Simplicius on the Individuation of Material Substances

Introduction

What makes an individual an individual?¹ This question has received enormous attention in modern debates on Aristotle² – curiously enough, one might say, given that Aristotle does not use a term like *individuation* (or *individuate*), let alone develop an elaborate theory of it.³ On the other hand, it is likewise remarkable that already the ancient commentators on Aristotle investigate Aristotle’s ideas of how the individual is constituted. They address individuation in a much more straightforward way than the Stagirite does.⁴

Simplicius of Cilicia, who in the 6th century A.D. stands at the end of the late ancient commentary tradition, speaks of individual forms that individuate matter. Since in the same text (*In Phys.* I 9) he calls immanent form universal, it seems reasonable to conclude that the individual forms are individual instances of one universal species-form. However, Simplicius here also mentions accidental properties that are peculiar to form rather than to matter. On the basis of Simplicius’ commentaries on the *Categories* and on the *Physics*, I will argue that the individuating accidents are not part of the individual forms, but that each individual’s form coordinates the individual’s accidental features. By belonging to a certain species, the individual form sets limits as to which accidents a matter-form compound can assume. This approach enables Simplicius to combine hylomorphism with a theory of individuation

* **Corresponding author: Marina Schwark**, Philosophisches Seminar, Universität zu Köln, Köln, Germany/Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte, KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium; E-mail: mschwark@smail.uni-koeln.de. – I would like to thank all of those who gave me the opportunity to present earlier versions of this paper or of parts of it: in Heidelberg on May 9, 2016 (chapter 3); in Leuven on June 8, 2017; in Cologne on June 26, 2017; and again in Leuven on November 16, 2017 (chapter 3). The vivid discussions on these occasions greatly helped me develop my ideas. Special thanks are due to Christoph Helmig and Jan Opsomer for their detailed comments. I am further indebted to the two referees of *Elenchos* for their stimulating remarks. Lastly, I thank Peter Larsen and Philip Kupferschmidt for proofreading the English text.

¹ As the title of my paper suggests, I restrict my discussion to the individuation of material substances. I thus leave aside the question of how rational souls and celestial intelligences are individuated.

² For more recent studies on individuation in Aristotle, see, e.g., Fine (2001); Gill (2001); Castelli (2003); Cho (2003) 88–91, 297–303; Galluzzo/Mariani (2006) 70–74 and 167–211, each with further literature; Kirby (2008) 9–44; Harte (2010); Castelli (2013) 162–166; Galluzzo (2013) 234–242. For a concise overview of the debate on individuation in contemporary analytic metaphysics, see Lowe (2003).

³ As Galluzzo (in Galluzzo/Mariani 2006) 73 puts it: “one is forced to acknowledge that the evidence in favour of attributing to Aristotle a genuine and independent interest in the problem of individuation is very little.”

⁴ On Alexander of Aphrodisias, see the article by Rashed (2010). Of the later authors, only Porphyry’s theory of the individual as a bundle (ἄθροισμα) has received proper attention (see Graeser 1996, 190–193; Chiaradonna 2000; Barnes 2003, 150–154, 314–316, 342–345; Sorabji 2004, 169–171; Chase 2011, 22–24). See section 2 for more on this. Erismann (2014) mainly focuses on the status of universals in Philoponus. The problem of individuation is merely touched upon (see Erismann 2014, 143–144, 146–147, 156). Apart from the commentaries on Aristotle, late ancient authors also discuss individuation in independent treatises and commentaries on Plato. There is a considerable scholarship on individuation in Plotinus, see Aubry (2008) and Chiaradonna (2014), each with further literature.

through properties. I will further show that Simplicius in his commentary on *De Caelo* I 9 explains the non-repeatability of the individuating properties in light of his Neoplatonic cosmology.

My paper proceeds in four main steps. Section 1 is devoted to Simplicius' commentary on *Physics* I 9, where he claims that individual forms individuate matter. Here I will clarify the sense in which Simplicius speaks of individual forms as opposed to the universal immanent species-form. In a second step I will argue that Simplicius combines Aristotelian hylomorphism with a theory of individuation through properties. Section 3 then further elucidates the relation between substantial form and individuating properties. In the last part of my paper, I will examine Simplicius' commentary on *De Caelo* I 9, where he explains the distribution of the individuating properties in the context of his Neoplatonic cosmology.

1 A puzzle about individual forms: *In Phys.* I 9

In his commentary on *Physics* I 9, 253.28–256.13, Simplicius is concerned with Aristotle's proof that matter is ungenerated and imperishable. After systematically analyzing the proof, Simplicius argues that individual matter perishes just like individual form. In this context, he mentions individual forms that individuate matter. This statement is interesting, especially since Simplicius in the same passage mentions universal immanent forms, i.e., universal mind-independent forms *in rebus*. In what follows, I will first outline Simplicius' argument and then elucidate the role of form in individuation. In doing so, I will investigate the sense in which the individual forms are individual. That is, I will examine whether they are merely numerically distinct or whether they are also qualitatively distinct.⁵

At *In Phys.* I 9, 253.28–256.13, Simplicius explains how we should understand Aristotle's thesis that matter is ungenerated and imperishable. In this context, Simplicius compares matter to form. Just as common matter is ungenerated and imperishable, so too is common form: “But this [sc., being common] also applies to the forms, since the commonality of any form is not destroyed out of the universe, but there is always human and horse and white and virtue and each of the other forms because the commonality of each of them endures.”⁶

⁵ For the sake of convenience, I adopt this terminology from Loux. Loux (1991) 225–228 distinguishes between quantitatively different forms and qualitatively different forms. Quantitatively different forms differ merely numerically, while qualitatively different forms differ insofar as they possess different properties (properties not in the sense of spatiotemporal properties). Loux's terminology is influenced by debates in contemporary metaphysics. Loux apparently does not use the term *qualitative* in the Aristotelian sense, i.e., he does not want to suggest that two forms differ with regard to the accidental category *quality*, and with regard to this category only.

⁶ Simpl. *In Phys.* I 9, 255.18–21: ἡ τοῦτο καὶ τοῖς εἶδεσι προσήκει· οὐδενὸς γὰρ εἶδους κοινότης φθείρεται ἐκ τοῦ παντός, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄνθρωπος αἰεὶ ἐστὶ καὶ ἵππος καὶ λευκὸν καὶ ἀρετὴ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων εἰδῶν ἕκαστον διὰ τὸ

Simplicius argues that the forms in question exist in the universe (τὸ πᾶν). The context, too, indicates that Simplicius is thinking of immanent forms in the sense of mind-independent *universalia in rebus*. As we have seen, Simplicius is primarily concerned with matter, and, unlike immanent forms, neither transcendent Forms nor abstracted universals are directly related to matter. Thus, we can conclude that Simplicius draws a parallel between matter and immanent forms. Interestingly, Simplicius does not confine himself to substantial forms, but includes qualities such as white and virtue as well.

After having stressed that common matter, like common form, is imperishable, Simplicius extends his inquiry. He explains that we can conceive of matter in two ways. On the one hand, we can think of it insofar as it is matter in itself, and this means insofar as it is common. On the other hand, we can pick out the matter of a certain thing – qualified matter, that is, as Simplicius describes it: “insofar as it is my matter and matter of such and such a sort.”⁷ Is this particular matter ungenerated and imperishable? Simplicius identifies two problems that would arise if this were the case.⁸ First, particular matter would have no purpose once the form would have perished. When my form perishes, it does not make sense for my matter to remain.⁹ A second absurdity Simplicius mentions is that if individual matter were ungenerated and imperishable, this would make matter superior to and more substantial than form. Simplicius here explicitly relies on the premise that particular forms come to be and perish.¹⁰

Simplicius introduces his own solution with the particle μήποτε:¹¹ “Perhaps then matter in itself is not individual, but it is individualised by individual forms just as it is shaped by

μένειν τὴν κοινότητα ἐκάστων. Trans. I. Mueller. Translations of *In Phys.* I 7–9 are from Mueller (in Baltussen/Atkinson/Share/Mueller, 2012), except when otherwise indicated.

⁷ 255.23: ἀλλὰ καθὼ ἐμὴ ὕλη καὶ τοιάδε ὕλη. This characterization is reminiscent of Arist. *Metaph.* XII 5, 1071a24–29, where Aristotle explains differences in causes. The causes of things that belong to different categories differ specifically and are the same only by analogy. By contrast, the causes of things that belong to the same category differ numerically, as becomes evident from the opposition between your matter, form, and efficient cause and mine.

⁸ Although Simplicius does not mention Alexander of Aphrodisias or his followers, it seems that the arguments respond to the position that is held in *Quaestio* II 28. (On the authorship of the *Quaestiones*, see Sharples 1994, 2–3; on the authorship of *Quaestio* II 28 in particular, see Lloyd 1981, 60. For the sake of simplicity, I call Alexander the author of *Quaestio* II 28.) When investigating the difference between genus and matter, Alexander argues that matter is imperishable also numerically, see *Quaestio* II 28, 78.20–22: καὶ ἡ μὲν ὕλη καὶ κατ’ ἀριθμὸν ἀφθαρτος, τὸ δὲ γένος τῷ εἶδει τὸ ἀφθαρτον ἔχει καὶ τῇ τῶν γινομένων ἀνεπιλείπτῳ διαδοχῇ, τὸ δὲ καθέκαστα φθαρτὸν αὐτοῦ. For an interpretation of the *quaestio*, see Lloyd (1981) 59–61; Sharples (1994) 125–126 n. 168, 126 n. 174; Rashed (2007) 94–104.

⁹ 255.21–25: ἀλλ’ ἄρα καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἄτομον ἐαυτῆς ἡ ὕλη ἀγέννητος καὶ ἀφθαρτός ἐστιν, ὥστε τὴν ἐμὴν ὕλην οὐ καθὼ ὕλη (τοῦτο γὰρ τῆς κοινότητός ἐστιν), ἀλλὰ καθὼ ἐμὴ ὕλη καὶ τοιάδε ὕλη ἀγέννητον εἶναι καὶ ἀφθαρτον; καὶ πῶς οὐ μάτην ἔσται αὕτη τοῦ ἐμοῦ φθαρέντος εἶδους; οὐδὲ γὰρ ἔσται ἄλλου ὕλη, καθὼ ἐμοῦ ἐστι.

¹⁰ 255.25–27: πῶς δὲ οὐκ ὄντως κρείττων ἔσται τῶν εἰδῶν ἡ ὕλη καὶ οὐσιωδεστέρα, εἴπερ τῶν ἀτόμων εἰδῶν φθειρομένων ἡ ἄτομος ὕλη μένει;

¹¹ This particle generally indicates that Simplicius is expressing his own opinion. See Fleet (in de Haas/Fleet 2001, 140 n. 29) and, more thoroughly, Menn (in Menn/Barney forthcoming, 26). I thank Stephen Menn for sending me the unpublished draft.

forms.”¹² As Simplicius has already stressed, “matter in itself” (ὕλη καθ’ αὐτήν), i.e., prime matter, is common. Individual matter, by contrast, is individual precisely because it exists in conjunction with an individual form. Simplicius here explicitly mentions individual forms. Moreover, in what immediately precedes this statement he relates “my matter” to “my form.” “My form” must refer to an individual form, because Simplicius says that it is perishable. The example of “my form” shows that Simplicius is thinking of substantial forms.

The rest of Simplicius’ argument reads as follows:

For individuals which are different in number are made multiple by divisions and differences in their accidents. But division and number and accidents are not peculiar features of matter, but rather of forms. Therefore this common deviation from being, or what matter is, does not come to be or perish. But the [particular] deviation and matter of this sort, which is eventually checked by form and individualised, is what comes to be and perishes just like individual form.¹³

Simplicius here examines the difference between common and individual matter and concludes that the latter comes to be in interaction with form. Individual matter only exists in the compound. Simplicius further explains that the constitution of several individuals depends upon two factors: (1) division and (2) a difference in accidents. Individual forms individuate matter by means of what is peculiar (ἴδια) to them, i.e., by means of the divisions and accidents (συμβεβηκότα) that are connected with them. I take it that Simplicius additionally calls number a peculiar feature of form because matter, as a continuous substrate, cannot be counted. We can count individuals because they are discrete, and their being discrete depends on their having a form.¹⁴

When Simplicius says that division (διαίρεσις) is peculiar to form, he means that individual forms actually divide a continuous substrate, matter, into discrete units, the compounds. De Haas¹⁵ in his interpretation of Simplicius’ *In Phys.* I 7, 230.29–33, argues that Simplicius carefully distinguishes between matter as undetermined extension on the one hand and form

¹² 255.27–28: μήποτε οὖν οὐδὲ ἔστιν ἄτομος ὕλη καθ’ αὐτήν, ἀλλ’ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀτόμων εἰδῶν ἀτομοῦται, ὥσπερ καὶ μορφοῦται ὑπὸ τῶν εἰδῶν. Trans. I. Mueller, slightly modified.

¹³ 255.28–256.1: τὰ γὰρ ἄτομα τῷ ἀριθμῷ διαφέροντα διαιρέσεσι πληθύνεται καὶ διαφοραῖς συμβεβηκότων. οὔτε δὲ διαίρεσις οὔτε ἀριθμὸς οὔτε τὰ συμβεβηκότα τῆς ὕλης ἴδια ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ τῶν εἰδῶν. αὕτη οὖν ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος κοινῇ παράλλαξις, ἢ ὅτι ποτέ ἐστιν ἡ ὕλη, ἀγέννητος καὶ ἀφθαρτός ἐστιν. ἡ δὲ τοιάδε παράλλαξις καὶ ἡ τοιάδε ὕλη κατελιγμένη λοιπὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ εἶδους καὶ ἡτομωμένη γίνεται καὶ φθείρεται ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ εἶδος τὸ ἄτομον.

¹⁴ Interestingly, Alexander at *Quaestio* II 28, 78.1–6, suggests a perspective on individuation very much in agreement with the one we find in Simplicius: ὥς γὰρ κοινῆς οὐσῆς τῆς ὕλης τὰ εἶδη ἐν αὐτῇ γινόμενα κατὰ τὴν πρὸς ἄλληλα διαφορὰν διάφορον ποιεῖ καὶ τὸ συναμφοτέρον, οὕτως καὶ τοῦ γένους ὄντος κοινοῦ τὰ εἶδη καὶ αἱ διαφοραὶ συντιθέμεναι αὐτῷ κατὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς διαφορὰν ποιοῦσι τὴν ἐν τοῖς γένεσι διαφορὰν. τὰ γὰρ αὐτὰ ἕτερα γίνεται τῇ τῶν διαφερόντων συνθέσει. Matter is common; all differences pertain to forms. While this is a traditional Aristotelian tenet, I think it worth noting that Simplicius here uses it in order to argue against the position that individual matter is eternal. Alexander can be interpreted as defending this view in the very same *quaestio* (see n. 8 above).

¹⁵ De Haas (1997) 116 with n. 225.

as determinate measure on the other. If matter is completely undetermined, it can only provide the possibility of division, not actual division.¹⁶ The forms, then, actually divide the bare extensionality with which Simplicius identifies matter.¹⁷ The present passage from *In Phys.* I 9 supports de Haas's interpretation because Simplicius here says that the division that results in several particulars is peculiar to form. According to Simplicius, matter provides a divisibility that the partless forms do not have,¹⁸ while the forms cause an actual division that matter cannot bring about. Thus, both form and matter play a part in the individuation of a material substance.

At first glance, Simplicius' claim that individual forms individuate matter suggests that these forms exist individually even before they combine with matter. This, in turn, suggests that form is individuated by some other factor before it enters matter. However, it remains open what this individuating factor could be. Also, given that Simplicius conceives of immaterial forms as partless and indivisible,¹⁹ it is difficult to explain how the universal species-form could be divided into several individual forms prior to its combination with matter. I therefore assume that Simplicius is not thinking of immaterial individual forms. Instead, he means individual forms as they exist in matter-form compounds. He says that these enmattered instantiations of the universal species-form individuate matter because he wants to emphasize that form takes the leading role in individuation. Both matter and form are required to constitute an individual – but Simplicius assigns the passive role to matter, while he assigns to form the active role of dividing the substrate and endowing it with properties.

Simplicius' theory of individuation is strongly shaped by his fidelity to Aristotelian tenets. At *In Phys.* I 7, 226.21–22, for instance, Simplicius points out that for Aristotle form rather than matter is a particular thing (τόδε τι). He further explains that matter cannot be a particular thing because it “has no difference relative to anything since every difference is a formal

¹⁶ See also the broader context of the passage (Simpl. *In Phys.* I 7, 225.22–233.3).

¹⁷ Simplicius' argument might be inspired by Aristotle's *Physics* III 7, 207a33–b1. See also Simplicius' commentary on that passage (*In Phys.* 504.3–22) and Soulier (2014) 63–66.

¹⁸ This is paralleled by Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum* XI 8, 440.6–18. Philoponus there argues that the individuation of one species into several particulars necessitates matter because the εἶδος taken by itself does not have parts. Instead, the εἶδος is divided along with its divisible substrate. As de Haas (1997) 118 n. 237 points out, εἶδος is ambiguous here, denoting both ‘form’ and ‘species.’ De Haas (1997) 118 n. 237 concludes: “Hence the division of the species into individuals coincides with the division of the transcendent form into immanent forms under the influence of its substrate.”

¹⁹ See, e.g., Simpl. *In Phys.* I 7, 231.37–232.5: καὶ ἔστιν οἷον χώρα αὕτη [i.e., matter] τῶν γενητῶν τε καὶ αἰσθητῶν οὐκ εἶδος τι ἀφορισμένον ὑπάρχον, ἀλλ' ὑποστάσεως κατάστημα, ὥσπερ τὸ ἀμερὲς καὶ ἀδιάστατον καὶ αὐλον καὶ ὄντως ὄν καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα κατάστημά ἐστι τῆς νοητῆς φύσεως, πάντων μὲν ὄντων τῶν εἰδῶν καὶ ἐκεῖ καὶ ἐνταῦθα, ἀλλ' ἐκεῖ μὲν ἀύλως, ἐνταῦθα δὲ ὑλικῶς, ταῦτόν δὲ εἰπεῖν, ἐκεῖ μὲν ἀμερίστως καὶ ἀληθῶς, ἐνταῦθα δὲ μεριστῶς καὶ σκιοειδῶς.

quality.”²⁰ Interestingly, though, Simplicius mingles this Aristotelian notion of matter with Neoplatonic doctrines. He holds that matter occupies the lowest rank in the ontological hierarchy. It “departs from Being and much more from the One” and does not have being proper but merely a reflection of being.²¹ The ontological status of matter (in Aristotelian as well as in Platonic metaphysics) thus prompts Simplicius to attribute the key role in individuation to form.

If individuation is conceived as the division of a continuous substrate, then it suffices to assume that the individual forms that individuate matter are numerically distinct instances of one and the same species-form. However, in addition to the numerical distinction of several individuals, Simplicius wants to account for the fact that individuals differ not only numerically but also with regard to their accidents (συμβεβηκότα). In fact, the numerical discrimination goes hand in hand with differences in accidents. Like the division of the substrate, the difference in accidents, too, is connected to form rather than to matter. To be precise, the accidents are proper to form rather than to matter.

This is not to say, though, that individuating accidents (i.e., accidents that are peculiar to one individual and distinguish it from other individuals of its species) are part of its individual form. Instead, I think that Simplicius’ statement needs to be understood along the following lines: given that all accidental properties are formal rather than material,²² it is the individual forms, rather than matter, that coordinate the accidental properties and thus guarantee the unity of the individual. Hence, the link between form and accidental properties does not necessarily conflict with the view that the individual forms are numerically distinct instances of one and the same species-form. I will further elaborate on this point in the next two sections. Section 2 is devoted to the role that the accidents play in individuation. Section 3 will then elucidate the relation between the accidents and form.

2 Individuation through accidents

The passage from *In Phys.* I 9 is not the only place where Simplicius talks about individuation through συμβεβηκότα. There are several passages in his commentary on the *Categories* where he addresses the issue more directly. The most important of these is to be found at *In Cat.* 3,

²⁰ Simpl. *In Phys.* I 7, 227.2–5: ὡς εἴ γε ζητοῦντες τὴν ὕλην τόδε τι αὐτὴν ἀφωρισμένως διάφορον τῶν ἄλλων ὄντων ὑποθώμεθα, ἄλλω τινὶ περιπεπτώκαμεν καὶ οὐ τῇ ὕλῃ. ἐκείνη γὰρ οὐδεμίαν ἔχει πρὸς τι διαφορὰν, εἴτερ ποιότης εἰδητικὴ πᾶσα διαφορὰ ἐστίν.

²¹ Simpl. *In Phys.* I 7, 232.34–233.2: ἡ δὲ ὕλη τὸ ἔσχατόν ἐστι καὶ τοῦ ὄντος ἐκβαῖνον καὶ πολλῶ μᾶλλον τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ ἐν τῇ παραλλάξει καὶ παρεκτροπῇ τῇ πρὸς τὸ ὄν ὑφέστηκεν, ἐπειδὴ διὰ τὴν γόνιμον τοῦ ὄντος δύναμιν ἔδει καὶ τὴν ἔμφασιν τοῦ ὄντος ὑποστῆναι.

²² Simplicius at *In Phys.* I 7, 227.2–5, (quoted in n. 20 above) says that matter does not have any individuating difference because every such difference is a formal quality (ποιότης εἰδητικὴ).

54.24–55.5. There Simplicius deals with Aristotle’s characterization of the relation between genus and differentia. He begins by elucidating the notions of genus and differentia, respectively. Following Porphyry, Simplicius argues that the term *genus* has many meanings. He specifies the notion of genus that is relevant for the present argument and contrasts it with the notions of species and differentia:

The genus which has been taken up here is that which is predicated essentially of many things which differ in species; whereas the species is that which is predicated essentially of several things differing in number, and the differentia is that which is predicated qualitatively of several things which differ in species.²³

Since these definitions presuppose a clear conception of ‘differing in species’ and ‘differing in number,’ Simplicius defines these two notions too:

Now, those things differ in species which have become distinguished from each other in the account of their essence. Those things differ in number, by contrast, which have determined the characteristic property of their own existence by means of a concurrence of accidents.²⁴

When two things differ in species, they have different definitions. Simplicius uses the expression λόγος τῆς οὐσίας because the definitional account indicates a thing’s essence. The definition captures the thing’s true being *qua* member of its species. Now Simplicius juxtaposes things that differ in species with things that differ in number. In the latter case, he does not speak of an essence but of “the characteristic property of their own existence” (ιδιότης τῆς οικείας ὑποστάσεως). Simplicius further explains that the individual determines its characteristic property “by means of a concurrence of accidents.” In other words, a certain combination of accidents distinguishes one individual from another individual of the same species and accounts for the fact that they are each one in number.²⁵ As Simplicius states at the beginning of the passage,²⁶ he relies on Porphyry’s *Isagoge*. He approvingly adopts Porphyry’s doctrine that the individual is characterized by a unique conglomeration of proper features.²⁷

²³ Simpl. *In Cat.* 3, 54.26–55.2: τὸ δὲ νῦν παραληφθὲν γένος ἐστὶν τὸ κατὰ πλειόνων καὶ διαφερόντων τῷ εἶδει ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι κατηγορούμενον, εἶδος δὲ τὸ κατὰ πλειόνων καὶ διαφερόντων τῷ ἀριθμῷ ἐν τῷ τί ἐστιν κατηγορούμενον, διαφορὰ δὲ ἡ κατὰ πλειόνων καὶ διαφερόντων τῷ εἶδει ἐν τῷ ποιῶν εἶναι κατηγορουμένη. Trans. M. Chase, slightly modified.

²⁴ Simpl. *In Cat.* 3, 55.2–5: ἀλλὰ τῷ μὲν εἶδει διαφέρει, ὅσα τῷ λόγῳ τῆς οὐσίας ἀλλήλων κεχώρισται· τῷ δὲ ἀριθμῷ διέστηκεν, ὅσα συνδρομῇ συμβεβηκότων τὴν ιδιότητα τῆς οικείας ὑποστάσεως ἀφωρίσατο. Trans. M. Chase, slightly modified.

²⁵ Simplicius here deviates from Dexippus’ *In Cat.* 30.20–34. The latter rejects individuation through properties. He argues that what makes the individual an individual is its (mere) countability (see Chiaradonna 2000, 304–305; Rashed 2010, 158–160) and that individuals are countable because they are separate (διεστηκότα, see Sorabji 2004, 171).

²⁶ See Simpl. *In Cat.* 2, 54.25–26.

²⁷ See Porph. *Isag.* 7.19–24: ἄτομον δὲ λέγεται ὁ Σωκράτης καὶ τοῦτ’ ἐπὶ τὸ λευκὸν καὶ οὕτως ὁ προσίων Σωφρονίσκου υἱός, εἰ μόνος αὐτῷ εἴη Σωκράτης υἱός. ἄτομα οὖν λέγεται τὰ τοιαῦτα, ὅτι ἐξ ιδιοτήτων

Simplicius uses this theoretical framework at least twice in his commentary on *Categories* 8. One of these passages contains interesting parallels with the passage from *In Phys.* I 9 that we have analyzed in section 1 of this paper. It runs as follows:

We esteem more highly than all others Aristotle's admirable doctrine of Quality; not only is it declared that Quality is incorporeal, in that bodies are distinguished by their differences according to Quality; but also, when he says that qualified people are spoken of in terms of their qualities, he defines qualities as *logoi* that give form to the qualified, while, when he says that the qualities are present in the qualified men themselves, he then asserts firmly that the *logoi* too co-exist along with the matter in matter although existing *per se*. For the qualified would not be said to exist because of them, if in fact they were entirely of matter and did not stand on their own when giving existence to matter and in this way existed alongside it separately.²⁸ But since people are said to be called individuals of such a sort because of quality, and are distinguished, individual by individual, in partition, the *logos* of qualities will also be found in division.²⁹

As is well known, *Categories* 8 deals with the accidental category of quality. In the passage quoted above, Simplicius offers a general interpretation of Aristotle's account of quality.

Without investigating all details of Simplicius' intricate interpretation, I would like to highlight a few points that are relevant to our question of individuation.

Unlike the Stoics, Simplicius holds that quality is incorporeal, and he attributes this view to Aristotle as well.³⁰ More precisely, qualities are reason principles (λόγοι) that give form to the qualified. Although they exist in matter, they are self-subsisting entities. This description, which might apply to other accidental categories as well, accords with our analysis of the passage from *In Phys.* I 9 in the previous section. There we have seen that Simplicius conceives of all accidental differences as formal rather than material. Moreover, Simplicius assumes that "bodies are distinguished by their differences according to Quality." In principle,

συνέστηκεν ἕκαστον, ὧν τὸ ἄθροισμα οὐκ ἂν ἐπ' ἄλλου ποτὲ τὸ αὐτὸ γένοιτο· αἱ γὰρ Σωκράτους ιδιότητες οὐκ ἂν ἐπ' ἄλλου τινὸς τῶν κατὰ μέρος γένοιτο ἂν αἱ αὐταί [...]. See also Chiaradonna (2000); Barnes (2003) 150–154, 314–316, 342–345; Chase (2003) 135 n. 573; Sorabji (2004) 165–166, 169; Rashed (2010) 157–158; Chase (2011) 22–24.

²⁸ Although there is no variant reading for χωριστῶς in 218.13 (rendered by Moerbeke as *separatim*), it is tempting to conjecture ἀχωρίστως and to translate '[...] existed inseparably with it.'

²⁹ Simpl. *In Cat.* 8, 218.5–15: Τὴν δὲ Ἀριστοτέλους περὶ τῆς ποιότητος δόξαν ὡς θαυμασίαν πασῶν προκρίνομεν, ἣ οὐ μόνον ἀσώματος οὕσα ἢ ποιότης διηγόρευται, ἅτε ταῖς διαφοραῖς κατ' αὐτὴν διωρισμένων τῶν σωμάτων, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅταν μὲν λέγεσθαι κατὰ τὰς ποιότητας εἴπῃ τοὺς ποιούς, λόγους εἶναι τὰς ποιότητας διορίζεται τοὺς εἰδοποιούντας τὰ ποιὰ, ὅταν δὲ ἐν τοῖς ποιῶσι αὐτοῖς παρῇ λέγη, ἐν ὅλῃ τότε αὐτοὺς καὶ μετὰ τῆς ὕλης δυσχυρίζεται συνυπάρχειν, ἔχοντας μέντοι καθ' ἑαυτοὺς ὑπόστασιν· οὐ γὰρ ἂν κατ' αὐτοὺς ἐλέγετο τὸ ποιόν, εἴπερ ὅλοι τῆς ὕλης ἦσαν καὶ μὴ ἐστηκότες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς παρῇ αὐτῇ τὸ εἶναι καὶ οὕτως αὐτῇ συνῆσαν χωριστῶς. ἐπεὶ δὲ ποιῶι τινὲς κατὰ τὴν ποιότητα λέγεσθαι εἰρηνται καθ' ἕκαστον ἄτομον διακεκριμένοι ἐν μερισμῷ, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἐν διαίρεσει ἔσται ὁ τῶν ποιότητων λόγος. Trans. B. Fleet, slightly modified. See also Simpl. *In Cat.* 8, 229.12–18, where Simplicius investigates the difference between state (ἔξις) and condition (διάθεσις). He argues that they do not differ from each other in the way species do because they are not distinguished by specific differentiae. Nor do they differ from each other in the way two individuals do, because in their case we do not find individuating bundles that account for a numerical discrimination: ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἀριθμῷ διαφέρει ἀλλήλων, ὥσπερ Σωκράτης Πλάτωνος· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἰδιάζον πλῆθος συνδραμὸν τὴν κατ' ἀριθμὸν διάστασιν ἀπειργάσατο (229.16–18). This line of reasoning, too, presupposes a theory of individuation through conglomerations of characteristics. See also Porphyry *In Cat.* 129.4–17.

³⁰ According to Stoic doctrine, qualities are corporeal, while Platonists and Peripatetics consider them to be incorporeal, see Chiaradonna (2000) 321–322.

this claim can be read in two ways. On the one hand, Simplicius might be using the word *διαφορά* in the technical sense. The *διαφοραί* would then be the differentiae that distinguish species of the same genus. Bodies would be distinguished insofar as they belong to different species. This reading presupposes that differentiae fulfill their discriminating function “according to quality,” which accords with Simplicius’ definition of the differentia in his commentary on *Categories* 3.³¹ However, it seems more likely that Simplicius is using *διαφορά* in a broader sense, denoting any kind of difference whatsoever. His use of the word here would then parallel the use we have encountered in the passage from *In Phys.* I 9.³² In that case, he would conceive of a distinction of individual bodies *qua* individual bodies. One individual body differs from another individual body of the same species insofar as it possesses different accidental properties, to be precise, it differs with respect to the accidental category of quality.

The last part of the passage confirms the latter reading. Here Simplicius explicitly refers to the question of individuation, i.e., to the question of what accounts for the distinction of one individual from another. Simplicius, once more following Porphyry, replies that it is the individual’s being qualified in a certain way. The individual’s being qualified, in turn, depends on quality.³³ This implies that the accidental category of quality is relevant to the method of division. We can presume that accidental qualities play a role in the division of a species into individuals, parallel to the role the differentia has in the division of a genus into its species.³⁴ This is not to say, however, that accidental qualities fulfill this role all by themselves. As has been noted, Simplicius is particularly concerned with the accidental category of quality. Given this context, his remarks should not be taken to exclude that other accidental categories, such as quantity, can be part of the individuating set of proper features too.³⁵

³¹ Quoted at the beginning of this section.

³² Simpl. *In Phys.* I 9, 255.28–29: τὰ γὰρ ἄτομα τῷ ἀριθμῷ διαφέροντα διαιρέσεισι πληθύνεται καὶ διαφοραῖς συμβεβηκότων.

³³ On Simplicius’ understanding of the relation between quality and qualified, see Hauer (2016).

³⁴ Porphyry *Isag.* 7.8–8.3 can be interpreted along these lines too, see Sorabji (2004) 168. On the status of differentiae in Simplicius, see Hauer (2018) 176–201. Simplicius at *In Cat.* 5, 98.9–12, states that differentiae are not accidents (see Hauer 2018, 179–181). According to Hauer (2018) 221, he “ascribes both a substantial and a qualitative aspect to essential qualities and differentiae.”

³⁵ Simplicius here deals with the place individuals occupy in a comprehensive predication system, and he asks which categories are relevant for assigning them this place. At the same time, he provides an ontological explanation of the relation between quality and qualified when he defines qualities as “*logoi* that give form to the qualified” and further remarks that “the *logoi* too co-exist along with the matter in matter although existing *per se*.” The passage thus shows that too rigid a distinction between the ontological and the logico-epistemological side of the problem would be inappropriate. As Chiaradonna (2000) 308–309 has pointed out with regard to Porphyry, the logical theory of predication presupposes a certain conception of the ontological structure to which

As the passages under consideration show, Simplicius adheres to the view that an individual is distinguished from other individuals of the same species by a peculiar conglomeration of accidents. The texts also show that Simplicius is heavily influenced by Porphyry, who expounds a similar theory both in his short commentary on the *Categories* and in his *Isagoge*.³⁶ Yet, if we compare Simplicius' *In Cat.* with these two extant texts of his predecessor, Simplicius' commentary turns out to be a precious source, because it alone combines individuation through properties with Aristotelian hylomorphism. Simplicius' texts thus affirm that individuation through properties does not necessarily presuppose a bundle theory in the sense that the individual consists exclusively of properties. In the next section, I will further examine the relation between the peculiar conglomeration of accidents and substantial form.

3 The two aspects of form: *In Phys.* II 1

In the passage from *In Cat.* 8 that we have considered above, Simplicius mentions matter, but he does not mention form. In the passage from *In Phys.* I 9,³⁷ by contrast, Simplicius does refer to form: individual forms shape and individuate matter by division, number, and accidents, which are all peculiar features of form. Still, he does not explain how exactly he conceives of the relation between substantial form and individuating accidents. In what follows, I will elucidate this point by drawing on an interesting passage from *In Phys.* II 1.

Aristotle in *Physics* II 1 examines the notion of nature (φύσις). In this context, he raises the question of whether nature is to be identified with matter or with form. The chapter is relevant for our present purposes because it also deals with form as the object of definition.³⁸

Following Themistius' paraphrase, 39.15–17, Simplicius transforms Aristotle's reasoning that nature is form into a syllogism: "One could syllogize thus: [major:] nature is the very thing whose presence causes what exists by nature to exist by nature; [minor:] what exists by nature

predication refers. See further Hauer (2015) 178–180, who argues that, like Aristotle's *Categories*, Simplicius' commentary on the *Categories* intertwines the linguistic analysis with an ontological one.

³⁶ See Porph. *In Cat.* 129.4–17 and *Isag.* 7.19–24. Porphyry, in turn, is certainly inspired by previous authors. See Plato's *Theaetetus* 209C, where Socrates suggests that Theaetetus differs from other human beings by way of a certain kind of snubnosedness. In the same sentence Socrates adds "the other [characteristics] of which you consist" (τᾶλλα οὗτω ἐξ ὧν εἶ σύ, trans. by Sorabji 2004, 166), so this peculiar feature is part of a whole conglomeration of characteristics. See the even closer parallel to *Th.* 157B–C, pointed out by Barnes (2003) 343 with n. 47 and Sorabji (2004) 165. Socrates there reports the view that we cannot predicate anything of a particular but are only able to give a bundle (ἄθροισμα) of qualities a certain name.

³⁷ Analyzed in section 1 of this paper.

³⁸ See Arist. *Metaph.* VIII 2, 1043a12–28, where Aristotle distinguishes different types of definitions, depending on whether they are related to the object's form, its matter, or both. For an interpretation of the passage in Aristotle, see Morel (2015) 115–125 with further literature. Simplicius mentions Aristotle's three types of definitions at *In Phys.* II 2, 296.10–13.

does so by the presence of the form.”³⁹ Simplicius omits the conclusion that nature is form, because he has already mentioned it in the preceding part of the commentary.⁴⁰ Up to this point, Simplicius has not departed too much from Aristotle’s text. Now he adds a further premise concerning the twofold character of form:

Since form is twofold – one according to the shape, the other according to the account – when we determine what each thing is, we indicate form on the one hand according to the shape alone, i.e., according to the outward figure and color and size, on the other hand according to the account, i.e., according to the uniform model of the unfolded definition; this [form] corresponds to the definition, as also does the name. This [form] also embraces the shape. Now, he says that this form according to the account or the shape of such a kind is nature.⁴¹

Unlike the preceding passage, this part of the text is not paralleled by Themistius. In the lemma Simplicius comments on, Aristotle uses the phrase ἡ μορφή καὶ τὸ εἶδος twice (193a30–31 and 193b4).⁴² While Themistius in his paraphrase uses μορφή and εἶδος interchangeably, Simplicius here distinguishes between the two.⁴³ He explains that form is twofold, i.e., that it has two aspects: form according to the shape and form according to the account. Both of these aspects are relevant to definition.

Simplicius says that when we determine what each thing is (ὀρίζόμενοι τί ἐστὶν ἕκαστον), we indicate (ἀποδίδομεν) its form according to its two aspects. On the one hand, we indicate form in terms of shape (κατὰ τὴν μορφήν) or outward appearance. On the other hand, we indicate the conceptual aspect of form, form according to the account (κατὰ τὸν λόγον). Shape is characterized by a certain outward figure, color, and size. It seems that Simplicius intentionally lists accidental features. The size, for instance, may vary from individual to individual even within one species. Simplicius’ characterization of shape thus agrees with his inquiry of shape as a quality in his commentary on *Categories* 8, 261.17–273.4. Simplicius

³⁹ Simpl. *In Phys.* II 1, 276.22–24: καὶ συλλογίσαιτο ἂν οὕτως· οὐ τῇ παρουσίᾳ τὰ φύσει ὄντα φύσει ἐστὶ, τοῦτο ἐστὶ φύσις· τῇ δὲ τοῦ εἶδους παρουσίᾳ τὰ φύσει ὄντα φύσει ἐστὶν. Trans. B. Fleet, slightly modified.

⁴⁰ He will also refer to it in what follows, see Simpl. *In Phys.* II 1, 276.35–277.2: εἰ γὰρ ἡ φύσις ἡ ἐκάστου ἐν τῷ εἶναι ἐκάστου, τὸ δὲ εἶναι ἐκάστου ἐν τῷ κατὰ τὸν λόγον καὶ τὸν ὀρισμὸν εἶδει ἐστὶ (διὸ καὶ ἀντιστρέφουσιν οἱ ὀρισμοὶ πρὸς τὰ ὀριστά), ἡ φύσις τὸ εἶδος ἂν εἴη.

⁴¹ Simpl. *In Phys.* II 1, 276.24–30: ἐπειδὴ δὲ διττὸν ἐστὶ τὸ εἶδος τὸ μὲν κατὰ τὴν μορφήν τὸ δὲ κατὰ τὸν λόγον ὄν, ὀρίζόμενοι τί ἐστὶν ἕκαστον ἀποδίδομεν τὸ μὲν κατὰ τὴν μορφήν μόνην τὸ κατὰ τὸ ἐπιπολῆς σχῆμα καὶ χρῶμα καὶ μέγεθος, τὸ δὲ κατὰ τὸν λόγον τὸ κατὰ τὸν μονοειδῆ τύπον τοῦ ἀνειλιγμένου ὀρισμοῦ, ὃ καὶ συντρέχει τῷ ὀρισμῷ, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα, τοῦτο δὲ καὶ τὴν μορφήν περιέχει· τοῦτο οὖν τὸ εἶδος τὸ κατὰ τὸν λόγον ἢ τὴν τοιαύτην μορφήν εἶναι τὴν φύσιν λέγει. My translation, based on Fleet’s translation.

⁴² Aristotle does not explicitly distinguish the two terms in *Phys.* II 1. In general, it seems difficult to grasp the semantic difference in Aristotle’s works, especially since the two terms often appear together (see Stevens 2003, 581). At *Meteorology* IV 2, 379b25–32, μορφή is the outward shape as a result of qualitative and quantitative changes caused by concoction. This “nouvelle configuration de la matière,” as Opsomer (2003) 380 calls it, in turn serves as the substrate for another process. Most notably, Aristotle here contrasts μορφή with a thing’s essential form (εἶδος).

⁴³ Simplicius also often uses the terms εἶδος and μορφή interchangeably (see Opsomer 2003, 364, 369). At *In Cael.* 275.5, for instance, he uses the phrase μορφή τις καὶ εἶδος as referring to one single item, immanent form.

there follows Iamblichus, who holds that shape results when substantial form manifests itself individually in matter. Unlike Iamblichus, however, Simplicius in his commentary on *Cat.* 8 argues that shape is constituted by other qualities like figure and color.⁴⁴ Roughly speaking, we can say that all members of a species are the same in form, but they are not the same with regard to shape as a quality, for shape as a quality is individual.⁴⁵

Furthermore, Simplicius states that form according to the account embraces the outward shape. This could be interpreted as follows: when we offer a definition in the strict sense, we indicate the form according to the λόγος, and we do so by naming the proximate genus and the specific difference. This definition applies to all members of the species. The features that belong to shape (figure, color, size, etc.) obviously do not pertain to all members of the species. Nevertheless, the form according to the λόγος to a certain degree determines these features too. As is well-known, the extent to which accidental features like figure, color, and size can vary among individuals of the same species is limited. Substantial form sets the range of, e.g., colors and sizes that can naturally occur in individuals of a given species. For instance, although the natural color of human hair varies to a certain extent among individuals, some colors, such as blue or green, will never naturally occur in a human being. Similarly, human beings can have different heights, but they can never be 10 feet tall. The same holds true for any species, *mutatis mutandis*.⁴⁶

When Simplicius, at the beginning of the passage, mentions the two ways of determining a thing, he uses the participle ὀριζόμενοι in a broader sense. He does not mean ‘defining’ in the strict sense of a definition by proximate genus and differentia specifica. Instead, two different kinds of determination are included. In the characterization of the εἶδος κατὰ τὸν λόγον, by contrast, the genitive ὀρισμοῦ denotes definition in the strict sense. This definition refers to the uniform type, the λόγος. Both kinds of determination are related to substantial form, even though they indicate different aspects of form: On the one hand, we can give a definition in the strict sense, which takes form according to the λόγος as its object. Such is the traditional definition by proximate genus and specific difference. On the other hand, we can indicate form according to the shape, i.e., we can indicate substantial form as it is manifest in matter.

⁴⁴ See Schwark (2018) for a more detailed analysis.

⁴⁵ I think that the semantic distinction between εἶδος and μορφή is relevant at Simplicius *In Cael.* 277.13 too (see section 4.2 below).

⁴⁶ See Schwark (2018) 75 with n. 74. Hauer (2018) 213–214 with n. 626, too, suggests that immanent form sets limits as to which adventitious qualities a compound can assume. As far as I can see, she states this idea hypothetically, though, without adducing textual evidence.

Since accidental features are listed, this manner of determining an entity differs from a definition *sensu stricto*.

The present passage is important because it informs us about the relation between substantial form on the one hand and the accidental features that constitute outward shape on the other. This dependency relation accounts for the range within which accidents can occur in an individual of a certain species. In this context, it is noteworthy that two of Simplicius' predecessors, Porphyry and Dexippus, call the εἶδος the subject or substrate (ὑποκείμενον) of the accidents. Porphyry in his *Isagoge*, 17.3–6 and 21.12–15, argues that accidents are posterior to the species (εἶδος) because the species acts as their subject (ὑποκείμενον). Further, in his commentary on the *Categories* in questions and answers, 93.12–18, he says that the accidents are in the species as in a subject. All of these three passages suggest that εἶδος refers to the species. Dexippus' commentary on the *Categories*, 43.28–31, points in a different direction. Dexippus draws an analogy between matter and form on the one hand and form and accidents on the other: just as matter underlies (ὑπόκειται) the forms, so does form underlie the accidents.

Dexippus' commentary on the *Categories* is influenced by Porphyry's long commentary on the *Categories* (now lost) and perhaps also by his short commentary in questions and answers.⁴⁷ It is therefore reasonable to assume that Dexippus either adopted his view from Porphyry or that he developed it against the background of Porphyry's theory. In short, Dexippus' statement could reflect the ontological counterpart of the theory we find in Porphyry's extant commentaries. Simplicius probably did not use Dexippus' commentary as a source,⁴⁸ but it seems likely that he did use Porphyry's commentaries.⁴⁹ If we presume that Dexippus' theory of the form as a substrate for accidents goes back to, or at least relies heavily on, Porphyry, and if we further presume that Simplicius, too, accepted the theory in Porphyry, then it becomes clear why Simplicius in his commentary on *Physics* I 9 says that the accidents are proper to form. The accidents might be proper to form insofar as the species-form serves as the substrate for the accidents. This would accord with the limiting function of form that Simplicius sketches in his commentary on *Physics* II 1.

With regard to our initial question of individuation, we can draw the following tentative conclusions: Every individual possesses one instance of the universal species-form. When taken by itself, this form differs from other instances of the same species-form only

⁴⁷ See Dillon (1990) 8.

⁴⁸ See Dillon (1990) 11.

⁴⁹ See Luna (2001) 301.

numerically. However, the individual instance of the species-form underlies the non-essential accidents.⁵⁰ These non-essential features belong to the form because it limits and coordinates them, but they are not part of the form. Within the range of possible accidents that is set by the species (e.g., no naturally occurring blue hair in human beings), the accidents can vary from individual to individual (e.g., brown hair as opposed to blond or black). The individual is the very individual that it is, precisely because it has the very accidents that it has. Shape results when the species-form individually manifests itself in matter. It includes accidental features such as a certain color and size (as opposed to the range of possible colors and sizes that is set by the species-form).

Now, where do the individuating accidents come from, exactly? In his commentary on *Physics* I 7, Simplicius emphasizes that qualities (and all other individuating differences) are formal.⁵¹ Furthermore, in his commentary on *Categories* 8, Simplicius explains that qualities are reason principles (λόγοι).⁵² A matter-form compound becomes qualified when it participates in quality as a reason principle.⁵³ The details of this theory are intricate, partly also because Simplicius draws a distinction between essential and adventitious qualities.⁵⁴ For our present purposes it suffices to note that qualities are immaterial. An example may illustrate the implications of this metaphysical framework. We can pinpoint the peculiar features of an individual material substance – of Socrates, let's say: his snub nose, his bulging eyes, his potbelly, etc. Since none of these features is part of his specific form, we might at first glance mistake them for material properties. However, according to Simplicius, these qualitative properties are strictly speaking immaterial, even though they are manifest in matter. They exist in matter, but they are themselves formal. Against this background, it makes sense for Simplicius to assume that they belong to form and are coordinated by it.⁵⁵

Still, none of the passages considered so far provides an answer to the question why the individual has the very accidents it has. It therefore remains open whether the individual conglomeration of accidents is unique in the sense that no other individual with the same

⁵⁰ Simplicius at times distinguishes between essential and adventitious attributes. Although his discussion is not very systematic, it seems that he characterizes essential attributes as completing the subject and being inseparable from it. While adventitious attributes are labeled as accidents, the categorial status of essential attributes is controversial. See Hauer (2018) 158–159.

⁵¹ See, e.g., *Simpl. In Phys.* I 7, 227.2–5, quoted in n. 20 above.

⁵² See *Simpl. In Cat.* 8, 218.5–15, quoted in n. 29 above.

⁵³ See Hauer (2018) 213–214, 222.

⁵⁴ See Hauer (2018) 158–159.

⁵⁵ Simplicius repeatedly stresses the close relation between accidents and substantial form. He also says that form according to the shape, i.e., according to the outward appearance that is determined by accidental features, can be defined. It is unclear whether a definition of the form according to the shape differs from a definition of the compound and if so, how it differs from it (see n. 38 above).

conglomeration exists or in the sense that no other individual with the same conglomeration could ever exist.⁵⁶ As Sorabji remarks, both options run into philosophical difficulties. Accepting the weaker condition that the features are not actually shared runs the risk that the individual could be reduplicated in the future. In that case, proper features are not sufficient to account for individuation. At the same time, it is difficult to explain how individuals should meet the stronger condition that their characteristic features are not shareable.⁵⁷ What regulates the distribution of accidental features? How can the uniqueness of an individual's conglomeration of accidents be guaranteed? While Porphyry's stance on these questions remains unclear, Simplicius comes up with a sophisticated solution in the context of his Platonic cosmology.

4 Do individuals have paradigms? The case of *In Cael.* I 9

In his commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo* I 9, 274.8–279.30, Simplicius considers the problem of individuation from a cosmological perspective.⁵⁸ Here he presents an interesting solution to the question of how the individuating accidents are distributed among material substances. Simplicius' main aim is to refute Alexander of Aphrodisias' criticism of transcendent Forms. Alexander questions Plato's argument for the uniqueness of the cosmos by pointing to the multiple instantiations of other transcendent Forms. Simplicius replies to this objection that each transcendent Form has one universal immanent form corresponding to it. As will become apparent in the second part of this section, however, Simplicius also considers each individual's peculiarity as opposed to the features it shares in common with other members of its species.

At *Timaeus* 31A–B, Plato argues that the world must be unique because it resembles its perfect paradigm, which itself is unique. Simplicius offers a long quotation from Alexander's commentary on *De Caelo*,⁵⁹ where Alexander argues that Plato's line of thought is inconsistent. According to Alexander, Plato posits two different kinds of relations between Forms and perceptibles. On the one hand, he establishes a one-to-one relation between the paradigm of the cosmos and the perceptible cosmos. Just as the former is unique and contains all intelligible living beings, so too is the latter unique and contains all perceptible living

⁵⁶ Sorabji (2004) 166, 169 raises this question with respect to Porphyry and Boethius. Both Porphyry (*Isag.* 7.23–24) and Boethius (*In Int.*² 136.28–137.2) hold that the distinctive features cannot be shared, while Boethius (*In Isag.*² 235.5–236.6) interprets Porphyry as saying that they are not shared (see Sorabji 2004, 169).

⁵⁷ See Sorabji (2004) 166.

⁵⁸ This passage has not yet received much attention in secondary literature. Falcon (2001) and Bowen (2013) do not discuss it. Simplicius' text contains a significant number of citations from Alexander of Aphrodisias' lost commentary on *De Caelo*. A collection of the fragments and discussion of Alexander's arguments is offered by Rescigno (2004) 441–458.

⁵⁹ Discussed by Rescigno (2004) 445–452.

beings. On the other hand, Plato postulates a one-over-many relation in the case of all other Forms. In the case of human being, for instance, one Form corresponds to many perceptible human beings. Alexander argues that Plato's second claim is diametrically opposed to the first. If for example in the case of the Form of man one Form corresponds to many instances, this should be possible in the case of the cosmos as well. In other words, the one-to-one relation between the Form of the cosmos and the perceptible cosmos seems inappropriate if compared with other Forms and their instances. There could be many instances of the cosmos too; these would be many in number but one in form.

Simplicius objects to Alexander's interpretation of Plato, according to which, as a general rule, many instances correspond to one paradigm. He refutes Alexander's argument in several steps. First, he adduces the counter-example of the heavenly bodies, e.g., the sun and the moon. In each of these cases, there is only one instance of the given form: the sun is literally one of a kind.

I am amazed how Alexander, in saying these things, did not understand that not all perceptible animals are such that there are many of them in accordance with each intelligible animal. For there are not many suns or many moons, but all the heavenly animals are unique.⁶⁰

Simplicius here links his argument with the discussion of unique instantiation that he has offered earlier.⁶¹

In a second step, Simplicius extends his argument to sublunary entities:

For not only are the sun and the moon single, but the man which exists for ever in the world as an image is single too, and so too is the horse, which have their being in things which are generated and destroyed; and these things are common and inseparable forms of matter, which Aristotle also accepted as being eternal, although assuredly not as prototypes.⁶²

⁶⁰ Simpl. *In Cael.* I 9, 276.29–32: ταῦτα τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου λέγοντος θαυμάζω, πῶς οὐκ ἐπέστησεν, ὅτι οὐ πάντα αἰσθητὰ ζῶα οὕτως ἔχει, ὥστε καθ' ἕκαστον νοητὸν ζῶον πολλὰ εἶναι αἰσθητά· οὐ γὰρ πολλοὶ ἥλιοι οὐδὲ πολλοὶ σεληνιαί, ἀλλὰ πάντα μοναδικὰ τὰ οὐράνια ζῶα. Trans. R.J. Hankinson, slightly modified. Translations of *In Cael.* I 5–9 are Hankinson's, except where otherwise indicated.

⁶¹ See *In Cael.* I 9, 274.10–275.21. Also, note that the present passage is reminiscent of Proclus' commentary on the *Timaeus*, vol. I book II, 439.22–29. There Proclus mentions counter-arguments against Plato's claim that the cosmos is unique, without, however, providing the names of his opponents. Unlike Simplicius, Proclus points to the unique instantiation of heavenly bodies as an argument against the Platonic position: the fact that sun, moon, etc. are uniquely instantiated could be used to refute the argument that the cosmos is unique because it is a whole. Sun and moon are unique, too, although they are parts, i.e., parts of the cosmos (see Rescigno 2004, 450–451). Simplicius deviates from Proclus in that he uses the case of the uniquely instantiated heavenly bodies as an argument in favor of the Platonic position. Rescigno (1996) 19–29 therefore assumes that Simplicius intentionally ignores the anti-Platonic argument reported by Proclus. I doubt whether this is the case. Rescigno does not take into account that Simplicius' present argument is supplemented by two further arguments. (Rescigno disregards Simplicius' third argument altogether.) He thus misses the point of Simplicius' line of thought as a whole. For the two additional arguments that complete Simplicius' line of reasoning, see below.

⁶² Simpl. *In Cael.* I 9, 276.34–277.4: οὐ γὰρ ἥλιος μόνος εἷς καὶ σελήνη μία, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄνθρωπος εἷς ὁ αἰεὶ ἐστὼς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ εἰκονικῶς καὶ ἵππος εἷς ἐν τοῖς γινομένοις καὶ φθειρομένοις τὸ εἶναι ἔχοντες, καὶ ταῦτά ἐστι κοινὰ καὶ ἀχώριστα εἶδη τῆς ὕλης, ἅπερ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης ὁμολογεῖ αἰδία εἶναι, οὐκ ὄντα δηλονότι πρωτότυπα.

Unlike Hankinson, I hold that the image Simplicius mentions here is not “the general idea of the universal which exists in the Soul of the world.”⁶³ The demonstrative pronoun ταῦτά refers back to sun, moon, and man and horse as eternal images.⁶⁴ However, if we accept this reading, then Hankinson’s interpretation does not make sense, because Simplicius identifies man and horse as eternal images with forms immanent in matter, not with universals on the level of the World Soul.⁶⁵ The context also points in this direction. Simplicius does not even mention the World Soul here, he talks about forms immanent in matter. This becomes particularly evident in the subsequent paragraph, where Simplicius relies on the Platonic doctrine of participation. He explains that, when matter participates in form, immanent forms “are imprinted in the ultimate [i.e., material] things in virtue of their similarity to the prototypes.”⁶⁶

Up to this point, Simplicius’ argument only establishes that one immanent universal form corresponds to one transcendent Form. In order to refute Alexander’s objection against Plato, Simplicius needs an additional argument. That is, he must explain the multiplicity of individuals that share one form, while at the same time saving his thesis that one individual corresponds to one paradigm. Simplicius begins by classifying the different characteristics a perishable particular thing possesses into common and peculiar ones:

Each of the generated and destructible things has something common, for instance being a human being, [which derives] from the single exemplar, and something particular, [which derives] from the disposition of the heavenly and the sublunary bodies changing in time, from which individuals come to be (since the disposition is itself individual even if it is productive of many things) and to which they are assimilated.⁶⁷

Simplicius maintains that the commonalities among different individuals are due to the single Platonic Form that serves as their paradigm (ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐνὸς [...] παραδείγματος). This elaborates upon his immediately preceding remarks about participation, in which he distinguishes between the prototype on the one hand and the immanent form as the imprint of

⁶³ Hankinson (2004) 151 n. 505.

⁶⁴ Grammatically ταῦτά could refer back to τοῖς γινόμενοις καὶ φθειρομένοις, but this would lead to a contradiction.

⁶⁵ Rescigno (1996) 20 seems to mean forms immanent in matter, too, though his term “idee cosmiche” is rather imprecise.

⁶⁶ *Simpl. In Cael.* I 9, 277.7–8: διὸ οὐκ ἔστι πρωτότυπα τὰ ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ, ἀλλὰ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν τῶν πρωτοτύπων ἐν τοῖς ἐσχάτοις ἐκτυπωθέντα.

⁶⁷ *Simpl. In Cael.* I 9, 277.8–13: τῶν δὲ γινόμενων καὶ φθειρομένων ἕκαστον τὸ μὲν κοινόν, οἷον τὸ ἄνθρωπος εἶναι, ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἔχει παραδείγματος, τὸ δὲ ἴδιον ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν οὐρανίων καὶ τῶν ὑπὸ σελήνην ἄλλοτε ἄλλης γινόμενης διαθέσεως, ἀφ’ ἧς ὑφίσταται τὰ ἄτομα, ἀτόμου καὶ αὐτῆς οὐσης, εἰ καὶ πολλῶν οἰστικῆς, καὶ πρὸς ἣν ὁμοιοῦται. Trans. R.J. Hankinson, modified.

this prototype on the other.⁶⁸ The particularity, by contrast, is due to a certain disposition (διάθεσις). This disposition is constituted by the order of heavenly bodies and sublunary bodies at a given point in time t.⁶⁹

Simplicius' description of the disposition deserves special attention. I disagree with Hankinson, who renders the phrase ἀτόμου καὶ αὐτῆς οὐσης as 'since the disposition is also of an individual.'⁷⁰ Rather, the disposition from which individuals come to be is *itself* individual, a fact Simplicius underlines through his use of the words καὶ αὐτῆς. The disposition's own individuality is precisely the reason why it produces individuals.⁷¹ Simplicius' argument is grounded in the so-called principle of similarity. Rosemann argues that this principle is already manifest in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* VII 7 and XII 3, and that it can ultimately be traced back to Plato, perhaps even to Parmenides.⁷² In Proclus, the principle of similarity receives the formal status of an axiom, constituting proposition 28 of the

⁶⁸ Simpl. *In Cael.* I 9, 277.4–8: οὐδὲν γὰρ τῶν ἐνύλων πρωτουργόν, εἴπερ ἡ ὕλη μετέχουσα τῶν εἰδῶν μορφοῦται, ὄντος δὲ τοῦ μετέχοντος ἀνάγκη ἄλλην μὲν εἶναι τὴν μέθεξιν, ἄλλο δὲ τὸ ἀφ' οὗ ἡ μέθεξις ἐνδίδεται· διὸ οὐκ ἔστι πρωτότυπα τὰ ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ, ἀλλὰ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν τῶν πρωτοτύπων ἐν τοῖς ἐσχάτοις ἐκτυπωθέντα.

⁶⁹ Simplicius' argument seems to be influenced by previous authors, above all by Proclus, see Procl. *In Parm.* 823.25–824.3 and 825.8–14 Steel as well as d'Hoine (2010) 242–247. According to Rashed (2010) 168–170, the Stoics already maintain that the individual as an individually qualified object (ιδίως ποιόν) is determined by the constellation of heavenly bodies at the time of its birth. See Rashed (2010) 160–164 on Alexander of Aphrodisias' criticism of the Stoic doctrine that the individual eternally returns, once per world cycle. Rashed (2010) 170–171 thinks it plausible that Alexander, too, assumes an astral influence on the individuation of material substances.

⁷⁰ Hankinson obviously takes αὐτῆς οὐσης to be an absolute genitive, with αὐτῆς as a personal pronoun that refers back to διαθέσεως. He reads ἀτόμου as a possessive genitive. This translation unnecessarily complicates the sentence. Therefore, I suggest that the participial construction ἀτόμου καὶ αὐτῆς οὐσης belongs to the relative pronoun ἥς (indirectly to διαθέσεως) as a *participium coniunctum*. The adjective ἀτόμου thus characterizes the disposition (διάθεσις).

⁷¹ Yet, Simplicius also mentions, hypothetically, that it might be capable of producing several individuals at once: τῶν δὲ γινομένων καὶ φθειρομένων ἕκαστον τὸ μὲν κοινόν [...], τὸ δὲ ἴδιον ἀπὸ τῆς [...] διαθέσεως, ἀφ' ἧς ὑφίσταται τὰ ἅτομα, ἀτόμου καὶ αὐτῆς οὐσης, εἰ καὶ πολλῶν οἰστικῆς, καὶ πρὸς ἣν ὁμοιοῦται. Although Simplicius does not explicate what he has in mind here, it is likely that he is thinking of twins and multiples. The problem of twins played a prominent role in ancient debates on astrology and individuation (see, e.g., Long 1982, 169, 173; Hegedus 2007, 53). On the one hand, Simplicius seems to indicate the possibility that twins and multiples share the same constellation. On the other hand, he introduces the phrase with a relativizing εἰ καὶ. William of Moerbeke translates *et si simplicium delativa*, which shows that he probably read ἀπλῶν οἰστικῆς instead of πολλῶν οἰστικῆς. This reading, too, is problematic because of the plural it contains. Also, the concessive εἰ καὶ / *et si* is now difficult to explain, for the fact that the disposition produces *simple* individuals does not stand in direct contrast to its being individual. In any case, Moerbeke's variant reading indicates that the passage was perceived as delicate. The reading that corresponds to Moerbeke's translation might be a (not entirely consistent) attempt to circumvent the philosophical problems entailed by εἰ καὶ πολλῶν οἰστικῆς.

⁷² See Rosemann (1996) 33–97. To the various passages in Plato that Rosemann (1996) 35–41 cites, one may add the characterization of the “safe cause” at *Phaedo* 100D–E. See Sedley (1998) 116–127, who links Plato's notion of the “safe cause” with the principle of “like causes like.” Sedley additionally points to Anaxagoras' fragment B10, where the principle of similarity plays an important role. Already Barnes (1982) 119 formalizes what he calls “the Synonymy Principle of causation” as follows: “if *a* brings it about that *b* is φ, then *a* is φ.”

Elements of Theology: “Every producing cause brings into existence things like to itself rather than unlike.”⁷³

After having distinguished common and peculiar characteristics and their respective causes, Simplicius adds the following:

And for this reason the specialists of these issues delineate the genera, the species, and the shapes of generated things by looking to the configurations of the heavenly bodies, tracing out the similarities which the things which derive from there bear to them.⁷⁴

Simplicius affirms that astrological divination indeed has its merits.⁷⁵ Astrologers can use their knowledge of the heavenly constellations and make predictions about a generated individual. They can outline its genus, its species, and, notably, its shape (μορφή). Simplicius does not explain the difference between εἶδος and μορφή here. I assume, with Hankinson, that εἶδη refers to species, because only if it is understood in this way is the transition from the most general to the most particular complete. The last part of the enumeration, μορφάς, then names shape as the individual manifestation of substantial form.⁷⁶ The overall picture Simplicius draws here is one in which the Platonic Form accounts for the universal characteristics that belong to a genus or a species. The individual disposition, by contrast, accounts for an individual’s peculiarity. It guides the interplay between form and matter that eventually leads to shape (μορφή) as the individual manifestation of enmattered form.⁷⁷ In section 3, we have seen that shape comprises accidental features like figure, color, and size. Against this background, we can assume that the individual disposition determines an individual’s peculiar accidental features and thus accounts for its individuality.

What does this theory have to do with the refutation of Alexander’s argument? Against Alexander, Simplicius postulates a one-to-one relation even in the case of Forms like man and horse. His claim rests on the assumption that one universal immanent form corresponds to one transcendent Form. This strategy needs to be complemented, though, for Alexander anticipates the argument that the many instances of a transcendent Form are one in form. Alexander argues that even though these many instances are one in form, they do not display the one-to-one relation between Form and instance that is appealed to in the case of the

⁷³ Procl. *ET* p. 32 ll. 10–11: Πᾶν τὸ παράγον τὰ ὅμοια πρὸς ἑαυτὸ πρὸ τῶν ἀνομοίων ὑφίστησιν. Trans. by Rosemann (1996) 97 n. 97. For a discussion of this proposition, see also Opsomer (2015).

⁷⁴ Simpl. *In Cael.* I 9, 277.13–15: διόπερ οἱ ταῦτα σοφοὶ καὶ γένη καὶ εἶδη καὶ μορφάς τῶν γεννωμένων διαγράφουσιν εἰς τοὺς οὐρανίους σχηματισμοὺς ἀποβλέποντες καὶ τὰς πρὸς ἐκείνους ἀνιχνεύοντες ὁμοιότητας τῶν ἐκεῖθεν παραγομένων. Trans. R.J. Hankinson, slightly modified.

⁷⁵ On Simplicius’ attitude toward divination, see Gabor (2014).

⁷⁶ On Simplicius’ distinction between εἶδος and μορφή, see section 3 above.

⁷⁷ On the relation between form, matter, and shape, see Simpl. *In Cat.* 8, 272.7–14 and 272.25–30, discussed by Schwark (2018) 72–74.

cosmos. Simplicius copes with this objection by positing paradigms of another sort; on this understanding, each one of a multiplicity of individuals corresponds to one paradigm. For instance, one of the many human beings or many horses that exist in the perceptible world corresponds to one individual disposition.

The cosmic disposition thus fills an explanatory gap. It is the “immediate exemplar, one in number,” of one of the many generable and destructible things.⁷⁸ Ontologically speaking, however, the cosmic disposition is not on a par with a transcendent Form. While the latter is an eternal hypostatization of an essence, the former is a temporally limited set of relations within the cosmos. It belongs to the realm of nature, which implies that it can only fulfill the role of a concurrent cause.⁷⁹ Since it involves sublunary entities, and since sublunary nature is not ruled by absolute necessity,⁸⁰ the disposition includes contingencies.

What matters most to us is that the Platonic Form and the individual disposition share the role of a paradigm. This point is crucial because it enables Simplicius to link his hylomorphic account of individuation with Platonic ontology. The individual manifestation of immanent form depends upon the individual disposition as its immediate “paradigm.”⁸¹ This disposition is not a transcendent cause, but it ultimately depends upon transcendent causes.⁸² It thus mediates between the supranatural realm and the natural world. On the one hand, it shares its role of a paradigm in common with the transcendent Forms. On the other hand, it fulfills this role on the level of nature.

⁷⁸ *Simpl. In Cael.* I 9, 277.16–19: ὥστε καὶ τῶν αἰδίων ἕκαστον καὶ τῶν γενητῶν καὶ φθαρτῶν τὸ ἐν τῷ ἀριθμῷ πρὸς ἐν ἀριθμῷ τὸ προσεχὲς παράδειγμα ἀφομοιοῦται, καὶ καλῶς ὁ Πλάτων ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐν εἶναι τὸ τοῦ κόσμου παράδειγμα τὸ παντελὲς νοητὸν ζῶν ἕνα εἶναι τὸν κόσμον ἀπέδειξεν. Trans. R.J. Hankinson, slightly modified.

⁷⁹ See *Simpl. In Phys.* II 3, 314.9–14, where Simplicius says that nature is only a concurrent cause. Natural generation immediately depends upon the movements of the heavenly spheres. Since these are governed by psychic causes, and since on an even higher level the intelligible Forms exert their influence, natural generation ultimately depends upon these: διὸ καλῶς ἔχει τὴν μὲν φύσιν συναίτιον λέγειν μᾶλλον, αἷτια δὲ προσεχῇ τῶν ἐν γενέσει καὶ φθορᾷ τὰς τῶν οὐρανίων κινήσεις, καθ’ ὧς τρέπεται τὰ τῆδε. ἀνωτέρω δὲ τοὺς ψυχικοὺς τῶν κινήσεων λόγους καὶ ἔτι τούτων ἀνωτέρω τὰ νοερά εἶδη, ἐξ ὧν πρώτων ἐνδίδεται πᾶσιν ἢ τῶν εἰδῶν ἑλλαμψις κατὰ τὴν τῶν δεχομένων ἐπιτηδειότητα. See Proclus, who in *ET* prop. 75 distinguishes between causes proper and concurrent causes (συναίτια). Causes proper are characterized by transcending their effects, while concurrent causes exist in the resultant.

⁸⁰ According to Aristotle, the sublunary nature acts always or *most of the time* in a determinate manner, see *Physics* II 8, 198b34–36: ταῦτα μὲν γὰρ καὶ πάντα τὰ φύσει ἢ αἰεὶ οὕτω γίγνεται ἢ ὥς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, τῶν δ’ ἀπὸ τύχης καὶ τοῦ αὐτομάτου οὐδέν. See also Simplicius’ commentary on that passage (*In Phys.* 372.23–374.28).

⁸¹ There are two interesting parallels regarding the use of *προσεχὲς παράδειγμα*: see Proclus *In Tim.*, vol. II book III, 207.28–32, and Damascius *In Parm.* III, 169.11–13. Like Simplicius, both Proclus and Damascius use *παράδειγμα* as referring to something different from the Platonic Form. Still, the context is not the same as in Simplicius. Proclus argues that the harmony in the soul is the immediate paradigm of the harmony in the sensible realm. Damascius calls Cronus the immediate paradigm of the substance of the celestial bodies. Thus, unlike Simplicius, Proclus and Damascius here use *προσεχὲς παράδειγμα* for entities that transcend the natural realm.

⁸² As Simplicius’ argument at *In Phys.* II 3, 314.9–14, suggests (see n. 79 above).

The paradigmatic function of the individual disposition is a cornerstone in Simplicius' theory of individuation. It accounts for the distribution of the accidental properties that make the individual the very individual it is. Simplicius explicitly claims that the cosmic disposition is individual. Does this also mean that it is non-repeatable? Simplicius' texts do not provide an answer to this question. We have seen that Simplicius in his commentary on the *Categories* adheres to the view that material substances are individuated through their proper features. This implies that no two individuals may share exactly the same properties, for if they do, it turns out that there is another individuating factor that distinguishes them from each other.

It seems that the individual cosmic disposition is a means to guarantee that an individual set of properties cannot randomly be reduplicated. The idea is not new: it can be found in the Stoics, in Alexander of Aphrodisias, and in Proclus.⁸³ The Stoics restrict the non-repeatability of the heavenly configuration, and of the corresponding conglomeration of properties in an individual, to the period between two successive conflagrations.⁸⁴ Alexander, by contrast, argues that the same astral configuration could never occur twice in the course of the history of the world.⁸⁵ Simplicius discusses the Empedoclean theory of world cycles at *In Cael.* I 10, 307.14–308.22, but he does not state his own opinion on the issue. Whatever his opinion may be, however, it is safe to say that the correspondence between the cosmic disposition and the individual enables him to account for the non-repeatability of the individual within a fixed chronological interval, e.g., within the interval of one cosmic cycle.⁸⁶ In this sense, Simplicius' Neoplatonic cosmology provides the causal framework for the non-repeatability of the individual.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis has shown that Simplicius is well aware of the problem of individuation, and that he addresses it more directly than Aristotle does. While the question of whether Aristotle takes substantial form to be universal or particular remains open for debate, Simplicius explicitly claims that individual forms individuate matter. These individual forms are numerically distinct instances of one universal species-form.

⁸³ See n. 69 above.

⁸⁴ See Rashed (2010) 165–169.

⁸⁵ Alexander's position is paraphrased by Averroes, see Rashed (2010) 162–164 for an English translation of the Arabic text and for comments on that text.

⁸⁶ See also Plotinus, who in *Ennead* V 7 3 explains that the unfolding of all reason principles leads to different individuals, and that this unfolding of the reason principles is restricted to a cosmic cycle. Furthermore, see Simplicius *In Phys.* 5, 886.1–20, pointed out by Rashed (2010) 166. Simplicius there reports that the Stoics debated over whether numerically one and the same individual can recur in the next world cycle. It seems that Simplicius himself does not allow for this view.

At the same time, it should be noted that the division Simplicius describes in his commentary on *Physics* I 9 is brought about by accidents that are peculiar to form. This accords with Simplicius' commentary on the *Categories*, where Simplicius adopts Porphyry's theory of individuation through proper features. Regarding the relation between individuating accidents and substantial form, Simplicius' commentary on *Physics* II 1 is revealing. Substantial form plays a key role as that which coordinates the individual's accidents. It sets the range of accidents that can naturally occur in an individual of a given species. In Porphyry and Dexippus we find the theory that the εἶδος underlies the accidents. If we assume that Simplicius adopts this view, we can see why he thinks of form as setting the range of possible accidents. Within the limits that are set by the species, each instance of the universal species-form acts as a substrate for individuating accidents.

Simplicius' commentary on *De Caelo* I 9 sheds further light on the distribution of properties. Each natural being corresponds to an individual disposition of heavenly and sublunary bodies that serves as its immediate "paradigm." The individual disposition guarantees that the individual's conglomeration of accidental properties is non-repeatable. Simplicius' theory of individuation is thus embedded in his Neoplatonic metaphysics: as a "paradigm" on the level of nature, the individual disposition is ultimately governed by higher causes.

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