distinguishing role in the process of particularization. It does not mean that the accident in question would be a part of the underlying substance, qua substance. In this context, the spatial position is the thing individuated in itself: it is the ultimate reason that makes diversity possible, and it is the *sine qua non* of particularization.

In the next passage, Avicenna goes into more details regarding accidents and their kinds of inherence in the subject. We have already seen above that he was hesitating about the exact nature of inherence that accidents have. In the V.5 chapter of the Metaphysics of the *Shifā',* he divides accidents into relations (*muḍāfāt*) and states (*ḥālāt*). Under the latter, there are such whose removal entails the removal of the individual, and there are such whose removal does not entail the removal of the individual, only its accidental difference towards others will be changed.[825]

[824] *Mubāḥathāt*, 337 [1045].
[825] *Ilāhiyyāt*, 238, 8–239, 5.

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Avicenna seems to take up this problem again:

> 1069: The adherence of accidents and material features is in two ways: The first is like the adherence of forms and accidents to quantity and position, and the second is like the adherence of motion to blackness. The first adherence, if it ceases to be, it is impossible for it to remain an existent in itself, or in its subject. Like blackness: if quantity and position depart from it, it cannot be said that its essence remained, unless as becoming indivisible, and non-designatable, and the black parts that we posit in case of blackness are not existent, and then how could be that blackness existent? As to the adherence of motion to blackness, any of them shall depart, it does not affect the other in anything.[826]

The two types of adherence run parallel to the one seen above. However, Avicenna here names two categories, quantity, and position whose removal entails the removal of the subject. As we saw above, quantity and position are necessary concomitants of the body; which is to be found up in the *Tabula Porphyriana*, being a genus, although not proximate genus of any human being for example. Therefore, quantity and position always accompany a body, but they do not constitute it in Avicenna's view. If there is no quantity and position in a body, it is a sign that it has no continuity and the three dimensions may not be posited in it: then, it is no longer a body.

Avicenna, in the *Maqūlāt* of the *Shifā'* attributes firm existence (*wujūd qārr*) to these categories: as we saw above, commenting upon the second Aristotelian division of quantity,[827] he insists that quantity that has a position, has actual parts having firm existence: these parts have a position to each other and continuity.[828]

However, this understanding of the position is other than the one, which means the relation to something else. This latter serves to distinguish one individual from the other, the former, the one subsumed under quantity means the internal relation of the parts, being a concomitant of continuity. It does not mean that it would individuate: as a concomitant of an essential feature (being a body) always accompanies the subject. That is, the aporia of the Ilāhiyyāt V.5 is still not resolved.

[826] *Mubāḥathāt*, 342 [1069].
[827] The traditional Aristotelian division is that quantity is either continuous or incontinuous, and positional and non-positional. Aristotle, Cat. 4b21–22 καὶ τὸ μὲν ἐκ θέσιν ἐχόντων πρὸς ἄλληλα τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς μορίων συνέστηκε, τὸ δὲ οὐκ ἐξ ἐχόντων θέσιν.
[828] *Maqūlāt*, 127, 6–9.

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4 Conclusion

In this thesis, we reconsidered Avicenna's theory of individuation of sensible substances. Since individuation was of marginal interest in the Classical philosophical tradition, following our methodological principles, first, we had to set up the context, in which the issue appeared: since individuation was not a distinct philosophical topic, the reconstruction of the original tenets depends upon the clear understanding of the contexts where it occurred. By contexts, we mean both inner and outer ones: the former represents the "requirements" of the philosophical system, whereas the latter comprises the cultural, religious challenges. Although it is impossible to understand Medieval philosophical texts in their context entirely, our inquiry cannot be but deficient in this respect. Still, even if this approach cannot be complete, we followed it as much as possible.

In the introductory chapters, we showed that the Greek philosophical tradition provided the tools and frameworks where individuation was addressed. The texts of the Alexandrian philosophical curriculum are the central axis, upon which the discussions hinged. In the logical context, it was mainly Porphyry's *Eisagoge* and the *Categories* that exercised a lasting influence upon the doctrines. Just like Avicenna, Elias, the Alexandrian commentator challenged the "bundle-view" of individuals; and as his successor, David briefly reported, a sort of debate has arisen about individuals that time. The commentators had something to say in the context of the threefold division of common element, just like in hylomorphism. According to the generally accepted view, the matter was the principle of individuation, and as Themistius modified it, the principle of multiplicity. In turn, the form was the principle of persistence, as Alexander Aphrodisias noted.

We briefly outlined that in the Islamic rational theology, the similarity-otherness question appeared in connection with God's *tawḥīd*, and it is here, where the distinction of atoms was treated. Although there were a great variety of views, some theologians endorsed a spatio-temporal distinction, with a special emphasis on the extension. The particularization argument that aimed at showing the existence of the Creator from the observation that accidents are all created and accidental features could easily be otherwise, also appears throughout Avicenna's works. Elements of this theory indeed play a prominent role in Avicenna's view on particularization. This chapter offers only introductory remarks; it will be the goal of further research to investigate this point further.

In the logical approach, we examined Avicenna's challenge of the "bundle-view" of individuals and his spatio-temporal solution. We showed that it was partly directed against some of the

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Baghdad peripatetics, like Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī and Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Ṭayyib, who took the term individual to be equivocal. We have shown that the spatio-temporal criterion serves not only to identify individuals in Avicenna's system, but it is a metaphysical base for the mental representation of particulars. Thus, this is another reason why individuals have no intelligible concepts, except for the *individuum vaguum*. The outer context here is the famous problem, God's knowledge of particulars.

In the Metaphysical part, we followed Avicenna's main topics: the threefold consideration of quiddities, where he seems to accept an accidental reading of individuation; we showed that this is due to the derivative understanding, that is, particularization: what is at stake here is the particularization of the quiddity.

It has been suggested in the secondary literature that it is existence that individuates for Avicenna. However, we slightly modified this view. Keeping to Avicenna's contention, we showed that existence does not have a distinguishing role on the conceptual level; if it is distinguished, it is unity, the correlational pair of existence that explains its distinctness and particularity on the conceptual level. Even though the particular existence is particular to the individual, in Avicenna's modal ontology, it always has a cause. In the process of generation, it has a necessitating condition, which rests again upon the spatio-temporal distinction. On the other hand, it is unity that reflects the particular aspect of existence, not existence in the absolute sense.

We equally treated Avicenna's spatio-temporal reading of individuation. In a broader context, what ultimately explains the diversity of the material world is spatial position, as it is the utmost particularizing factor in producing difference by the celestial motion. This is the reason in virtue of which change and divisibility come to be in the material world. It overarches Avicenna's philosophy, it appears in Logic, as counting for the unshareability of concepts in the conceptual level, in the Physics, where it serves to differentiate circular motions, and finally in the Metaphysics, in different sub-questions. It explains the particularity of the material world if we look at the individual as an existent, and it is the criterion that serves to differentiate between distinct pieces of matter.

In the hylomorphic approach, we agree with most of the scholars that matter is the principle of individuation if we understand individuation here as multiplicity. The spatial position and time are the necessary conditions of distinctness between different pieces of matter. At the same time, the form also plays a role in individuation: it is the principle of persistence that explains

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the individual's being the same, as it appears in the argument on growth. It is the substantial form that renders the thing actual; it counts for its identity; it explains why Zayd is the very same individual. In the existence-quiddity approach, it is existence that corresponds to actuality and, in this respect, it overlaps with form, being responsible for identity. In his later works, Avicenna admits that it indeed counts for identity; in case of the human rational soul, it plays the same role through self-awareness, inasmuch as self-awareness represents the particular existence. In sum, Avicenna has a complex theory of individuation: it would be an oversimplification to say that x or y individuates in his system. Instead, individuals are complex entities, having many causes. Among the many factors, each one explains a certain aspect. This is in accord with Avicenna's "principle of the one:" one thing produces only one thing in one thing.

Last but not least, we examined Avicenna's views on individuation from the *Budhūr* material. It is a valuable text because it contains explicit passages about the topic. Here Avicenna stresses the role spatial position plays in individuation, whereby individuation he means the Porphyrian, conceptual reading of individuals. He elaborates on the element "individuated in itself." As we have seen the spatio-temporal reading appears throughout his opus, first because on mental level individuation is taken to mean distinction and second, because in his emanationist system the particularization is the main challenge, as far as individuals are concerned. Although the spatio-temporal reading of individuation does not explain Zayd's being Zayd, it serves as a criterion to distinguish one individual from another. On the other hand, it serves to explain the diversity of the material world. It is one of the utmost principles in virtue of which multiple motions come to be in the supralunar, and in consequence, in the sublunar sphere.

These later texts testify that Avicenna gave massive importance to the spatial position in individuation, at least at the end of his career. This tenet is corroborated by the whole thesis because it is the spatial position being the ultimate source of particularization that overarches almost all the philosophical topics. This is to be understood under the egis of our methodological approach: the inner context, namely, Avicenna's system as a whole, rests upon the threefold division of quiddities, which entails a derivative reading of individuation, where, on the analytical level, the discussion revolves around the particularization of the quiddity in itself. On the other hand, the views of the predecessors, contemporaries, and the actual cultural-religious challenges represent the outer context, without which Avicenna's philosophy can hardly be understood.

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6 Abstract

The thesis explores the notion of individuation of material substances in Avicenna's teaching. Since this problem was of marginal interest in the Peripatetic philosophical tradition, it was not a distinct topic on its own right, and in consequence, it appears in different contexts throughout the philosophical corpus. Thus, we followed a contextual approach that strives to find the middle path between strict philosophical and strict historical approaches.

The Late-Antique philosophical curriculum paved the way how individuals were treated in Arabic philosophy, by providing the base-text and commentaries. Therefore, we briefly summarized how individuals were approached in logic and metaphysics in the Greek philosophical legacy, with a special emphasis on the commentary tradition. We highlighted that Elias foreshadowed Avicenna's solution on the conceptualization of individuals, whereas Themistius and Alexander Aphrodisias inspired his articulation of the role matter and form played in individuation, respectively.

Avicenna has a syncretic view of individuation. We showed that individuation cannot be oversimplified: different factors explain different aspects. We followed examined it in Logic, Physics and Metaphysics, and finally we added a passage-collection from his late works that explicitly addresses the question of individuation. Here, he emphasized the spatio-temporal criterion of individuation, namely that it is spatial and temporal features that explain the unshareability of individuals.

Accordingly, the spatio-temporal reading overarches Avicenna's treatment of particulars. In Physics, spatial position is the ultimate condition of the particularity of the material world that derives from positional motion. When it comes to metaphysics, in the sublunar realm, in the process of generation, it is the spatial position that sets apart one receptacle from another, again, being a condition for a particular being to be a designated individual. Matter, in this context is the principle of multiplicity, and form-existence is the principle of identity that still needs to be particularized, by another cause.

We distinguished between the substance-accident and quiddity-existence distinctions in his system, showing that, although they seem contradictory, they represent different approaches to the individual. Therefore, Avicenna's individuation must be seen as a complex theory, where every factor explains a certain aspect.

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Összefoglalás

A disszertáció az anyagi szubsztanciák individuációját tárja fel Avicenna tanításában. Mivel e probléma egy marginális kérdés volt a peripatetikus filozófiai hagyományban, nem képezte önálló filozófiai fejtegetés tárgyát, s ennek következtében különböző kontextusokban jelent meg. Ezért, egy kontextuális megközelítést választottunk, amely a pusztán filozófiai és történeti metódusok között a középutat képviseli.

A későantik filozófiai curriculumban forrottak ki azon alapszövegeket és kommentárjait, amelyek alapján az individuáció problémáját közelítették meg az arab filozófiában. Ezért röviden felvázoltuk a görög filozófiai hagyományban, hogyan értelmezték az individuumokat a logikában és metafizikában, különös tekintettel a kommentár-irodalomra. Hangsúlyoztuk, hogy Elias már megelőlegezte Avicenna megoldását az individuum fogalmának megalkotására, míg Themistius és Alexander Aphrodiseus inspirálhatta az anyag és forma szerepét az avicennai individuációban.

Avicennának az individuáció tana összetett. Kimutattuk, hogy nem lehet egyoldalúan megközelíteni azt: különböző faktorok az individuum különböző aspektusait magyarázzák. Megvizsgáltuk logikai, fizikai és metafizikai kontextusban, végül hozzátettünk egy kései passzusgyűjteményt, amely *expressis verbis* az individuációról szól. Itt, Avicenna az individuáció tér-idő olvasatát hangsúlyozta, azaz, hogy idő és térbeli koordináták a kritérumai az individuumok egyediségének.

Ennek megfelelően, a tér-idő olvasat átíveli Avicenna életművét: a fizikában a térbeli pozíció a végső feltétele az anyagi világ partikularizációjának, amely a pozicioinális mozgás eredménye. A metafizikában, a hold-alatti világban a térbeli pozíció különít el egy receptákulumot egy másiktól, amely így feltétele annak, hogy egy partikuláris létező rámutatható individuum legyen. Az anyag, ebben a kontextusban a sokszorosság princípiuma, míg a forma, (és létezés) az identitásé, amely önmagában nem partikularizált – ennek más princípiuma van.

Különbséget tettünk a szubsztancia-járulék és lényeg-létezés felosztások között, amelyek, jóllehet egymásnak ellentmondónak tűnnek, csupán különböző megközelítései az individuumnak. Tehát, Avicenna individuáció elmélete egy komplex teória, amelyben minden faktor egy bizonyos aspektust magyaráz.