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The Ontology of Individualization in Avicenna in the Context of Identity and Differentiation*

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Abstract: Discussion of the issue of individuation in Avicenna's philosophy seeks an answer to the question of how individuation can be explained ontologically in light of species-realization in individuals. The ontological aspect of individuation itself has two facets. One of them is what makes the individuals of a given species identical to themselves. The other pertains to what truly distinguishes the individuals of the species from each other. Just as answering for the self alone does not yield dissociation, the dissociation of individuals does not answer the question about their selves. Prior to Avicenna, the explanation of individuals' selfhood was interpreted in the context of Aristotle's philosophy and discussions were conducted on whether it is matter or form that gives selfhood. The differentiation of individuals from each other was handled on the sensory plane through the field of properties. The main claim of this article is that Avicenna developed a unique approach with his theory of quiddity that encompasses both aspects of individuation. With this theory, Avicenna explains the self-identity of the individual with "the existence of quiddity-in-itself specific to that individual" and thus creates the necessary ground for a field of properties that will make it possible for the individual to be differentiated from other individuals of the species. The differentiation of individuals is answered through the field of properties that can be "pointed to" as a result of sensory perception. Among these features, position (*waḍʿ*) and place (*ayn*) come to the fore in terms of being considered primordial. In order to justify this claim, the theory of quiddity-in-itself, which underlies Avicenna's original approach to the issue of individuation, and the structure of the properties that emerge depending on secondary dispositions (*istiʿdād*) will be revealed. In this way, it will be argued that quiddity-in-itself provides the substantial unity that will save the object from being a mass of properties, and that first position and place, and then other sensible properties give the distinctive individual structure on the basis of the idea of *istiʿdād*. In this way, the article will argue that Avicenna develops an integrated ontology of individuation in terms of quiddity and *istiʿdād* theories.

Keywords: Individuation, Specification, Avicenna, Quiddity-in-itself, Secondary dispositions (*istiʿdād*), Properties/aspects, Position (*waḍʿ*), Place (*ayn*).

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Introduction

The problem of individuation, introduced as a response to the question of how the ontological actualization of entities in the sensible world takes place, has two aspects. The first concerns the principle that renders the individuals of a species identical with themselves. The second pertains to what distinguishes the members of a species, which are common in terms of their species-meaning, from one another. Avicenna, through his theory of *mahiyyā* (quiddity), developed an account that addresses both aspects of the problem of individuation.[1] Indeed, according to Avicenna, the self-identity of the individual must be explained through "the presence of quiddity-in-itself as particularized to that individual." The question of how individual distinction takes place can only be addressed after acknowledging the individuality of the subjects themselves; according to Avicenna, unless a ground is established for the individuality of individuals, no set of properties can be said to indicate an individual. Thus, the totality of properties possessed by individuals allows for their distinction from others only after "the presence of quiddity-in-itself as particularized to that individual" is realized in an external subject. This article aims to demonstrate that Avicenna's resolution of the individuation problem is achieved through the resources provided by his theories of quiddity and *istiʿdād*. It further intends to show how his account takes into consideration his distinctions concerning the domain of properties that arise from secondary *istiʿdād*s, prior to (and independently of) position (*waḍʿ*) and place (*ayn*).

1 Although there exists a considerable body of scholarship on the problem of individuation in Aristotle, studies focusing on Avicenna's treatment of the issue are rather scarce. One of the few exceptions is the doctoral dissertation of Rofougaran, who examined Avicenna's and Aquinas' approaches to the problem of individuation and argued that Avicenna maintained an Aristotelian approach to individuation. Nicolas Louis Rofougaran, *Avicenna and Aquinas on Individuation* (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2000). Another recent doctoral dissertation investigates individuation with a focus on material substances and claims that Avicenna developed an account of individuation on the basis of properties carried by material substance. István Lánczky, *Individuation of Material Substances in Avicenna's Philosophy* (PhD diss., Pázmány Péter Catholic University, 2019). Another study directly addressing the question of individuation in Avicenna has been authored by Amir Hossein Pournamdar. In this work, the author argues that the Peripatetic tradition prior to Avicenna failed to put forth a theory of individuation. According to him, Avicenna, instead of employing the concept of *tamayyuz* (distinction), which denotes the particularization of the universal meaning, prefers *tashakhkhuṣ* (individuation) and thereby develops a novel type of individuation theory grounded in sense perception. Amir Hossein Pournamdar, "Avicenna and the Problem of Individuation Valorizing the Individuals," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 35 (2025): 71–106.

In Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophy, the problem of individuation was discussed under the topic of universals, within the framework of universal–particular relations and the natural universal. Alongside this common treatment, beginning in the Late Medieval period and continuing into modern times, the various answers to how the problem of individuation was addressed in Aristotelian philosophy constitute an independent line of inquiry.[2] One reason for the emergence of this independent trajectory is the rise of a new reading of Aristotle in contemporary philosophy, along with the shift in the foundational principles of thought, and the resulting aspiration to interpret, by means of Aristotle's relevant passages, the new contexts that the problem of individuation has assumed.[3]

In the modern tradition of commentary on Aristotle that has developed through the secondary literature, the question has been raised whether individuation originates from matter or from form. In this context, specific passages of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* have been interpreted in order to ground both positions.[4] While most com-

2 Karl Popper (1902–94) argues that the origins of the problem of individuation should not be sought in Aristotle, but rather in earlier thinkers such as Anaximander (d. 546 BCE), Plato (d. 347 BCE), and Euclid (d. 275 BCE). Popper further emphasizes that the principle of individuation, in conceptual terms, first emerged not in Aristotle but in the philosophy of Avicenna. After Avicenna, Popper draws attention to figures of the Latin Middle Ages who dealt with the problem, such as Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), Albertus Magnus (d. 1280), and Duns Scotus (d. 1308). See Karl Popper, "Symposium: The Principle of Individuation," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 27 (1953): 97, fn 1.

3 For a study that delineates the content and boundaries of the problem of individuation in contemporary philosophy, examining it through the sub-problems with which it is associated, see Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Individuality: An Essay on the Foundations of Metaphysics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

4 Aristotelian individuation has been treated within a rather extensive body of literature from early modern interpretations up to contemporary philosophy. Within these two main lines of interpretation—one taking matter, the other form, as the principle that accounts for individuation—the question has been problematized as to how matter or form should be understood in relation to the external object, and the passages thought to substantiate each claim have been analyzed. For other significant studies not mentioned here, see A. C. Lloyd, "Aristotle's Principle of Individuation," *Mind* 79 (1970): 519–29; E. Regis, "Aristotle's 'Principle of Individuation'," *Phronesis* 21 (1976): 157–66; J. A. Smith, "Tode ti in Aristotle," *Classical Review* 35 (1921); Nicholas P. White, "Identity, Modal Individuation, and Matter in Aristotle," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 11 (1986): 475–94; J. E. Whiting, "Form and Individuation in Aristotle," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 3 (1986): 359–77. For further information, see S. Marc Cohen and C. D. C. Reeve, "Aristotle's Metaphysics," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/.

mentators have argued that individuation is secured through matter, a smaller group of scholars has maintained that form is the principle that provides individuation. According to Cohen, in his article "Aristotle and Individuation," the fact that an object can be explained either on the basis of its form or its matter stems from treating the answers to two distinct questions as if they were answers to a single one. The first lies in the question of what the principle of unity is—that which grants an object its individual unity and identity, and makes it possible for us to recognize it as an object in the external world. This principle is the form, which enables us to regard all objects sharing the same species-form as members of that species. On the other hand, the answer to the question of what the principle of individuation is—that which distinguishes a particular object existing externally under a given species from other members of the same species—is matter.[5] Differentiation in the matter constituting given objects separates them from their species-mates, emerging thereby as the sole locus in which a division can be maintained that preserves the boundaries of the species while also allowing for individual difference.

As Cohen has highlighted, the form-centered approach developed regarding how Aristotle explains individuation does not actually explain the principle of individuation;[6] it provides an answer to the question of what it is that gives the object its unity and identity. Therefore, it should not be said that there is a disagreement about whether individuation is to be explained by form or by matter; rather, there is an issue of making clear to which principle the explanation pertains.[7] As Cohen has

5 For passages in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* that have been interpreted as evidence that matter is the principle of individuation, see Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 1016b31–1017a3; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1034a4–9. Cf. Averroes, *Tafsīr mā baʿd al-ṭabīʿa*, trans. Muhittin Macit (Istanbul: Litera Publishing, 2017), II:284–93; Aristutālīs, "Maqālat al-Lām min Kitāb mā baʿd al-ṭabīʿa," trans. Isḥāq ibn Ḥunayn, in *Aristu ʿinda al-ʿArab*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1947), I:1074a31–38, 8–9.

6 For one of the main passages cited as evidence that form is the principle of individuation, see Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1071a20–30.

7 S. Marc Cohen, "Aristotle and Individuation," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. X (1984), 42. In this debate, Cohen draws attention to Łukasiewicz (1878–1956) and Anscombe (1919–2001) as representatives of the approaches that accept, respectively, the form- and the matter-based views of individuation. In their discussion of Aristotle's account of individuation, Łukasiewicz argued that form is the principle of individuation, whereas Anscombe maintained that it is matter that provides individuation. For the details of this debate, see Jan Łukasiewicz and Elizabeth Anscombe, "Symposium: The Principle of Individuation," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 27 (1953): 74–7; 89–96.

highlighted, the responses arguing that matter is the principle of individuation have gained prominence, taking their point of departure from Aristotle's identification of matter as the basis from which multiplicity arises. However, especially given the passages in the *Metaphysics* that say that multiplicity and individuals differentiate by having different subjects, the responses arguing that matter is the principle of individuation cannot answer the question of what makes Socrates Socrates and Callias Callias—that is, what makes them identical with themselves. In such a case, identity, which forms one of the two facets of individuation and is the ground of distinction, is excluded from the problem of individuation.[8]

Based on all these problems, objections have been raised to the effect that Aristotle's philosophy does not in fact aim at answering the issue of individuation by considering matter and form, and thus that the relevant passages of the *Metaphysics* do not carry sufficient evidential weight for the interpretations made in that direction.[9]

A large proportion of the Neoplatonic commentators' analyses concerning individuation is constructed upon the consequences of this ontology rather than on an ontological discussion.[10] Therefore, one does not encounter here a direct line of

8 According to David Ross, one of the contemporary commentators who accepts that matter is the principle of individuation in Aristotle, the philosopher's statements that matter is the principle of individuation are rather obscure and require a detailed examination of the status of matter in relation to the composite. For Ross, Aristotle's reason for regarding matter as the principle of individuation lies in the acceptance that the individuals of the lowest species are primary and fundamental substances—at least when the context in the *Metaphysics* concerning the issue of priority and posteriority among substances is taken into account. Since the commonality of the individuals belonging to the lowest species lies in form, the principle that provides their distinction will be their matter. Thus Ross's emphasis is that matter should be understood as the matter of the composite, through an actually realized object. From this point, Ross interprets Aristotle in a quite Avicennian manner, though without naming him. According to him, although Callias and Socrates are the same with respect to form, on account of the difference in their matters, the humanity-form realized in them must be different from one another. In this case, Ross's account of matter as the principle of individuation differs from the views that take bare matter alone as the principle of individuation without considering its union with form. What emerges here is the conclusion that both the potential provided by matter and the form that comes to it must be taken into consideration, such that matter-in-the-composite and form-in-the-composite together constitute the principle of individuation. Ross continues by stating that it is difficult to think that Aristotle himself considered the issue in this way and thought through all these details within his own system. David Ross, *Aristotle* (London, New York: Roudledge, 1996), 175–7.

9 Mary Louise Gill, "Individuals and Individuation in Aristotle," in *Unity, Identity, and Explanation in Aristotle's Metaphysics*, ed. T. Scaltsas, D. Charles, and M. L. Gill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 59.

10 Richard Sorabji, "Introduction," in *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200–600 AD* (*Logic and Metaphysics*) (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2012), 26–7.

discussion inherited from Aristotle regarding individuation. Yet it must be acknowledged that, especially with Porphyry's *Isagoge*, individuation is addressed around the discussions related to the natural universal. Porphyry defines individuals as "the combination of properties that will never be the same in another being" (*ex idiotētôn sunestêken hekaston*).[11] According to him, what secures individuality is this unique combination of properties. Even though an effort is made to reconcile Porphyry's Platonic view—that an individual is nothing more than the sum total of its properties—with the Aristotelian doctrine that matter is a substance that bears properties, no realistic account of individuation emerges.[12] Porphyry's philosophy lacks the conceptual and theoretical framework needed to articulate the reality of the individual unity that is peculiar to each individual and not reducible to sense perception.[13]

Until Avicenna, the issue of individuation appears to have been dealt with within the problem of universals, in the context of the structure of the natural universal. On the other hand, the Neoplatonic commentators have debated individuation through more secondary questions, such as the continuity of human individuals in this world, how individuals will continue in the life after death, and whether experience can give the meaning of individuation. For a comprehensive explanation that provides the identity and differentiation constituting the two facets of the problem of individuation as an independent ontological discussion, it is necessary to analyse the explanation Avicenna offers within his philosophy by means of the possibilities afforded by his theories of quiddity and *isti'dād*.[14]

11 Porphyry, "Isagoge," trans. Osman bin Dımeşki, in *Mantıku Aristo* III, ed. Abdurrahman Bedevî (Kuwait: Wekalatü'lMatbuat, 1980), 7, 16–24.

12 Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200-600* (*Logic and Metaphysics*), 165.

13 Porphyry's approach, which sees individuation as the sum of properties, continued to be a frequently resorted-to explanation for accounting for individuation after him. The medieval commentators called this view—which was defended by some commentators including Boethius after Porphyry—the "old view" (*antiqua opinio*). The approach of explaining individuation via accidents was subjected to serious criticisms particularly from the second half of the twelfth century onwards. Especially with the criticisms of Peter Abelard (d. 1142), it became an approach with which none of the philosophers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries wished to be associated. There are also approaches that try to protect themselves from these criticisms by separating the quantitative properties—dependent on the three dimensions that the individual possesses and the space it occupies—from the other accidents. See Martin Mickave, "On the Latin Reception of Avicenna's Theory of Individuation," in *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics*, ed. Dag Nikolaus Hasse and Amos Bertolacci (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 339–40.

14 For the relevant discussions, see Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5.7 [18] 1 (1–7), trans. Richard Sorabji, in *The*

The Nature of Individuation in Avicenna: What Does It Mean for the Species-Meaning to Actualize in Individuals?

Within the Peripatetic scientific framework, Avicenna holds that the species-meaning manifests externally upon the individuals of the species, and each member of the species shares in carrying this meaning. Avicenna expresses individuation through the concept of *tashakhkhuṣ* (individuation). In explaining how *individuation* is realized, he employs the concepts of *takhaṣṣuṣ* (t-kh-ṣ) and *taḥṣīṣ*. What makes possible an individual's particularization is that one or more of the universal attributes (*ṣifāt*) form a specialized whole upon a particular individual.[15] Avicenna provides the definitions and detailed discussions of the concepts *tashakhkhuṣ* and *takhaṣṣuṣ* in the *Taʿlīqāt*. In the passages that follow, we find a clear account of both concepts' definitions and how they differ:

> Being individuated (*al-muṭashakhkhiṣ*) means there is no counterpart. Man, with respect to being human, is found with his like; but with respect to being individuated he cannot be. Thus, Amr cannot be individuated by the position (*waḍʿ*) and place (*ayn*) by which Zayd is individuated.
>
> The **specialized** (*al-mukhaṣṣiṣ*) means the determination of a thing's existence and its separation from its like. [In this sense] *al-mukhaṣṣiṣ* means the existence of a thing. The individuated (*al-mushakhkhiṣ*) means to be, as an individual, actually constitutive (*takwīm*) and created (*takwīn*).
>
> Individuation (*al-tashakhkhus*) is individuated meanings that do not share with another. These meanings are position (*waḍʿ*), place (*ʿayn*), and time. In the other attributes and concomitants there is sharing—like blackness and whiteness.[16]

Avicenna, in each of the three *Taʿlīqāt* that he wrote in succession, makes a precise distinction between specialization and individuation. According to him, specializa-

Philosophy of the Commentators (Logic and Metaphysics), 373; cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. Lyord P. Gerson et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 606, 5.7 [18] 1 (1–7); Proclus, *In Parmenides*, 824,12–825,9, trans. Glenn Morrow and John Dillon, in *The Philosophy of the Commentators AD* (Logic and Metaphysics), 366–7; Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Alcibiades*, citing Olympiodorus, 210, 4–16, 27, quoted in *Olympiodorus, Life of Plato and on Plato first Alcibiades 1–9*, trans. Michael Griffin (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 40–1; Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Alcibiades*, 204, 3–11; 210, 5, cited in *Olympiodorus, Life of Plato and on Plato first Alcibiades 1–9*, 41.

15 Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, ed. Seyyid Hüseyin Musaviyan (Tehran: Institute for Research in Wisdom and Philosophy of Iran, 1391), 199.

16 Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [529], [530], [531]; see also Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [203].

tion (*takhaṣṣuṣ*) is used in both species and individual determination.[17] As will be seen in the second *Taʿlīq*, "the specialized" means the separation of a thing from others; the individuated (*al-mushakhkhiṣ*) means, as an individual, to be actually present externally. The meanings that make an individual's individuation possible are the position (*waḍʿ*), place (*ʿayn*), and time it possesses. These properties are unique in the sense that they cannot be transferred to another member of the species. Among the properties, position stands out by virtue of providing specialization and individuation.[18]

In another *Taʿlīqāt* passage, Avicenna emphatically shows why he places position ahead of place and time. Things or properties ascribed to an object are divided into intelligible and sensible relations. Intelligible relations are meanings that bear commonality. The sensible relation, although it is not itself sensed, is a state of being located in a space (*taḥayyuziyya*) by virtue of appearing in the sensible. "Spacetional" (*taḥayyūz*) is either spatial (*makānīyya*) or positional (*waḍʿīyya*).[19] In spatiality there is commonality; one place does not separate from another by being place. For differentiation to occur, another meaning must be added to place, and that is position (*waḍʿ*). This situation is also interpreted by Avicenna as position individualizing both time and place. According to him, time differs according to the position of a particular sphere to which it is subject. The principle of the individuation of place is likewise position, for place is distinguished from another place by a positionality to which presence is ascribed.[20] Position, however, is differentiated from another position not by a meaning outside itself but essentially. In order for this meaning individuated by positionality to be complete, many accidents must be added to a single positionality. In this case, even though there is no temporal differentiation, because individuation has been completed the individual meaning comes to be.[21]

17 Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [236]. Avicenna states that, among many specializing principles, the ultimate principle is the voluntary motion of the spheres. See also Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [524], [573].

18 Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [727]. For an exposition of individuation in terms of the material form and accident being "present in a subject," individuation by itself without being in a subject, or individuation by its own form—as in the case of celestial bodies whose species is unique to each individual—see Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [270].

19 Avicenna's explanations in the *Mubahasat* that the distinction between individuals is achieved not by any attribute assignable to them but only by being located in a place—and that this occurs through the relation of Spacetional (*tahayyūz*)—are discussed in Avicenna, *al-Mubāḥathāt*, ed. Muhsin Bidafer (Tehran: Institute for Research in Hikmat and Philosophy of Iran, 1396), 493–4, 1293–1301.

20 Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [791].

21 Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [376]. Although Avicenna distinguishes position (*waḍʿ*) as the principle that imparts individuation in itself, he sometimes continues to mention position and place together.

In some passages, Avicenna also puts time alongside position and, proceeding from the changeability of position, asks the question of how the individuation meaning "there" will continue or whether it will not continue and instead be annulled, yet he does not answer it.[22] This is the question asked in the *Taʿlīqāt* passage whose answer will be taken up in detail below in relation to Avicenna's view of quiddity-in-itself. In a *Mubāḥathāt* passage where Avicenna asks how the individuation meaning comes about, he says—bringing position to mind—that a necessary accident does not itself give the individuation meaning; rather, because of its being present externally, it is the quiddity and the necessarily attaching concomitants (*lāhiqun lāzimun*) that give the individuation meaning.[23] This answer shows first that the external actualization of quiddity must, essentially, precede the initial necessary position. As a matter of fact, the cause of the individuation meaning in individuals is the individual actualization found in them, and what makes that possible is that the external presence of the quiddity is specific to that individual.[24]

Knowledge concerning the recognition and differentiation of individuals that exist externally is obtained by way of sensation. How the species-meaning's actualization through the individual becomes a subject of sensation, and the nature of the differentiation to be performed together with sensation, must also be examined.[25] Avicenna handles this issue quite extensively in both the metaphysics and physics sections. He emphasizes that the ultimate thing aimed at in becoming in nature is the species-meaning itself, at which the individuals are indirectly aimed insofar as they carry this species-meaning. Indeed, according to him, the primordial and true

See Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [524], [525]. For the distinction between accidents such as blackness and whiteness—considered "states" of a body—and the "relation" of being in time, place, and position to the body, see Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [466]. The same emphasis can also be seen in the assertion that human individuals are individuated through relations; see *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [783]. For an explanation that the selfidentity of one individual among the members of a species is secured by a single position attached to him at a single moment after his external quiddity, and by the properties attached relative to that position, see Avicenna, *al-Mubāḥathāt*, 261, 575–7.

22 Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [788], [790].

23 Avicenna, *al-Mubāḥathāt*, 262, 581–3.

24 Avicenna, *al-Mubāḥathāt*, 376, 966–7.

25 For a discussion of the stages by which the transition from particulars to universals—from the particular to the general—occurs, and of the human cognitive faculties that prepare one to reach the universal, see Ömer Türker, *İbn Sînâ Felsefesinde Metafizik Bilginin İmkânı Sorunu* (Istanbul: ISAM Publications, 2010), 157–73.

end in becoming is not the individuals themselves—because of their changes and discontinuity—but the actualization of the universal nature of the species they bear. How should we understand the fact that individuals continually come into being and perish, and that, alongside the discontinuity of a particular individual, the succession of individuals creates a continuity and thus ensures the species' own unbroken continuity? In such an explanation, how should the species-meaning in the individual and the species itself in terms of its quiddity be handled?

Avicenna seeks the answers to these questions in the passage below:

> If we accept that the purpose is the infinity of individuals, the infinity of persons will be other than the meaning of each person. The reason that persons go on one after another to infinity is not that one infinity follows another. Therefore in reality the end is present here. This end is the existence of an indeterminate individual (*shaḫṣ muntašir*) or the infinity of persons. The person who leads to another person, to the third, to the fourth, is not the aim of the universal nature (*al-ṭabīʿah al-kulliyyah*), but of the particular nature (*al-ṭabīʿah al-juzʾiyyah*). When [a particular person] is the end of the particular nature, [any] other [person] after him cannot be the end and purpose of that particular nature.[26]

Avicenna states in this passage that one cannot speak of an "infinity" in the sense of *each individual qua that very individual*. Independent particulars, taken as such, do not signify an infinity as units in themselves. The individuals of a perishable species, however, carry within the very continuity and flux of generation and corruption a kind of extension of becoming that spreads across the whole process of generation—yet without having any determination in itself (*al-shakhs al-muntasir*, the indeterminate individual). The species-meaning in each particular, by contrast, is proper only to that individual inasmuch as the former exists within the latter. Avicenna described the existence of the universal nature in the individual as a "particular nature," as the species-meaning in the individual, *insofar as it is in that individual*, entails no commonality. Hence, Avicenna emphasizes that although the species-meaning transmitted from one individual to another is in itself common when the continuity of generation is considered, it is not common inasmuch as it exists in the individual.[27]

26 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifāʾ/Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. G. Qanawātī and S. Zāyed, (Cairo, 1960), 290–1, 10–3.

27 What makes it possible to understand the discontinuity that arises in the process of generation and corruption as a continuity is the state of succession. Avicenna states that, in the process where one individual of a species perishes and another comes into being, what remains constant amid the change is the continuity of the species-meaning constituted by the succession of individuals.

On the question of what is intended in nature, Avicenna problematizes why the individual as an individual cannot be final cause (*ghāya*) in nature. According to him, what is intended in nature is neither body as such nor living being as such. Rather, what is primarily intended and to be known in nature are the natural forms of species insofar as they become actualized externally as particulars (*fa-inna'l-maqṣūda fi'l-ṭabīʿati laysa an-yūjada ḥaywānun muṭlaqan wa-lā jismun muṭlaqan, bal an-tūjada ṭabāʾiʿu'l-nawʿiyyāti, wa'l-ṭabīʿatu'l-nawʿiyyatu idhā wujidat fi'l-aʿyāni kāna shakhsan mā*). Thus, final cause is the existence of the species-natures in the external world as particulars. Yet Avicenna stresses that individuals, *al-shakhs al-ʿayn* ("the determinate individual"), cannot be the final cause intended by nature; rather, such an end can only be the particular nature (*al-ṭabīʿa al-juzʾiyya*) as specified in "this individual" (*hādhā al-shakhs*). In terms of the integrity of nature, this formulation is intelligible. For if the individuals of the species were intended in nature *insofar as they are that very individual*, then the disappearance of that individual in the process of generation and corruption would entail a deficiency in the order of beings. In order to prevent such deficiency, what is intended through the existence of the individual must be the species-nature. Even though the species-nature in the external world does not actualize itself *qua itself*, it is nevertheless fully realized and universal final cause. Consequently, in respect to its existence in the external world, it is what is best known.[28]

Avicenna states that, in terms of as their external existence and individuation (*taʿayyun*), there is no intelligible principle that would determine the spatial priority or posteriority of individuals. Therefore, the fact that the external existence of individuals—as "this individual"—cannot be rationally delimited by a spatial determination that would secure their positional location and differentiation from other individuals shows that such differentiation is attained only through the perception of the soul's internal and external faculties. For precisely this reason, Avicenna claims that individuals are better known to us than universals (*fa-ḥīnaʾidhin takūnu*

Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, ed. Mujtabā al-Zarīʿ (Qom: Muʾassasat Bustān al-Kitāb, 2013), 300. In *al-Mubāḥathāt*, Avicenna addresses the question of how individual integrity is preserved despite changes occurring in the temperament (*mizāj*), and he answers that this is through the persistence of the individual's substantial unity, which can only be known by essential self-awareness (*al-shuʿūr al-dhātī*). Avicenna, *al-Mubāḥathāt*, 213–14.

28 Avicenna, *The Physics of The Healing*, trans. and ed. Jon McGinnis (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2009), 5–7.

al-shakhṣiyyātu aʿrafu ʿindanā mina'l-kulliyyāti). Once individuals are represented in the internal faculty of sense-perception (*al-quwwa al-ḥāssa*), the intellect abstracts the commonalities and differences between them and thereby brings forth their general, shared species-natures.[29] In Avicenna's account, then, the only way individuals can be distinguished is through their being sensibly perceived.[30]

Avicenna addresses the issues concerning how an individual should be named when no determination proper to it can be identified—due to the insufficiency of sense-perception—and how general meanings are predicated of the individual in *al-Samāʾ al-ṭabīʿī* (*De Caelo*). When the perceptions of the internal and external faculties are taken into account, a process of apprehension proceeds from the general to the particular. Yet, as we emphasized above, this apprehension is only sensory and thus does not provide an intellectual grasp of individuation, which is the final point of specification. Avicenna explains this process of apprehension from the general to the particular as follows:

> Although in perceiving particulars, sensation and imagination initiate the most important part of conceptualizing an individual, it is more like the common notion until they reach the conceptualization of the individual that is absolute in every respect. An illustration of how this is would be that "body" is a common notion to which it belongs, qua body, to be individualized and thus become this or that body. Similarly, "animal" is a common notion, but more particular than "body," and it belongs to it, qua animal, to be individualized and thus become this or that animal. "Man" is also a common notion that is more particular than "animal," and it belongs to it, qua man, to be individualized and thus become this or that man. Now, if we relate these orderings to the power of perception and observe therein two kinds of order, we find that what is closer to and more like the common thing is better known.[31]

General meanings are here ordered hierarchically, beginning from the highest genus and descending through subordinate genera and species. Sense-perception first apprehends the object in terms of its highest genus, namely its corporeality (*jis-*

29 Avicenna, *The Physics of The Healing,* 6–7.

30 Avicenna states quite explicitly in *al-Taʿlīqāt* that the intelligible meaning in the particular individual coincides with its sensible form: "Every particular individual is intelligible in correspondence with its being perceptible (*wa-li-kulli shakhsin juzʾiyyin maʿqūlun muṭābiqun li-maḥsūsihī*)." Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [10].

31 Avicenna, *The Physics of The Healing,* 7–8. For Avicenna's statement that particulars cannot be known through their causes, reasons, and necessities, see Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [637].

miyya). Then, as a lower genus, its being alive is apprehended, and thereafter comes humanity as a more specific general meaning in comparison to the other two. For this reason, Avicenna remarks that when there is merely an apprehension that "there is some object" before one, what is noticed is simply that it is a body. With a more detailed perception, it is apprehended whether that body is living or not. And when perception becomes more particularized, it is grasped whether the living being is a human or some other species of animal.

The initial perception of an object, in which its sheer corporeality is apprehended, resembles the way in which, at the level of intelligible meaning, the universal is more knowable than the particular in the universal–particular relation. Thus, the primary apprehension that "there is some individual there" does not pertain to the individual in terms of its species-specific or individuated meaning, but rather in terms of its most general meaning, namely corporeality. Avicenna characterizes this state, in which individuality is apprehended only as the recognition of the most general meaning, by means of the notion of the *al-fard al-muntašir* ("the indeterminate individual"). This notion is employed to indicate the apprehension of body as the most general through an indefinite individual. Avicenna further maintains that, when considered temporally, the imaginative faculty (*al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*) can derive from sense-perception an apprehension of the individual of the species without delimiting its specific features. For example, the first form represented in the imaginative faculty (*al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*) of an infant is the form of an indefinite male or female individual, one that does not allow the distinction between his father and a man who is not his father, or between his mother and a woman who is not his mother. Subsequently, a differentiation takes place, and the mother and father become distinguished from other men and women inasmuch as they are *that mother* and *that father*. Gradually, other individuals also begin to be differentiated in the infant's imagination. The image impressed in the child's mind is thus the absolute human individual without specification, and insofar as it remains undetermined, it is designated as the "indeterminate individual" (*al-shakhs al-muntašir*).

After explaining how this perception occurs, and that all general meanings belonging to different genera can be called "indeterminate individual" only by virtue of the sharing of a name (*ishtirāk al-ism*), Avicenna then proceeds to address how the indeterminate individual differs from the specified individual:

> ...When vague individual is said of this [indistinct likeness] and of an individual imprinted upon sensation from a distance (assuming the impression is that it is a body without perceiving whether it is animal or human), then the expression "vague individual" is applied equivocally to them. 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; and the same holds for a certain man and woman. It is as though the sense of "individual," while not being 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 when it is defined in this way, since the definition of individuality is attributed to the definition of the specific nature. In short, this is an indeterminate individual. In [the second] case, however, it is this determinate corporeal individual. It cannot be other than it is, save that, owing to the mind's uncertainty, either the account of being animate or inanimate can be attributed to it in thought, not because the thing in itself can be such—that is, such that any one of the accounts could be attributed indiscriminately to that corporeality. So the vague individual in [the first] case can be thought to be any existing individual of that genus or the one species. In [the second]case, however, it cannot be thought to be just any individual of that species, but can only be this single, determinate one. Be that as it may, the mind can still be susceptible to uncertainty, making it possible that, relative to [the mind, the individual] is designated, for example, either by determinately being animate to the exclusion of being inanimate ordeterminately being in animate to the exclusion of being animate, even after it is judged that in itself it cannot be both things but is determinately one or the other of them.[32]

In this passage, Avicenna considers the indeterminate individual (*al-fard al-muntašir*) and the specified, actualized individual from two perspectives: their existence in the external world and in the mind. The indeterminate individual does not differ with respect to its external or mental existence. An individual to which no specific genus or species-meaning is ascribed is called an indeterminate individual. In itself, it is one, and thus does not contain multiplicity, yet due to its indeterminacy it carries a universal meaning whose precise content cannot be identified. Since it is not subject to detailed apprehension, the relation of generality and specificity among universal meanings cannot be determined, and for this reason it is designated as "indeterminate." Precisely because of this indeterminacy, its perception coincides directly

32 Avicenna, *The Physics of The Healing*, 9. For Avicenna's explanation of the *al-fard al-muntašir* (the indeterminate individual), see Avicenna, *al-Shifā'/al-Burhān*, ed. E. A. 'Afifī (Cairo, 1956), 332.

with its sensible representation. The gradation between the universal meanings that the individual may potentially embody is not yet known.

While the indeterminate individual (*al-fard al-muntašir*) is necessarily conceived of in relation to one of the general meanings, it is not apprehended in relation to a specified individual but through its own sensible perception. In its mental existence, for instance, one may think of the human being as "body" or as "living." Yet once the individual is apprehended as specified, it is no longer possible to ascribe to it separately both its being a body and its being alive. Avicenna emphasizes that, without taking into account the progression in the mind from the general to the particular, one may move among these general meanings for the human being, but this does not amount to attributing body, living, and specieshood to the individual all on the same level, as is the case with the indeterminate individual. Just as in the perception of the infant, after it is first apprehended that "there is some human individual," the differentiation of that human as mother or father arises only at the level of sensory detail. The further question of how it becomes possible to recognize *that mother* as *that very mother* goes beyond sensory perception, as sense-perception and the image it produces in the mind do not yield an apprehension of the quiddity of the individual as being "this very individual."

In Avicenna's account, the difference between the indeterminate individual (*al-fard al-muntašir*) and the specified individual pertains to the image formed in the mind through the imaginative faculty (*al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*) after sense-perception. The questions of how differentiation proper to the individual takes place, how the composite of matter and form is distinguished from all else, and whether the accidental properties that set that individual apart from others provide individuation in themselves, will be discussed under the following headings in the context of the universal–particular relation and the ontological status of quiddity.

Dispositional (Istiʿdādī) Properties and the Theory of Quiddity in the Context of the Ontology of Individuation

One of the two aspects of individuation is the question of how the individuals of a species are differentiated from one another. This issue is treated in the context of the nature, types, and predication of accidents (*aʿrāḍ*) to the external individual. The fundamental question here is: which kinds of properties confer species-commonality,

and which kinds of properties provide individual distinctness? It is also necessary to investigate whether there is any difference when the properties that establish species-commonality inhere in the matter of the object. In Avicenna's theory, every kind of property that emerges in the object depends on primary and secondary dispositions (*isti'dādāt*).[33] I designate as "primary dispositions" the set of material preparations prior to the natural object's coming-to-be. "Secondary dispositions," by contrast, refer to the features manifested after the natural object's actualization in the external world, as well as to the preparations made for the occurrence of actions.[34] These secondary dispositions are divided into natural and volitional (originating from will and choice).

Secondary dispositions of natural origin are employed with respect to every kind of sensible quality exhibited by the elements, minerals, and plants, as well as the changes that pertain to them. Sensible qualities arise as an inseparable accident (*lāzim*) of the form that is possessed. They are therefore explained indirectly through the primary disposition, which is the preparation for receiving that form. While sensible qualities, insofar as they manifest externally, fall under the category of secondary natural dispositions, their being inseparable accidents of the form links them back to the primary disposition, understood as the preparation for that form prior to its actualization. In this way, secondary dispositions emerge on the basis of the ground made possible by the primary dispositions.

The changes pertaining to secondary dispositions of natural origin are accounted for in terms of qualitative alterations in natural objects. For fire to heat water through the quality of heat that it possesses, there must exist in the water a complete disposition (*isti'dād*) for heating. Since there is no disposition that necessitates permanence, once the contact of fire with water ceases, the quality of heat in the heated water vanishes, and the water returns to the quality of coldness that is the inseparable accident of its formal nature. Thus, the changes in natural objects are explained within the framework of secondary dispositions.

33 For the general framework of Avicenna's theory of natural dispositions (*isti'dādāt ṭabī'iyya*) and the transformation it effected within the ancient and Hellenistic philosophical tradition, see İbrahim Halil Üçer, "Aristotle's Dunamis Transformed: On Avicenna's Conception of Natural Isti'dad and Tahayyu," *Nazariyat: Journal for the History of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences* 2, no. 3 (November 2015): 37–76.

34 Avicenna states that what makes possible both specific and individual differentiation is the variation of disposition (*isti'dād*) and potentiality (*imkān*) among species and individuals, encompassing both senses. Avicenna, *al-Ta'līqāt*, [5].

The explanation of the qualities that arise as inseparable accidents of the forms of animals and humans is also made with reference to primary dispositions. The disposition that comes into being in animals through will, in relation to the new states brought about by voluntary movement, falls under volitional dispositions. For instance, the disposition arising in a lion to pursue a specific prey in proportion to its preparedness and will for hunting should be considered within the scope of secondary dispositions. Likewise, the qualities manifested in animals that are trainable can be understood in this framework. A dog, for example, through training, acquires the skill to hunt or to perform search-and-rescue tasks. The dispositions that arise in humans through will, and especially through deliberate choice (*ikhtiyār*), provide the preparedness for the qualities that emerge in the soul. In this context, human actions are directed toward the acquisition of states and habits (*aḥwāl wa-malākāt*) pertaining to work, profession, ethics, and so forth. Every kind of quality that emerges in the human being comes about through secondary dispositions arising from volitional and deliberate actions. Avicenna's emphasis on a preparatory ground, through *istiʿdād* (disposition), that precedes every kind of "act" (*fiʿl*)—both in the coming-to-be of species and in the differentiation of individuals—indicates that he offers a comprehensive account of the actualization of both species and individuals through disposition. It is particularly significant that, in both cases, the act results from preparation and comes "from an external source of action."[35]

Avicenna states that the determination of the totality of properties is not sufficient to allow for recognizing an individual and pointing to it. This admission enables him to provide an account of individuation by taking into consideration one of the foundational concepts in his philosophy, namely quiddity (*māhiyya*). In the problem of individuation, quiddity is the fundamental ground that determines Avicenna's answer and, in itself, makes it possible for the domain of properties to allow for individual differentiation. Avicenna examines the quiddities of things from three perspectives: "in itself" (*fī nafsihā*), "in external existence" (*fī'l-khārij*), and "in the mind" (*fī'l-dhihn*). He links the quiddity that is in external and mental existence to the "quiddity-in-itself" (*al-māhiyya bi-nafsihā*), which cannot be ascribed to any mode of existence. With this doctrine of quiddity-in-itself, Avicenna establishes a common ontological ground that allows the species-form existing in external particulars to be "unique inasmuch as it is

35 Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, [37].

in that individual" and to attain singularity as a whole through the properties (*aʿrāḍ*) that accrue to it by virtue of its form or matter.[36]

Avicenna situates the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accident within a new framework, namely that of quiddity-in-itself (*al-māhiyya min ḥaythu hiya*) and the accidents that accrue to that quiddity by virtue of its existence in the external world and in the mind.[37] In this way, the meaning of both universal and particular substances is unified in the commonality of quiddity, while the differences related to that meaning are ascribed to its existence externally and mentally. The quiddity-in-itself / pure quiddity (*al-māhiyya min ḥaythu hiya*) signifies a "plane of selfhood" in which the accidents that pertain to its being in external existence or in the mind are not taken into account.[38] Insofar as quiddity exists externally, it is

36 For an explanation of how this common ground is established, see Ömer Türker, "Being and Meaning: Fakhr al-Dın al-Razı and His Followers on the Identity of Knowledge and the Known," *Nazariyat: Journal for the History of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences* 1, no. 1 (November 2014): 42–6.

37 Avicenna himself draws attention to this new framework and, after presenting his theory of quiddity in itself, shaped within the context of this doctrine rather than following the earlier classifications of universal and particular terms in the preceding literature, states that he will examine the predication of the universal of the particular accordingly. Avicenna, *al-Madkhal* (*Introduction to Logic*), trans. Ömer Türker (Istanbul: Litera Publishing, 2006), 21, 22–4. In her detailed study of the *Madkhal*, Silvia di Vincenzo argues that in this text Avicenna disengages logic from ontology and establishes the former as an independent science. Yet Avicenna's reconsideration of the relation between the universal and the particular on the basis of one of the fundamental doctrines of his ontology, the theory of quiddity in itself, demonstrates that he chose precisely the opposite direction. For di Vincenzo's approach, see Silvia di Vincenzo, *Isagoge, The Healing, Logic: Isagoge* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), LXVII. For a descriptive study of Avicenna's treatment of universals in the *Madkhal*, see Michael Marmura, "Avicenna's Chapter on Universals in the Isagoge of his *Shifāʾ*," in *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge. Studies in Honour of W. M. Watt*, ed. A. T. Welch and P. Cachia (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979), 34–56.

38 Avicenna's doctrine of quiddity in itself should be regarded as a significant approach in the question of the priority or posteriority of universals, a major aporia discussed within the philosophical traditions since Aristotle, one that would profoundly influence and transform subsequent thought. The limited number of studies on Avicenna's theory of universals has shown that his view of quiddity in itself plays a crucial role both in determining the priority or posteriority among universals themselves and in establishing the order of priority between universal and particular substances. At the center of this issue, Benevich demonstrates, in a comparison with Alexander of Aphrodisias and Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī (d. 975), that Avicenna's solution to these problems cannot, as is sometimes suggested in contemporary scholarship, be subsumed under the Alexandrian account of universals. Rather, he introduces a new approach in which quiddity in itself comes into play through the distinction between existence and quiddity. According to Benevich, if, as in Alexander and Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, universal natures are explained through matter, then universals precede particulars; but if, as in Avicenna, they are explained through generic meanings, then universals are posterior to particu-

accompanied by accidents peculiar to its existence in the external world. These accidents accrue to it both in respect of its matter and in respect of its form. Those that pertain to an externally existing object by virtue of its form are, in themselves, the same, yet differ inasmuch as they are present in individual instances; however, trac-

lars. A universal nature, in this sense, cannot exist independently in the external world; it can only exist in a particular of the species. Benevich notes that with this interpretation Avicenna develops an alternative to the principle of the "identity of indiscernibles," which had been formulated as a paradox concerning how two externally identical objects could be distinguished from one another. For Avicenna, external particulars are unique by virtue of the quiddity present in them. According to Benevich, the reason Avicenna does not, as in Alexander and Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, accept the priority of universal natures is that to admit the primacy of universals in external existence would amount to acknowledging the existence of Platonic Ideas as universal substances—a thesis Avicenna firmly rejects. Such an existence, from the standpoint of the Avicennian system, entails not only numerous difficulties but also results in the identity of indiscernibles, and thus fails to provide an explanation that would allow for hypothetical plurality. Fedor Benevich, "The Priority of Natures against the Identity of Indiscernibles: Alexander of Aphrodisias, Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, and Avicenna on Genus as Matter," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 57, no. 2 (2019): 205–34. Akkanat, on the other hand, argues that Avicenna, by distinguishing between genus and matter on the basis of his doctrine of quiddity in itself, develops a solution to the problem of the priority and posteriority of universals, but that in his final analysis he follows Alexander in holding that universals are posterior. Hasan Akkanat, "Aleksander'den İbn Sînâ'ya İntikal Eden Büyük Problem: Tümellerin Önceliği-Sonralığı," *İslâmî Araştırmalar* 31, no. 2 (2020): 298–314. For a comparative study of Avicenna's theory of universals, interpreted through his approach to quiddity, with Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's theory of universals, see İbrahim Halil Üçer, "The Transformation of Realism: On the Ontology of Universals in Avicennian Philosophy and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Theory of Mental Exemplars," *Nazariyat: Journal for the History of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences* 6, no. 2 (2020): 23–68. Damien Janos's *Avicenna on the Ontology of Pure Quiddity* examines pure quiddity in Avicenna's philosophy in relation to associated issues. The work deals in detail with such questions as the relation of pure quiddity to quiddity in external and mental existence, and whether pure quiddities exist in God's knowledge. Yet the author's assumptions regarding pure quiddity, which pervade the entire book, appear inconsistent with the fundamental principles of Avicennian philosophy, particularly when Avicenna's doctrine of quiddity is taken into account. For Janos claims that, just as quiddity in external and mental existence has an ontological status, so too does quiddity-in-itself/pure quiddity. He argues that pure quiddity has its own "specific existence" (*al-wujūd al-khāṣṣ*) and that it possesses a mode of being distinct from the existence (*al-wujūd al-muḥaṣṣal*) of quiddity as it is instantiated externally and mentally. He further maintains that these special existences of pure quiddities are found in the Divine Intellect (471–2, 487–8, 500–1). This claim, however, not only conflicts with Avicenna's rejection of universals as separately existing entities and of Platonic Ideas, but also contradicts the doctrine of God's absolute unity, which leaves no room for the existence of quiddities in God. For Avicenna, it cannot be maintained, as in Neoplatonism, that forms or quiddities subsist in separate intellects. In this sense, attributing an ontological status to Avicenna's pure quiddities amounts to a fundamental misunderstanding of his doctrine of quiddity. Damien Janos, *Avicenna on the Ontology of Pure Quiddity* (Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter, 2020). For a review of this work, see Jari Kaukua, "Damien Janos. Avicenna on the Ontology of Pure Quiddity," *Nazariyat: Journal for the History of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2022): 155–69.

ing this difference is not always easy. For example, the property (*ḫāṣṣa*) of laughter, which pertains to the human in virtue of the form of humanity, is common to every individual of the species, yet it becomes differentiated insofar as it is actualized in the matter of each individual.[39] Insofar as quiddity exists in the mind, however, it is accompanied by accidents different from those of its existence in the external world.

Insofar as quiddity exists in the mind, it is accompanied by accidents such as imposition (*waḍʿ*), predication (*ḥaml*), universality (*kullī*) and particularity (*juzʾī*) in predication, as well as essential and accidental predication.[40] Avicenna examines what quiddity-in-itself is, and how the notion of universality is not included in its definition, by taking as an example the quiddity of "horse." He discusses how it is distinguished from its existence in the mind and in the external world in the *Ilāhiyyāt* as follows:

> ...The definition of horseness is not the definition of universality, and universality does not enter into the definition of horseness. For horseness has a definition that does not require universality, though universality is attached to it. For in itself it is only horseness. Insofar as it is merely horseness, it is neither one nor many, neither existent in the external world nor existent in the soul, nor existent in either of them potentially or actually. Rather, unity is an attribute that attaches to horseness, and through this attribute horseness becomes one. Likewise, together with this attribute, horseness has many other attributes, which pertain to it [in its existence in the external world]. In this case, horseness is general (*ʿāmm*) insofar as, by its definition, it coincides with many things. And horseness, when taken together with the properties and accidents (*khaṣāʾiṣ wa-aʿrāḍ*) to which it is referred, is particular (*khāṣṣ*). Therefore, in itself it is only horseness."[41]

In this passage, while examining the relation between universality and the quiddity of "horseness," Avicenna emphasizes that universality attaches to its definition insofar as it exists in the mind, and in this sense constitutes a necessary attribute of the quiddity considered in its mental existence. To clarify how this relation is to be understood, Avicenna distinguishes the existence of quiddity in the external world and in the mind from its existence *in itself*. Attributes such as unity, multiplicity, universality, and particularity attach to the quiddity of horseness only insofar as

39 Avicenna explains this elsewhere as follows: "Accidents are either necessitated by nature—in which case their multiplicity does not lead to differentiation in respect of species—or they are not necessitated by nature but are concomitant to it. In that case, their inherence in nature occurs due to a cause pertaining to matter." Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 207, 10–16.

40 Avicenna, *al-Madkhal*, 7–8, 15–4.

41 Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 196, 4–16.

knowledge of it exists in the mind, that is, in terms of its definition's applicability to many things. Individual horses, however, become particularized by way of indication, through the perception of their attributes and accidents that arise from their existence in the external world.

By contrast, when one speaks of the quiddity of horseness *in itself*, all inseparable and separable accidents that attach to it due to these two modes of existence remain outside of this meaning. The fact that quiddity-*in-itself* is one, but its manner of existence in the individuals of a species differs, is also explained by Avicenna, this time through the quiddity of humanity:

> When we consider it insofar as it is *sheer humanity* [the quiddity of being human], we must not conflate this consideration with a consideration that is externally added. For when the external consideration is mixed in, it divides the perspective into two: first, considering it insofar as it is itself, and second, considering it insofar as accidents attach to it. In the first consideration, the thing can only be humanity. Thus, if someone were to ask, "Is the humanity in Zayd, insofar as it is humanity, other than the humanity in ʿAmr?" one must reply, "No." Yet, accepting this does not oblige one to say, "Therefore, the one and the other are numerically identical." For the previous statement was an absolute negation, and by this negation we meant that humanity, insofar as it is humanity, is nothing but humanity. That the humanity in Zayd is other than the humanity in ʿAmr is something externally added.[42] For if this otherness did not lie outside of humanity itself, then humanity, considered merely as humanity, would have to be, say, a thousand or not a thousand. But we have already refuted this and taken humanity solely insofar as it is humanity.[43]

This passage is one of Avicenna's most significant explanations in which he addresses, through the theory of quiddity-in-itself, both the presence of universals in extramental things and how things in the external world become individuated. In this passage, Avicenna maintains that humanity as found in Zayd or in ʿAmr, insofar as it exists externally, must be distinguished from absolute humanity, and in this way the confusion regarding whether quiddity is one or many can be avoided.

42 That the humanity in Zayd is different from that in ʿAmr *insofar as it is in Zayd* is related to the fact that the universal quiddity of humanity, which is present in both, is realized through their respective particular material preparations, which differ from one another. The secondary dispositions (*istiʿdādāt*) pertaining to the states and inseparable accidents that arise in the individual as a consequence of the primary disposition, which makes the realization of the species-form possible, provide the ground for individuation. Avicenna, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 183, 6–9; Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Shifāʾ / al-Nafs*, trans. Mehmet Zahit Tiryaki (Ankara: TÜBA, 2021), 414–15.

43 Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 208, 1–5.

When considered in terms of humanity as quiddity-in-itself, the humanity in Zayd and in ʿAmr is one. Yet this is the case only when absolute humanity in itself is taken into account. Since the accidents inseparably and separably conjoined with humanity in Zayd differ from those conjoined with humanity in ʿAmr, the two external existences are distinguished from one another. In this sense, the quiddity in each of them is different insofar as it is the quiddity found in Zayd or the quiddity found in ʿAmr.[44] Thus Avicenna connects the multiplication of the individuals of a species and the emergence of their individuality as distinct from one another to the inseparable and separable accidents that arise in the external existence of quiddity as it is instantiated in a particular thing. For, according to him, were it not so, humanity as quiddity-in-itself would have to multiply in virtue of its being humanity, and there would exist in the external world as many instances of humanity in itself as there are individuals of the species — which is impossible.[45]

The attributes that initially adhere to an object after its actualization are its being in a specific place and position, and its capacity for three-dimensionality insofar as it possesses the form of corporeality. While a species' individuals share these attributes in common, they nevertheless differ with respect to the final proportion of their own parts, as well as their positions and the space/place they occupy in relation to other bodies.[46] As noted above, Avicenna grants a privileged status to position (*waḍʿ*) among these initial attributes, maintaining that with the external actualization of the essence, it is position that provides the principle of individuation. The inseparable accidents that adhere to the object in virtue of its species' essence likewise entail commonality at the species level, though they differ in terms of their quantitative manifestation in matter. Beyond lies the domain of separable accidents, which adhere to the object so long as it exists but are subject to disappearance. This domain of features is potentially infinite. Hence, its unboundedness poses a problem for identi-

44 Avicenna's explanation of the differentiation of essences in their external existence within an individual can also be read through his approach to specialization (*taḥaṣṣuṣ*). According to him, individuation does not occur through the specialization of one individual among human individuals, but rather through the existence of the meaning of "man" as one single meaning (*maʿnan aḥadiyyan*). Avicenna, *Taʿlīqāt*, [728].

45 For Avicenna's detailed analysis of the threefold ontological status of quiddity—namely, quiddity *"without the condition of anything"* (*lā bi-sharṭ shayʾ*), quiddity in the mind *"on the condition of not being anything else"* (*bi-sharṭ lā shayʾ*), and quiddity in external existence *"on the condition of being something"* (*bi-sharṭ shayʾ*)—see Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 201–3.

46 The four elements that possess a natural place are distinguished from other species-specific objects in this respect, insofar as their places are determinate.

fying individuation. This difficulty can only be resolved by considering the "position" of the individual endowed with specific attributes, which makes it possible to point to that individual.[47]

When an object is examined in terms of its external existence, the quiddity-in-itself must be considered from two perspectives: the quiddity insofar as it is itself, and the attributes that adhere to it in virtue of its external existence. Only when these two aspects are taken together can one speak of an external individual human being. At first glance, this formulation may give the impression that the external object comes into being through the combination of these two parts. Yet this impression must be rejected, since the quiddity-in-itself and its accidents cannot be taken as coequal parts. Rather, because the quiddity is "present there" in virtue of being itself, the inseparable accidents adhere to it. From this perspective, the quiddity has priority over its accidents in an essential manner. Avicenna's explanation in the following passage clarifies where individuality emerges and underscores that an individual can only be recognized and distinguished from others by means of its accidents:

> Now, had one said "the humanity in Zayd, insofar as it is humanity," the judgments "It is in Zayd" and "It is what is in Zayd" would be excluded, and humanity would have been considered precisely insofar as it is humanity. Otherwise, one would be considering humanity insofar as it is in Zayd. Yet we abstracted it and spoke of it only in terms of its being humanity. If, then, the pronoun "it" were referred back to the humanity in Zayd, the expression would become impossible. For the judgment "It is nothing but humanity" cannot be combined with "its being the humanity in Zayd." But if "it" refers back to humanity in itself, then the mention of Zayd becomes meaningless. However, you might intend by this the humanity to which being-in-Zayd has externally adhered—though in that case there is an additional consideration beyond humanity itself.[48]

47 In his doctoral dissertation on the individuation of material substances in Avicenna, István Lánczky argues that since the principle of multiplicity is matter, the ultimate principle that grants individuation is spatial position. Form, by contrast, is the principle of the identity and unity of the material substance. See Lánczky, *Individuation of Material Substancesy*, 198. I, however, while acknowledging that spatial position is the most fundamental distinguishing feature insofar as it grounds the possibility of pointing to an object through all the attributes it possesses, contend that the true ground enabling such spatiality is the external existence of the essence and its indicatability. For a passage in which Avicenna draws attention to the signification of individuality as indicatability, see Avicenna, *Taʿlīqāt*, [784].

48 Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 199, 1–9; In a passage from the *Taʿlīqāt*, Avicenna states that form qua form and matter qua matter are one single thing, and then explains that the cause of individuation and determination in external existence is the actualization of "this form," as determined by the disposition (*istiʿdād*) in the matter, upon "this matter" as determined. Avicenna, *Taʿlīqāt*, [271].

When the humanity present in Zayd is considered as "absolute humanity," what is being taken into account is not its existence in the particular individual Zayd, but rather its being the essence of humanity in itself. It is, however, impossible to say that the humanity present in Zayd is humanity insofar as it is the essence of humanity in itself. As can be seen in this passage, Avicenna states that the meaning of the essence of humanity in itself within Zayd cannot be identical with the meaning of humanity insofar as it is present in Zayd. Indeed, this is where Avicenna's remark that "there is something other than humanity" comes into play. For if one is to speak of the humanity found in Zayd, then together with the essence of humanity in itself, its concomitants must also be taken into account, and the existence of the individual realized as Zayd must be understood along with those concomitants. These concomitants are the inseparable accidents that attach to him as long as the individual has actualized externally and continues to exist, depending on his matter or form, and the separable accidents that may attach to him but are capable of being removed.

Avicenna distinguishes between the essence as it is in itself and the essence as it exists in a particular thing, on the basis that the essence in itself is indeterminate, whereas the essence present in a thing is determined by reference to accidents through the means of indication:

> If humanity [quiddity] were somehow made into something indicated or into something without multiplicity, it would not be indeterminate. In that case, our expression "humanity insofar as it is humanity" would not constitute a part of the subject. For when it is said "humanity insofar as it is humanity," indeterminacy returns. But when it is said that "humanity, insofar as it is humanity," then it is indicated, and thus something additional is attached to humanity.
>
> If we allow this, then both alternatives are negated of humanity, and apart from the meaning of its being necessarily itself or another, it would not be required to be one or many, or to be itself or another. In that case we say: humanity must be other by virtue of the accidents that accompany it, for it exists only together with accidents. Accordingly, humanity is not taken in the sense of humanity insofar as it is merely humanity. Since Amr's humanity, being humanity together with accidents, is not other than that, those accidents—whether they are the sum of necessary accidents that are, in a way, part of man or of humanity, or whether they are related to him by belonging to him—have an effect in the individuation of Zayd."[49]

49 Avicenna, *al-Shifā'/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 199–200, 14–11; For a passage on how otherness comes about through the attachment of necessary and non-necessary accidents to quiddity, see *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*, ed. Mujtabā al-Zāri'ī (Qum: Mu'assasat Bustān al-Kitāb, 2013), 269–70. In *Kitāb al-*

Here, Avicenna states that the quiddity present in an individual human being in the external world is not, insofar as it is "humanity in itself," a matter that can be designated or pointed to.[50] The quiddity that belongs to an individual is distinguished from the quiddity belonging to other individuals only by means of the accidents that pertain to that individual. In such a case, it cannot be said that it is "pointed to as quiddity-in-itself." Rather, it may be said that it is "quiddity which, insofar as it is present in this thing, has acquired such and such characteristics."Apart from the quiddity present in Amr or Zayd insofar as it is present in them, there is no separate quiddity-in-itself. However, when their particular accidents are abstracted away, and when the consideration of being in Amr or being in Zayd is disregarded, and when the meaning of quiddity is not referred to its being in some particular place, then the meaning is absolutely the quiddity of humanity in itself.

From this perspective, Avicenna maintains that insofar as man exists externally, he is not "humanity in itself," but rather "humanity and something else." He further notes that "human" will be present in both cases as though it were a part: the meaning of "human" in itself, and the meaning of "human" insofar as it is present in something.[51] Yet this notion of "part" must be understood in terms of conceptual analysis. Otherwise, quiddity-in-itself would stand in a part-to-part relation, and likewise the externally existing quiddity and its concomitants would be treated as two separate parts—which, as already indicated above, is impossible.[52]

Nafs, Avicenna presents the famous thought experiment of the "flying man" in order to emphasize that the soul is a substance separate from matter and does not need its body or existence in any location to be aware of itself. In this hypothetical experiment, any human individual who performs it would recognize—without considering any of their organs, bodily integrity, or spatial position—that they are a determinate human individual, namely themselves, and would not doubt this. If it is said that what individuates and distinguishes individuals from one another is their matter, then what the person becomes aware of is their particular temperament, this is incorrect. For temperament is only perceived through being affected (*infiʿāl*) by it, and that which affects is distinct from that which is affected (*munfaʿil*). Yet here we are speaking of a single act of awareness. Therefore, Avicenna maintains that this self-awareness is a property (*khāṣṣiyya*) corresponding to the person being their very self, distinct from any accidents that may be ascribed to their material existence.What is at stake here is a form of selfhood that carries the meaning of an awareness that cannot be externalized, and which corresponds, entirely apart from the features that accrue to individuals by virtue of their external existence, to the relation of the quiddity's being present in that individual as unique to that individual. Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Nafs*, 73.

50 Avicenna also designates the human quiddity that exists externally and to which accidents adhere as the "natural human" (*al-insān al-ṭabīʿī*). Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 200, 13–16.

51 Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 201, 4–10.

52 Avicenna reiterates his rejection of the view—rooted in the Platonic understanding of universal forms—that for the quiddities of things, insofar as they are in themselves, to be predicated of

In the external existence of quiddity, Avicenna distinguishes between two considerations: the meaning of the "whole" formed together with the features that accrue to the object, and the presence of the quiddity-in-itself within a thing as opposed to its being as an essence. According to him, insofar as a quiddity is itself an essence, it cannot multiply and be common among many things:

> It is not possible for one and the same meaning in itself to exist in many things. For if the humanity in Amr were present in Zayd not only in definition but in its very essence, then, necessarily, besides of the known accidents relative to Zayd, those things that attach to this humanity in Zayd would also attach to it in Amr. As for things like being white, being black, or knowing, which are established in the essence of the human, their being established in man does not render him essentially relative. For when man knows, he is relative only in respect to the thing known. This, however, especially when the condition of genus in relation to species is like that of species in relation to individuals, would require that contraries come together in a single essence, so that one and the same individual would be described as both thinking and not thinking. No one with sound disposition could imagine that one single humanity could at the same time be encompassed by the accidents of both Amr and Zayd. Therefore, when you consider humanity without any other condition, you must by no means consider these relativities, for they are as we have explained.[53]

In this passage, Avicenna rejects the idea that an essence exists as a single substance that is attributed to external things and thereby multiplied in relation to

external objects, they must exist as independent entities outside. This view can be formulated as: "Since the living, insofar as it is living, exists, it must therefore be separate from individuals [in the external world]." Against it, he emphasizes that for a quiddity to be present in external things as it is in itself, it does not need to exist elsewhere. Rather, it is possible to posit the absolute quiddity in such a way that its presence in the external realm is not preceded by any other locus of existence. Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ/al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 202–3, 9–10.

53 Avicenna, *al-Ilāhiyyāt* of the *Shifāʾ*, 208–9, 10–2. He explains in *al-Ishārāt* that when one asks about Zayd, who is an individual of the human species, the question "What is he?" is answered by expressing his essence: "He is a human." The accidents and inseparable properties that individuate Zayd and distinguish him from others are, however, additional meanings appended to his essence. Avicenna emphasizes that he does not pose the question "Who is he?" about Zayd. For the "who" question pertains to the individuating properties and accidents that, by necessity of the essence's existence in the external world, are predicated of Zayd. The features found in Zayd result first from the realization of the human form through the constitution of his temperament and material dispositions, together with the essential properties inseparable from that form, and subsequently from the various accidents that accrue to him relative to his material condition. Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-Tanbīhāt*, ed. Mujtabā al-Zāriʿī (Qum: Muʾassasat Bustān al-Kitāb, 2013), 263–4.

them. If an essence as a substance were present in each individual of a species—for instance, if the one substance "humanity" were present in Zayd—then whatever accidents attach to it in Zayd would necessarily attach to it in every individual of the species. In that case, it would be impossible to speak of the existence of multiple individuals of the species.

Within this context, Avicenna states that the attachment of separable accidents to the external human substance does not make the meaning of "human" relative. Each individual human, when he knows something or is characterized by any accident, is "the one who knows" or "the one who has such-and-such an accident" in relation to that specific thing. If accidents adhered to humanity as such, then mutually opposed accidents would become attached to the one essence in which humanity is realized. Thus, if the meaning of humanity were present as a single substance, its being as such would require taking into account all possible accidents that might attach to it, and consequently all individuals possessing that essence would share in the entirety of those accidents.

According to Avicenna, in this case a twofold impossibility arises. On the one hand, the essence possessed and existing as a substance in each individual would take on mutually opposed accidents simultaneously; on the other hand, since the one substance of humanity would already be endowed with accidents, the humanity present in both ʿAmr and Zayd would have to be accompanied by exactly the same accidents. Even if all other features were hypothetically assumed to be identical, at the very least their spatial position and location—which make individuation and designation possible—could not be the same. Because of these impossibilities, the notion that the external essence exists as a single substantial meaning in external things must be rejected, and the essence-in-itself must be considered apart from its inseparable accidents.

In the passages of the *Kitāb al-Nafs* where he discusses the complete abstraction of the essence-in-itself from every kind of relation and inseparable accident, Avicenna classifies the attributes that pertain to an essence insofar as it exists externally into two categories:

> The nature of humanity, by definition, is one single thing; to it is attached the existence of being "in this individual" and "in that individual," and thus it becomes multiple. This multiplication of the human nature is not on account of humanity itself. For if what necessitated multiplicity in them were the nature of humanity, then humanity would not be predicated of only one individual. And if humanity existed in Zayd on account of Zayd's humanity, it would not exist in ʿAmr. In this case, one of the accidents attaching to humanity insofar as it is in matter is precisely this kind of multiplication and division among individuals. Similarly, insofar as it is in matter, other accidents also attach to humanity. Namely, whenever humanity exists in some matter, it comes to be with a determinate quantity, quality, position, and place. All of these are extraneous to the nature of humanity. The human form does not, by its essence, necessitate the attachment of any of these concomitants; rather, it is on account of matter that they are necessitated, since the matter together with it imposes these additions upon it.[54]

As I have discussed in the passages above, Avicenna explains that in order to demonstrate that quiddity-in-itself (*al-māhiyya min ḥaythu hiya*) is fully abstracted from the accidents that pertain to its existence in the external world and in the mind, and that it is absolute in itself, one must see that the multiplication of the form of humanity through its instantiation in individuals cannot be due to humanity itself. For if this multiplication were because of the humanity present in individuals, then humanity could not be predicated of each individual one by one. Therefore, the form of humanity cannot be present in an individual, or in each of the individuals, by virtue of its individuality itself.

How, then, can it be explained that the meaning of humanity, as it exists in Ayşe or in Ali, belongs to them in a way proper to each and thus is not common? For the quiddity of humanity is not one single thing in the external world that is apportioned among individuals. Avicenna's statement that multiplication cannot be attributed to the quiddity of humanity does not contradict the view that in each individual there must be posited, prior to its existence in the external world, a quiddity-in-itself. *Indeed, Avicenna designates* position (*waḍʿ, "spatial location"*) *as the primary accident that makes the presence of quiddity in external individuals specific to them and thereby renders possible every feature that accrues to them: the quiddity being "in this Ayşe" and "in that Ali."*

54 Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Nafs*, 132–5; *Categories* (*al-Maqūlāt*), trans. Muhittin Macit (Istanbul: Litera Publishing, 2010), 89–90, 6–5.

At this first level, the accident functions both as a relation that makes it possible to account for the individual's self-identity, and as a ground that allows every feature—whether inseparable property or separable accident—to be predicated of the individual insofar as it exists externally. If the quiddity's presence in the individual could not be affirmed, one could not speak at this first level of "the humanity existing in this individual," nor could one speak of any features attributable to that individual.

According to Avicenna, it is only through the quiddity's being present in the individual in a way proper to it that one can speak of a set of features, and this takes place by means of indicatability. The role of indicatability, which grounds individuation through the quiddity's presence in the individual, is explained as follows:

> The individuality of the individual comes about only through the attachment of the essential and non-essential accidental properties (*havâssun 'aradiyyatun lâzimatun wa ghayru lâzimatin*) to the nature of the species, and through the specification of a matter of the species' nature that is referable (*mushârun ilayhâ*). It is not through the attachment of intelligible qualities to the species, regardless of their quantity. For in such qualities there is no reference to a concrete meaning, and therefore the individual cannot acquire individuality in the intellect by means of them.[55] No matter how many qualities you enumerate—saying, for example, "Zayd is tall, a scribe, a sailor, such and such"—Zayd's individuality does not thereby become manifest in your mind. Rather, the total meaning of these qualities can be found in more than one individual.
>
> It is only existence and reference to a concrete (personal) meaning that renders individuality manifest. For example, when you say: "He is the son of so-and-so, he exists at such-and-such a time, he is tall, and he is a philosopher." Then, at that time, it may happen that he has no partner in those attributes. You may also already know this to be the case. This knowledge occurs through a perception directed toward what is indicated by sense, just as in the indication of a particular person and a particular time. In this way, Zayd's individuality becomes manifest, and such a statement points to his individuality.[56]

This passage is one of the clearest places where Avicenna states that knowing that an individual *is that very individual* can only be understood through *indicatability*, in the sense of distinguishing him from others as a "whole" formed by the qualities manifest in him and apprehended through sensation. The essential properties of the species' nature and the accidents that are not necessary for that nature do not, in

55 For Avicenna's explanation of the singular particular (*al-mufrad al-juz'î*), see Avicenna, *al-Shifā' / al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 196, 3–5.

56 Avicenna, *Introduction to Logic* (*al-Madkhal*), 63, 5–19.

themselves, point to a particular individual. Listing the characteristics in relation to a given person—for example, enumerating the qualities possessed by Zayd—does not make him stand out as *Zayd*. For it is conceivable that another human individual besides Zayd might possess exactly the same characteristics.[57]

For this reason, Avicenna states that the individuation of a person, and his or her distinction from other members of the same species, becomes evident only through the *indicatability* of a concrete meaning. The individuality specific to a person is determined only by an *indication* directed toward his or her temporary position and place at that moment. The inseparable and separable accidents attributed to that individual may just as well be found in someone else, or they may not. Yet, even if they are, Avicenna maintains that the features of the indicated individual, insofar as they are indicated, secure differentiation by being specific to that particular person who exists in a certain time and place, and thus his or her individuality as that very person becomes manifest. The fact that quiddity exists externally together with its inseparable and separable accidents, and that individuation is given precisely by this totality, constitutes the guarantee of the uniqueness, specificity, and distinction of individuality in the external object.

Individuation in the Context of Predication: How Are Accidents Predicated of the Individual?

The primary inseparable accident that comes about as a necessary consequence of the existence of quiddity in extramental reality is the state of "being in that thing," which includes position and place. After this "indicatability," the meaning of individuation in the object must be analyzed by taking into account all of its features, both inseparable and separable accidents. In this context, I will examine how Avicenna explains the predication of accidents to the individual and his approach to the integrity of individual meaning.

57 As we have already noted, Avicenna states that individuation takes place through position (*waḍʿ*) and place, which he considers primary in comparison to other inseparable and separable accidents. In most of the places where he explains individuation, he uses position and place together, while at times he also adds time to them. Avicenna, *Taʿlīqāt*, [159].

Avicenna provides his most explicit explanations regarding the predication of the universal to the particular in *al-Madkhal*. While discussing simple expressions, he states that they are divided into universals and particulars. He notes that he will not conduct an inquiry into the meanings of particular expressions, since particulars are infinite and thus cannot be encompassed. Therefore, in the discussion of expressions, his aim is the knowledge of universal terms. However, for a universal expression to be universal, it must have a relation to the particulars of which it is predicated, whether in extramental reality or in the mind.[58] Before turning to the question of predication, Avicenna distinguishes between the essential universal, which signifies the quiddity of a thing, and the accidental universal. What provides this distinction is that the essential universal signifies the quiddity of substance rather than the existence of substance.

Avicenna states that in simple beings, the essence of a thing consists of a single meaning, namely its existence itself. In contrast, in composites of matter and form, the truth/essence of a thing's existence is constituted by the meanings that, when combined, form the quiddity of that thing. For example, the meaning of the essence of man requires that he is a substance; that he has an extension (*imtidād*) presupposing length, breadth, and depth; that he possesses nutritive, inner and outer perceptive faculties and voluntary motion; and that he has a soul capable of grasping intelligibles and acquiring and teaching the arts. The totality arising from all these together is the essence of man as a single entity. Insofar as this entity exists externally, further accidents accrue to man, which give rise to additional meanings and causes. It is precisely at this point that individuation and differentiation occur. The various accidents borne by different human individuals enable them to be distinguished from one another. None of these general accidents, apart from the properties specific to the species, is a necessary meaning for the external existence of the individual.

To each human quiddity realized externally, quantitative and qualitative accidents accrue insofar as each exists in that individual. Beyond the accidents that vary from one individual to another, there are properties (*ḫāṣṣa*) common to every member of the species, as well as inseparable accidents (*lāzim aʿrāḍ*) that adhere to its matter. The difference between these and general accidents is that, so long as the

58 Avicenna, *Introduction to Logic* (*al-Madkhal*), 21, 9–15.

individual exists, they will never be separated from such properties and inseparable accidents. For instance, to human individuals endowed with a rational soul, the property of "laughter" accrues as a necessary consequence of this soul. When the rational soul attaches to matter and makes it human, the feature of "wonder," which entails laughter, attaches to that matter. In a similar way, through the rational soul's attachment to matter, other inseparable accidents arise as its consequences: modesty, weeping, envy, the disposition for writing, and the ability to acquire knowledge. All of these inseparable accidents manifest with the actualization of the rational soul in matter, arising as necessary consequences thereof.[59]

Avicenna, stating that the essence (*dhāt*) of man is his quiddity (*māhiyya*), distinguishes between essential (*dhātī*) and accidental universals before explaining them. He first clarifies the distinction between essence (*dhāt*) and essential (*dhātī*), particularly addressing the conceptual confusions that persisted in the term *dhātī* until his time. What enables him to do this is his detailed conception of quiddity. Indeed, understanding what "quiddity" is in itself, as well as what adheres to it insofar as it exists externally and in the mind, depends on distinguishing between what signifies the quiddity-in-itself and what does not.

The fundamental distinction between *essence* (*dhāt*) and the *essential* (*dhātī*) is as follows: Universal terms are divided into those that signify quiddity insofar as they indicate the reality of a thing or things, and those that do not signify quiddity. The key feature of an essential (*dhātī*) term that does not signify quiddity is that, with respect to existence, it precedes the essence and cannot, on its own, signify the whole of the quiddity. In this sense, an essential (*dhātī*) term is a part of the quiddity and does not by itself indicate the entirety of the quiddity. When the terms "thinking" and "living" are considered separately, each of them, insofar as they are parts constituting the quiddity of humanity, are essentials that do not signify the quiddity as a whole. Indeed, Avicenna maintains that the most proper sense of the essential (*dhātī*) is to comprise those meanings that constitute the quiddity.

In the following passage, Avicenna explains with great clarity—through the example of the human being—the distinction between the essential that signifies quiddity and the essential that does not signify quiddity.

59 Avicenna, *Introduction to Logic* (*al-Madkhal*), 22–3, 1–5.

> A term that signifies quiddity cannot be an essential (*dhātī*) [term]. In this respect, "human" is not essential to human. But "living" and "rational" are essential to human. If "human," as human, is not essential to human but rather is essential to the individual particulars, then the essential relation of "human" is either to the reality of the individual's quiddity—and this, in the same way, is also human—or to the whole in which human is instantiated. Therefore, it is not the whole in its entirety but, insofar as it is a whole, it is a part of that from which the whole is constituted. In this case, it is not only "rational," "living," "human," and the like that are essential to individual particulars. Rather, also an individual's color, his being short, his being the son of so-and-so, and other such accidental features can be essential—for these are parts that constitute the whole. Accordingly, insofar as something is essential to an individual, "human" possesses only that of which it is possessed.[60]

The crucial distinction in this passage is that the term "human," insofar as it signifies the essence (*mahiyya*), is identical with the essence itself and therefore cannot be considered an essential (*dhātī*, zâtî). By contrast, "living" and "rational," as constitutive parts of the human essence, are essential (*dhātī*) terms with respect to humanity.

But then, how does the essential (*dhātī*) meaning of "human," present in individual humans, actually subsist there? Can it be said to exist as a part? Avicenna sets forth two possibilities:

1. The essential (*dhātī*) presence of "human" pertains directly to the reality of the individual's essence—namely, that the individual is a human being.
2. Alternatively, it refers to a whole that includes not only the essence itself but also the conditions that accrue to the human in external existence. In this case, the essential (*dhātī*) meaning of "human" predicated of the individual is not identical with the essence (*mahiyya*); rather, together with the other properties that accrue to it, it constitutes a part of the whole.

If the second option is so, then all the inseparable accidents (*aʿrāḍ lāzimah*, *lâzım arazlar*) and the general accidents (*aʿrāḍ ʿāmmah*, *genel arazlar*) that attach to the human individual by virtue of its form (*ṣūra*, *sûret*) or its matter (*mādda*, *madde*) fall within the scope of the essential (*dhātī*), since essentials (*dhawātī*) and accidents (*aʿrāḍ*) alike function as constitutive parts of the whole.

60 Avicenna, *Introduction to Logic* (*al-Madkhal*), 23–4, 6–10.

Avicenna maintains that, insofar as it signifies individual human beings, the essential (*dhātī*, *zâtî*) character of "human" is identical with humans' essence (*mahiyya*) and therefore does not exist in them merely as a part. He also demonstrates why the second alternative cannot hold. His account of what constitutes a universal essential (*dhātī*) meaning—excluding what accrues to the essence (*mahiyya*) and regardless of whether or not it directly signifies the essence—is as follows. If, when the relation of the universal term to the particular it signifies is removed, the existence of that particular itself also ceases—and the reason for this is precisely the absence of the predication of that universal meaning—then that meaning, whether it gives the truth of the thing's essence directly and coincides with that truth, or whether it is one of the components that constitute the essence, is a universal essential (*dhātī*) term. Accordingly, the first case is the meaning "human," which, inasmuch as it is predicated of individual humans, is a universal essential (*dhātī*) and corresponds to the essence (*mahiyya*). The second case refers not to the essence as a whole but to what is predicated as a part of it. Thus, the universals signifying "rational" and "living" are essential (*dhātī*) terms: each is individually a part of the essence and is therefore related not to the essence in its entirety, but to its being a part thereof.[61]

However, if the relation of a universal term to the particular it signifies is removed while that particular continues to exist, or if, so long as the particular exists, the removal of that relation occurs not because of itself but because of the disappearance of another meaning of which it is a concomitant, then in such a case the term is a universal *accidental*. Universal accidental terms vary according to the manner of their persistence and disappearance.

Some accidents, like sitting, standing, or blushing, quickly come and go in external existence; others, such as the passing of youth, vanish only over a long duration. There are also accidents that do not disappear externally but only in the imagination, such as the blackness of a black object. Still others remain so long as the particular exists, such as the human properties of astonishment and laughter. As long as man continues to exist externally, both of these qualities must also exist. Their disappearance occurs only through the disappearance of the meaning of "man" itself.[62]

61 Avicenna, *Introduction to Logic* (*al-Madkhal*), 24, 11–20.

62 Avicenna, *Introduction to Logic* (*al-Madkhal*), 24–5, 21–10. For another account of the issue of predicating essential and accidental universals and particulars, following the exposition in

As can be seen, Avicenna first distinguishes between the universal essential meaning, insofar as it signifies human individuals, and the essential universals that are parts of the essence but do not themselves signify the essence. He then considers whether the essence, being essential for individuals in external existence, might be a part of a whole that is completed by the general and inseparable accidents attaching to individuals externally. Yet since general and inseparable accidents cannot be the reason for answering the question of "what a thing is," Avicenna shows why they cannot be essential. Therefore, he rejects the idea that the essence, in its external existence, is a part of a whole completed by accidents.

Universal Essential Terms		**Universal Accidental Terms**			
Essential as a Part	Essential Not as a Part but as the Very Essence Itself	*General Accidents*		*Inseparable accidents of the quiddity*	
Rational and animal with respect to human essence	The essential universal meaning referring to individuals: the humanity present in each individual human	Accidents that quickly or slowly cease while the individual exists externally: as in the predication of accidents like sitting, standing, blushing, or turning pale in humans	Accidents that cease only in the imagination while the individual exists externally, such as the disappearance of blackness in a black person or tall individuals becoming short	Those required by the form (properties / *ḥāṣṣa*) That humans, as rational beings, necessarily experience wonder and laughter	Those required by the matter The blackness of the crow, the upright posture of humans

Figure 1. Avicenna's Division of Essential and Accidental Terms

Looking at Figure 1 above, the difference between the predication of essential elements of the quiddity, such as "living" and "rational," which are parts of the essence, and the predication of accidents to individuals becomes apparent. The key distinction is that when either of the essential predications ceases, the individual

al-Madkhal, see Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa'l-Tanbīhāt*, 5–9.

itself ceases to exist, whereas the predication of accidents does not entail the annihilation of the individual. As can be seen with general accidents, some of them may cease; however, inseparable accidents (*al-ʿarāḍ al-lāzimah*) and *ḥāṣṣa* that attach to the quiddity by virtue of its actual existence do not separate from the individual as long as it exists externally.[63]

In *al-Ishārāt*, Avicenna states that the highest form of *ḥāṣṣa* is that which encompasses all the individuals of a species, is exclusive to that species, and does not separate from them as long as they exist externally. When defining a thing, the *ḥāṣṣa* that is most manifest and apparent in external reality is the most useful characteristic for definition—for instance, the fact that man possesses the *ḥāṣṣa* of laughter. Because laughter is an easily observable manifestation in external reality, it can be established as a necessary property of man. Characteristics that are not exclusive to a single species may sometimes be considered *ḥāṣṣa* and at other times general accidents, depending on what they are predicated of. For example, walking and eating are not *ḥāṣṣa* of any one species but rather properties of "living." Yet, with respect to a given species, walking and eating fall within the category of general accidents.[64]

Avicenna gives his clearest explanation of how *ḥāṣṣa* and accidents are to be predicated of the individual, and how such predication can be known through *indicatability*, in a short passage of Chapter Five, which is devoted to the meaning of the species, in *al-Ilāhiyyāt* (Book V):

> The species is a nature realized both in existence and in the intellect. For since the quiddity of the genus attains existence through the things that constitute the genus, what the intellect must then do is to grasp it merely through indicatability, and once this nature has attained existence as the species of a species, nothing further is required for its cognition beyond indication. In this case, to the species are predicated those inseparable *ḥāṣṣa* and accidents through which the indicated nature becomes determinate. Now, such *ḥāṣṣa* and accidents are either sheer relations without any meaning in the essence itself—relations that are attached to the particular existences of simple entities and accidents, for their having a concrete being lies in being predicated of their subjects, and their concretization is indirect, as in the case of natural forms like the form of fire—or else they are additional states imposed upon relations. Yet, if one supposes that some of these fall away from what is indicated, then that which is other than the rest must also be thought to no longer exist, or to have become corrupted in respect of the otherness

63 Avicenna, *Introduction to Logic* (*al-Madkhal*), 25, 11–18.

64 Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-Tanbīhāt*, 15, 1–14.

> required of it. If, however, some others are supposed to fall away, this does not entail either that its quiddity, once it has attained existence, ceases to be, nor that its essence, once individuated, becomes corrupted. Rather, its otherness and distinctness are transformed into another kind of otherness without corruption. At times, however, we may find this difficult to grasp, and it does not become fully determinate to us. Yet what we are speaking of is not what we know, but rather how the matter truly stands in reality.[65]

The passage contains rich implications, ranging from the truth of the species and the possibility of knowledge of it, to the point where the relation between speciation and individuation emerges, to whether a distinction should be drawn between species and individuation in terms of indicatability and the attribution of separable and inseparable properties of the externally actualized individual to its essence.

The fundamental point that distinguishes the species from the genus is that it is realized both externally and in the intellect. When the species of a species, that is, the most specific and particularized sense of "species," comes to exist externally, it is known only "through indication." At this point, the essential attributes (*ḫāṣṣa*) and concomitants that give determinacy to the externally indicated species-nature are attached to it. In this way, the species-nature that exists externally and individuation are considered identical.

Another issue addressed in the passage concerns how *ḫāṣṣa* and accidents—which constitute the ground on which the species becomes *indicatible* and knowable in its external existence, and thus also the ground on which individuation arises—attach to the species-meaning externally, and the nature of the relativity between the object and what inheres in it.

As for *ḫāṣṣa* and accidents:

1. Some of them do not subsist as a meaning in themselves, but are made relative only with respect to an object. For example, the attribution of an object to a certain place, time, or position is a one-sided relativity. The place or time attributed to an object does not occur externally as the attribution of one external object to another. Reciprocal relatives, however, are different from these. Relations such as husband–wife, mother–child, or sibling–sibling require the existence of two distinct human individuals in external reality.

65 Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ / al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 228, 5–5.

2. Another group of *ḫāṣṣa* and accidents are states added upon such relatives. Following the basic attributions such as being in a position, in a place, or in a time, many properties that adhere to an object correspond to additional states that accrue to an object situated at an *indicatible* time and place.[66]

Every kind of quality, action, and passion must be considered within this framework, for this part encompasses a very broad range of properties that can attach to a thing. Among the attributes attaching to a subject, those referred to in paragraph (1) above are the inseparable accidents (*al-ʿarāḍ al-lāzima*) and the properties (*ḫāṣṣa*) that follow from the matter or form of the actualized subject. So long as the subject exists, they continue to attach to it. Although the content of the inseparable accident sometimes overlaps with that of the property, the inseparable accident is the more general notion, encompassing the property as well. The essential distinguishing point here is that the property is predicable of all the individuals of a species, whereas inseparable accidents may belong to the matter of some individuals of a species but not to others. For instance, blackness arises in the matter of those human individuals who are black and persists as long as they continue to exist.

However, it cannot be said that the whole human species possesses such a complexion. Inseparable accidents (*al-ʿarāḍ al-lāzima*) that attach to matter may differ

66 In the sections of *Kitāb al-Nafs* where he examines imaginative cognition, Avicenna develops a detailed argument to answer what enables the imagination to discriminate two perfectly identical small squares—one contiguous with the right side of a large square and the other contiguous with its left side—as two distinct squares. After eliminating the other alternatives, the remaining options are these: what makes their discrimination in imagination possible is either an accident accruing to one of the squares on account of its bearer-matter (substratum), or it is due to the matter in which the form of squareness is impressed in each case. For neither the commonality of the form nor the *inseparable accidents* that follow from the form yields differentiation. To secure differentiation, one must consider the unique places and positions proper to the external particulars. Thus we can speak of "being on the right" and "being on the left" as attaching to each, and of their being distinguished in imagination by considering each one's position relative to the large square. Avicenna's conclusion is that establishing the individuality and mutual differentiation of the two squares is possible only insofar as a subject brings them under imaginative cognition. Indeed, the thrust of the argument is to show that imaginative cognition occurs by means of a bodily organ—namely, the faculty of *mutakhayyila* (phantasia) located in the brain. By treating individuation within the limits of imaginative cognition and thereby problematizing accounts of the individuation of a physical object independently of a subject, Avicenna raises an issue that calls for fuller discussion. Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ: al-Nafs*, 334–43; for another version of this line of argument, see Avicenna, *al-Najāt*, ed. Maǧīd Fakhry (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, 1985), 158–61.

quantitatively. For example, one who has a black complexion may be darker than another. Features such as the capacity to stand upright or to possess broad nails, which arise from the matter of human individuals after their actualization in existence, are common to all human individuals. So long as human individuals exist, these properties (*ḫāṣṣa*) that arise in their matter cannot be separated from them nor differentiated among them. If it were assumed that the inseparable accidents and properties were removed from the subject, it would have to be said that the subject itself perished; for at the most fundamental level, along with the existence of the quiddity in actuality, there would also vanish the "otherness" that attaches to the subject, enabling it to be distinguished from other subjects and to be pointed out.

In the case referred to in paragraph (2) above, however, the removal of an accident that has been added to the subject does not entail the corruption of that subject. Such accidents, therefore, are not present in the subject as a consequence of the actuality of the quiddity itself. Their separation from the subject does not, as in paragraph (1), entail the disappearance of an essential otherness that individuates the subject from other external individuals. Avicenna states that such accidental changes—which accidents are removed and which others take their place—do not always become manifest or noticed in the perception of cognizing subjects. Yet, according to him, the point to be emphasized here is not this ambiguity; rather, what is essential is clarifying how the actuality occurs in external reality. This distinction that Avicenna makes at the end of the passage occupies a highly critical place in his account of the external existence of objects. The separation between the presence of accidents in the object and the lack of clarity in their perception shows that, independently of the cognizing subject, the ontological existence of individuals in external reality must be affirmed, and that any deficiency or ambiguity in their perception should be treated separately.

Another point Avicenna draws attention to concerning *properties* (*ḫāṣṣa*) is his important distinction that properties do not differ in terms of potential disposition (*istiʿdād*), yet they do exhibit differences with respect to their actual presence in matter. In this context, Avicenna criticizes Porphyry, who maintained that, just as with genus, the property is predicated equally of the things to which it is predicated and does not admit of any increase or decrease in its predication.[67]

67 For the passage Avicenna transmits and criticizes, see Porphyry, *Isagoge*, 16.4–6, as cited in di Vincenzo, *Isagoge*, 369.

The properties that arise in dependence on form are the dispositional properties (*al-ḥāṣṣa al-istiʿdādiyya*) that are constantly present in all individuals of the species together with the form, and in terms of their "dispositional existence" no difference resulting from excess or deficiency can be posited. However, when these dispositional properties are actualized in the individuals of the species, they exhibit differences. The locus of their actualization is the matter specific to that form, and matter allows for such differences. For instance, states such as amazement, laughter, weeping, and shame arise as affections in the matter only as a consequence of the human being's possession of the form of rationality. Thus, the properties that follow from the form do not differ in one individual as compared to another merely insofar as each is human and possesses the dispositional property of laughter, weeping, etc. Yet it may be admitted that one, due to the constitution of his temperament, is more inclined to laughter, while another is more disposed to shame. In this way, the properties that follow from the form may admit of more or less depending on the temperament of the matter in which they are manifested.[68] What we understand from Avicenna's approach is that both the inseparable accidents that adhere to matter and the properties (*ḥāṣṣa*) that follow from form, though not in terms of their potential (*istiʿdādī*) existence, can nevertheless differ from one another in terms of excess and deficiency once the individual of the species has come to be and these features are actualized in its matter. Avicenna maintains that one must distinguish between the secondary potential (*istiʿdādī*) condition prior to the emergence of such features and their actualized state.

Avicenna's approach to the domain of attributes (*ʿarāḍ*) that inhere in a thing also reveals the central axis of his account of individuation. *Indeed, the strongest answer he provides to the question of where individuation arises is based on the claim that the inseparable accidents* (*lawāzim*) *and accidents* (*ʿarāḍ*) *added to the essence* (*māhiyya*) *as a requirement of that essence are "present precisely in that individual," and thus that the presence of the essence in the external individual is unique* (*shakhṣiyya*).

The positing of a quiddity-in-itself (*māhiyya bi-nafsihā*) that can exist both externally and in the intellect not only enables the simultaneous consideration of these two ontological modes, but also constitutes the ground for the domain of features that inhere in a thing by virtue of its existence in actuality or in the mind. The unique

68 Avicenna, *Introduction to Logic* (*al-Madkhal*), 90, 1–14.

whole composed through the presence of inseparable accidents and accidents in the external individual gains its existence only by virtue of the presence of the quiddity-in-itself there. Otherwise, no truly individual-specific features could be spoken of.

Therefore, it must be said that the principle of individuation is not the sensible field of attributes that appear in perception, but rather the quiddity-in-itself and its instantiation in external existence, which makes those attributes possible.

Conclusion

In Aristotelian philosophy, the problem of individuation has been discussed in different contexts from the late Middle Ages to the modern and contemporary periods. Commentators have disagreed on whether the principle of individuation within Aristotelian metaphysics is matter or form. From the Neoplatonic tradition, no consistent and direct treatment of individuation was transmitted to Avicenna. Neoplatonic commentators examined the problem of individuation through more subordinate components and discussions.

Avicenna, however, proposes an account of individuation that is grounded not in matter, form, or the properties carried by the composite, but rather in the external existence of the quiddity itself (*al-māhiyya*). The quiddity-in-itself, which can be considered independently of any accidents (*aʿrāḍ*) attaching to it insofar as it exists either externally or in the intellect, must also be posited as existing in both states. Without presupposing a quiddity-in-itself, even the accidents pertaining to it in external or mental existence could not be spoken of. What renders the quiddity-in-itself both independent of all concomitants and yet unique in each individual with respect to its external existence is precisely its being instantiated as "this Ayşe" or "that Ali," prior to all other attributes.

While the quiddity-in-itself (*al-māhiyya bi-nafsihā*) is one and the same, independent of its existence in the external world or in the mind, in its external existence it is instantiated in each of the individuals of the species as something proper to them. This mode of existence is defined through *indicatability* (*al-ishāra*) by way of position and place, which are required for the external existence of the quiddity. In this way, it also provides the medium for the predication of every kind of attribute to an individual.

At this first level, the concomitant relation—together with its associated indicatability—is primarily a relation that grants the possibility of the individual's being "that very individual." Position- and place-dependent indicatability thereby constitutes the ground upon which every property, whether inseparable or separable accident, can be predicated of the individual with respect to its external existence. For Avicenna, the external existence of the quiddity-in-itself together with the separable and inseparable accidents added to the individual constitutes the individual's integrity. What must be noted here is that this integrity of quiddity and properties is not to be understood in a merely mereological sense, but rather in the sense that the quiddity ontologically precedes and makes possible the properties.

Avicenna subjects the status of properties to a new approach in light of the theory of *isti'dād* (disposition/potency). According to him, the inseparable properties (*ḫāṣṣa*) that arise in connection with the species belong to the primary dispositions (*al-isti'dādāt al-ūlā*), whereas the separable accidents emerge in connection with secondary dispositions (*al-isti'dādāt al-thāniyya*) that develop in the thing after its individual actualization. Avicenna maintains that while primary dispositions do not differ as dispositions, they do differ in terms of the degree of their actual presence in things. In this context, he criticizes Porphyry, who held that natural properties of things remain entirely the same in potency and in act across all individuals of the species.

Thus, for Avicenna, primary dispositions are common to individuals in their dispositional state, but in act they may vary; secondary dispositions, by contrast, arise only after the actualization of the thing, and therefore differ between individuals both in their dispositional and in their actual states. Avicenna's detailed analysis of properties through *isti'dād* makes it possible to distinguish clearly between inseparable accidents, properties, and separable accidents, to identify individual differences, and to show that the transition of properties from potency to act requires an external factor.

Through his theory of quiddity, Avicenna thus offers an account of the selfhood of a thing, moving away from the danger of reducing it either to its components or to its attributes. Moreover, by making a detailed distinction within the domain of properties, he aims to explain individual differentiation by identifying the properties that are inseparable or separable from the individual, depending on whether they are required by its matter or by its form.

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