


12-28-1992

# Alexander on Form-in-Matter and the Breakdown of Aristotle's Categories

John O. Ellis

*University of Memphis, john.ellis@emory.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://orb.binghamton.edu/sagp>

 Part of the [Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity Commons](#), [Ancient Philosophy Commons](#), and the [History of Philosophy Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Ellis, John O., "Alexander on Form-in-Matter and the Breakdown of Aristotle's Categories" (1992). *The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter*. 180.

<http://orb.binghamton.edu/sagp/180>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). It has been accepted for inclusion in The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter by an authorized administrator of The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). For more information, please contact [ORB@binghamton.edu](mailto:ORB@binghamton.edu).

John Ellis  
Memphis St. Univ.  
Dec 28, 7:30pm, Jefferson West  
Washington, DC

### *Alexander on form-in-matter and the breakdown of Aristotle's categories*

One aspect of the story of the destruction of Aristotle's categories in late antiquity has already been told. Richard Sorabji has shown us how Philoponus, in the *contra Proclum*, came to consider prime matter as 'the three-dimensional', which he also called a substantial quantity.<sup>1</sup> This view had the effect of raising a quantity, he three-dimensional, to the level of substance. There is another part to this story, one which fills in the picture, or shows us how Philoponus' view in the *contra Proclum* depends upon a by then long standing tradition. For Philoponus argues for the notion of a substantial quantity by referring to the already accepted idea that there are substantial *qualities*.<sup>2</sup> It is the history, or at any rate a certain portion of the history, of the idea of substantial qualities that I'd like to tell here.

First I had better be clearer about what I mean by the "breakdown" of Aristotle's categories. There were of course attempts to reduce the number of the nine non-substance categories—ultimately, it was suggested by some, down to just one, the category of relation—, but this sort of reduction would not amount to a breakdown of the categories in the sense I mean here. By far the most important feature of Aristotle's categorical structure is the distinction between substances and non-substances, or accidents, and any attempt to blur that distinction would be an attempt to "destroy" or "breakdown" the categories in my sense. One way to do so would be to raise an accident to the level of substance—as Philoponus did with his substantial quantity, the 'three-dimensional', or as some maintained, as we shall see, that there are qualities which are 'substantial', e.g., whiteness in the case of snow.<sup>3</sup> Another would be to demote substances to one of the non-substance categories. There were a variety of suggestions along this line in antiquity as well: from the relatively easily handled one that Socrates is an accident of place to the more serious tack that form is an accident of matter, or that sensible substance is really nothing but a bundle of accidents.

The two strategies of attack are closely related in that they both issue from discussions and criticisms of Aristotle's "definition" of "being in a subject" at *Categories* 1a24-5. Aristotle himself says that specific differences are not in a subject (3a21f.). Once one comes to see specific differences as special sorts of *qualities*, then one opens the door to there being other qualities, or properties generally, that deserve this special status. The form-in-matter problem also arises out of discussions concerning *Categories* 1a24-5. Suppose one asks whether form is related to matter as in a subject. Why not? It is not a part of matter nor can it exist separately. Besides, Aristotle himself speaks of form as being *predicated of* matter, both in contexts where "predicated of" seems to be equivalent, in our sense, to "accident of"—we will consider some examples shortly.

In his discussions of the form-in-matter problem, I believe Alexander is able to clarify the Aristotelian view, but not without a price: for what we shall find is that his solution supports the arguments of those who, like Lucius, would want to wreck Aristotle's categories. In fact, Alexander's solution to the form-in-matter problem *rules out* Porphyry's reply, on Aristotle's behalf, to Lucius.

My discussion will be divided into six sections. In the first I provide some background to the form-in-matter problem in Aristotle; the second focusses on Alexander's solution to the problem; in the third, we consider Plotinus' contribution; in the fourth, there's brief treatment of the problem by the commentators on the *Categories*; and finally in the fifth section, I look at what I shall be calling "Lucius' problem"—this pertains directly to the substantial qualities doctrine, and it reveals, I will be suggesting, how Alexander's way of solving the form-in-matter problem contributes to the breakdown of the Aristotelian categories. In the sixth section I shall suggest how the two issues are connected.

#### A. Aristotelian background

Let us begin with the "Aristotelian" sources of the form-in-matter problem. Here I shall ask the reader to do two things which from our modern perspective are unusual. The first is to consider *Categories* 1a24-5 as a definition, or quasi-definition, of an accident. It was viewed along these lines in the texts we will be discussing; some of the commentators even made explicit how Aristotle's description could be seen as analogous to a definition.<sup>4</sup> Consider the text:

- i) the predicate belongs in the definition of the subject (as animal belongs to man), or
- ii) the subject belongs in the definition of the predicate (as in Ar.'s favorite example, snubness belongs to nose).

So, there is *κατὰ συμβεβηκός*, or *per accidens*, predication just in case neither the predicate belongs in the definition of the subject nor vice-versa (e.g., white belongs to man *κατὰ συμβεβηκός*). Accidental predication is a case of one thing being said *of another*, *per se* predication, in either sense, is not, so if form is predicated of matter in one of the 2 senses of *per se* predication, then they are not other in being. Aristotle's "somehow one" could be explicated along these lines, and artifacts would not make up a unity, since the shape the artists imposes on the bronze is not related to it *per se*. *Physics* 2.1, with its distinction between natural substances and artifacts in terms of having an internal vs. an external principle of change can be read in this light.

One who adopts the dynamic strategy, as L.A. Kosman (1984 & 1987) does, will point out that the change from potency to act is not one of becoming other than, or alteration, but a realization of an already latent tendency, or a realization of what that something already is. For example, an infant's becoming a mature adult is not a case of alteration, but an actualization of the human form which was already there—potentially. According to the dynamic strategy, the form and matter are somehow one because the matter is potentially the form; and at the moment of actualization they are one. Again, artifacts fail to be unities on the dynamic strategy as well, because the shape of the statue is not latent in the bronze as such, but must be imposed on it by the artist. Again, *Physics* 2.1 is relevant here.

Both strategies may be brought to bear on these problems.<sup>7</sup> The unity of form and matter in the case of natural substances is what distinguishes them from artifacts and accidental beings, like white man. So form's being predicated of matter is not a case of one thing being said of another. We could also put this by saying that matter is not sufficiently distinct from form to be a subject for *accidental predication*. Matter *underlies*, or serves as a *ὑποκείμενον* for, form in a different way. Aristotle formulates the different ways of underlying at *Metaphysics* 9.7 1049a27-b2:<sup>8</sup>

For the subject (τὸ καθ' οὐ) or substratum (τὸ ὑποκείμενον) differ by being or not being a 'this' (τόδε τι); the substratum (τὸ ὑποκείμενον) of *accidents* is an individual such as a man, i.e. body and soul, while the accident is something like musical or white. The subject is called, when music is implanted in it, not music but musical, and the man is not whiteness but white, and not ambulation or movement but walking or moving.—as in the above examples of 'of something [e.g. a casket is not wood but of wood]. Wherever this is so, then, the ultimate (τὸ ἔσχατον) subject is a substance; but when this is not so but the predicate is a form or a 'this' (εἶδος τι καὶ τόδε τι), the ultimate subject (τὸ ἔσχατον) is matter and material substance. And it is only right that the 'of something locution (ἐκείνινον) be used with reference both to the matter and to the accidents; for both are indeterminates. (Oxford translation, slightly revised<sup>9</sup>)

The passage sets up a parallel between the way a composite substance (man considered as a composite of body and soul) relates to accidents and matter relates to form, but it does so in order to indicate the difference in the way each underlies. The composite substance is already a 'this', and so it underlies accidents as something already determinate, where its being so is not dependent on the accidents which modify it. The matter, by contrast, is not already a 'this', but requires form in order to gain determinateness. Thus, although composite substance and matter both underlie, or can be considered *ὑποκείμενα*, their 'being or not being a "this"' affects the way in which they serve as *ὑποκείμενα*. This difference underpins the *linguistic* parallel<sup>10</sup> between matter and accidents, for since matter is not a 'this', it can appear to be a modification of an already definite form, just as an accident is a modification of an already definite substance. Aristotle points out that the parallel is reflected in Greek language, since the 'of' locution (ἐκείνινον) is used for both matter and accidents. That is, we don't call the statue bronze, but of bronze, just as we don't call someone music, but musical. Both are indeterminates when the respective 'predication' has occurred, and must be so, if the substance in question is *one* substance, or a unity.

Let this suffice as an outline of Aristotle's position regarding the form-matter problem. To sum up, I hope to have shown that

For soul does not come to be in body without qualification, since if that were so it would have come to be in every body, hence also in the simple bodies, fire, air, water, earth, and that's impossible. But the organic body is subject and matter for soul, which is neither able to be organic before it has soul nor, once it throws off the soul, can it still be organic. For no soulless body is organic. Therefore, on that account, it is not possible to grasp [that] in which soul is. For being organic [goes] with soul, as lead [goes] with heaviness.

Now it might seem that a natural form, like soul, is in something determinate, viz., a body, and so why isn't it in that as a subject? So, at any rate, would go the objection that Alexander seems to be anticipating.<sup>15</sup> But Alexander argues that the *ex quo* matter for soul is a "soulless body", while its constitutive matter is an "organic body". Alexander's rather abstract and technical language helps make the point clearly, that there can be no question of soul being in a *soulless* body, so there can also be no question of the soulless body somehow remaining intact through the change; if it could do so, of course, then the soul would have to be conceived of as an accidental modification of it. As Alexander says, "what has something [in it as] in a subject has this while maintaining its own substance".<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the soul is in the organic body, but, again, there can be no question of the organic body persisting through the change. It comes to be and perishes with the soul. We put this above in terms of form and matter not being *other* in being; so here, the soul and an organic body are not other in being, i.e., in the sense evidently intended here, at any rate, the organic body is not specifiable independently of soul: an organic body is defined by soul, just as lead is defined by heaviness. This is sense (i) of per se predication we distinguished above.

There are other ways in which Alexander expresses the idea that form and matter are "not other in being"—e.g., in terms of their *codependence* on one another, since neither can form exist independently of matter (*Mant.* 5 121,32-4; *Quaest.* 1.17 30,4-6), or in terms of matter being included in the account of form. i.e., sense (ii) of per se predication (*Quaest.* 1.26)—but the dependence of matter on form is the most important for the purpose of solving the form-in-matter problem. For what this shows is really the crucial feature of Alexander's solution: any subject of an inherent property must have certain credentials, viz., it must already exist in actuality, and so be capable of existing separately from that inherent, and of being specified independently of it. What we saw above in Aristotle as a description of two ways of underlying, where the subject for inherent properties was said to be a τὸδε τι, is turned into a requirement in Alexander: a subject *must* already be a τὸδε τι if it is to underlie an accident. For convenience, let's call this requirement the τὸδε τι requirement:

The τὸδε τι requirement: if *x* is a subject for an inherent property *y*, then *x* is a τὸδε τι before *y* comes to be in it.

Of course, we must bear in mind that if something is a τὸδε τι then it exists in actuality and is capable of existing independently.

I hope by now to have shown that Alexander's discussion of the form-matter problem includes those features that we saw in our outline of Aristotle's position above, viz., an emphasis on the differences between artifacts and composite substances, the use of the idea that form and matter are not other in being, and a formulation of two senses of ὑποκείμενον. But before we can move on to discuss later treatments of the problem, we must consider another treatment by Alexander himself. For in *Quaest.* 1.8 he introduces a restriction on the discussion that proved to be influential, and also makes use of a distinction, perhaps invented by Lucius, that will be of some importance to our own discussion shortly.

*Quaest.* 1.8 begins with a reference to the *Mantissa* discussion we have been considering.<sup>17</sup> It builds on that discussion, and adds to it in important ways. I don't go into the details of this comparison here, but restrict my comments just to the new bit. I have divided the following portion of 1.8 for convenience (17,8-18,30).

(1) To [show] that form is not in matter as in a substrate, it was said that soul is not in body either, since the form is the cause for the matter's being in actuality (for it is not possible for it to be in [real] existence apart from the form), and that what is in a substrate is in something which is in actuality and is able to exist even apart from what is in it as in a substrate.

Alexander's response to this objection can be summed up in a general way as follows. He first makes some general remarks about how we ought to conduct our inquiry into such matters (3). We want to know whether  $x$  is in  $y$  as in a subject. Alexander suggests that in order even to start the inquiry, we must be able to take some  $x$  in which  $y$  is and then ask how  $y$  is in it. But this requires that we can identify  $x$  independently of  $y$ . In other words, he first insists, once again, on the  $\tau\acute{o}\delta\epsilon\ \tau\iota$  requirement, that any subject for an inherent property must already exist in actuality and be a  $\tau\acute{o}\delta\epsilon\ \tau\iota$ . He draws the following corollary to this (T\*).

Well, the form is *not yet* in the matter, if [the matter] is taken by itself; and for this reason one would not enquire *how* that is in it which is not even in it in the first place.

So there can be no question of form being in *matter* as in a subject. What form is in is the "compound being"—or the composite of matter and form. But if we consider how form is in that, we must see that it is not as in a subject, since the form is in the composite as a *part*, and so the condition as set forth in clause (a) of the quasi-definition of inherence is not satisfied. The conclusion of course is that form is not in *anything* as in a subject, and hence not an accident of anything.

There is still a question, raised by this objection and again, by a second objection at (6), of how to distinguish the way that form contributes to its subject, viz. the composite, from the way an accident contributes to its subject. Both would seem to be necessary conditions, in some sense, of their subject's existence. It is in this context that Alexander sets out two ways of contributing to the being of something in (7), (a) & (b), and it is this distinction that will be most important for what follows. It is a distinction between being an unqualified condition for the being of something and being a condition *as a part* for the being of something. Call this latter a constituent condition.<sup>18</sup> Form is a constituent condition of the composite: it contributes to the being of the composite as a part of what it is. Such being the case, it obviously follows that the composite cannot exist without the form—the form helps to make up its very being; as Alexander puts it, the form contributes to the composite's being a  $\tau\acute{o}\delta\epsilon\ \tau\iota$ . An accident, on the other hand, inheres in a subject which is already complete, which is already a  $\tau\acute{o}\delta\epsilon\ \tau\iota$ . As such, the composite can exist without the inherent property. It may, therefore, at first glance, strike one as odd to speak of inherent properties as being conditions, of any sort, for the subject's "being in existence" ( $\tau\acute{o}\ \epsilon\iota\nu\alpha\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\acute{\alpha}\sigma\epsilon\iota$ ). But what such locutions mean here is only that inherent properties contribute to the subject's being *qualified* in some way, either in terms of quality, or quantity, or any of the other nine, non-substance categories, and not to the subject's *actual existence*. The subject for an inherent property, which on Alexander's view must be the composite, and not the matter, already exists independently of it. Of course, there is a sense in which composites depend upon inherent properties for their very existence, but this is only at the general level—a piece of wax must have some shape or other, but it can exist without the particular shape it now has. So Alexander argues in the passage immediately following (8).<sup>19</sup>

Before we move on to other discussions of the form-in-matter problem, it will be useful to sum up the key features of Alexander's solution.

- (T)  $\tau\acute{o}\delta\epsilon\ \tau\iota$  requirement: if  $x$  is a subject for an inherent property  $y$ , then  $x$  is a  $\tau\acute{o}\delta\epsilon\ \tau\iota$  before  $y$  comes to be in it.
- (T\*) corollary to (T): since matter has no actual existence apart from form, there can be no question of form being in matter in the first place.
- (C) constituent condition:  $x$  is a constituent condition of  $y$  iff  $x$  is a part of the being of  $y$  (or contributes to  $y$ 's being a  $\tau\acute{o}\delta\epsilon\ \tau\iota$ , or completes the being of  $y$ ).
- (CP) constituent principle: if  $x$  is a constituent condition of  $y$ , then  $x$  cannot be in  $y$  as in a subject.

As a final remark, note that Alexander's formulation of the constituent principle is quite general; it is not limited to forms, although it is brought in here in connection with the problem of form-in-matter. This leaves the door open to there being other examples, some of which we shall consider shortly.

two senses of subject, or ways of underlying; one as matter to form, the other as a subject for affections. The other alternative is recognizable as Alexander's—it is a version of the  $\tau\acute{o}\delta\epsilon\iota\ \tau\iota$  requirement: matter cannot be a subject for form, since form is its actuality or perfection. Strictly speaking, form is not even in matter (our T\* above), and here also Plotinus makes use of a version of the constituent principle; form, together with matter, complete some one thing. The third passage, on “not being in a substrate”, also emphasizes the constituent principle.

Plotinus is important to the rest of my story for two reasons; the first is obvious: his treatment of the form-in-matter problem was no doubt influential on the Neoplatonic commentators. But secondly, he makes use of *all* of the key components of Alexander's solution, (T), (T\*), and (CP). The commentators, however, with the possible exception of Simplicius, omit (T) and its corollary (T\*). Why?

We must remember, as I pointed out at the outset, that Plotinus ultimately drops the “division into elements”, since form, matter, and the composite make up a P-series, and so there can be no one genus, substance, to which they belong. But once the division is dropped, (T\*) at any rate obviously goes with it, since it requires the distinction between form and matter.<sup>21</sup> Yet there is more. Plotinus' final conception of sensible substance (chs. 8 & 15) amounts to a rejection of (T) as well. Let me explain.

In chapter 8 Plotinus suggests that we no longer consider the parts of which sensible substance is composed, but rather sensible substance as such, e.g., stones, earth, plants, animals. It is still common to such substances that none of them are in a subject or belong to another, but there is a problem. Since we are considering sensible substances *qua* sensible, or as what is available to the senses, they obviously cannot exist without some size or quality—that would render them insensible. But if that is so, Plotinus asks, how are we “to separate off the accidental”, or distinguish the substantial from the accidental?

For when we separate off this, size, shape, colour, dryness, moistness, what are we going to establish as substance itself? For these [sensible] substances are qualified substances. But is there something around which occur what make being simply substance into being qualified substance? And will fire be not as a whole substance, but something belonging to it, like a part? And what could this be? Just matter. But then, is sensible substance a conglomeration of qualities and matter...?<sup>22</sup>

I take it that even though Plotinus expresses the point interrogatively, it nonetheless is his final view on the nature of sensible substance. This would seem to be confirmed by his later remarks in ch. 15, where he speaks of sensible substances in the same way. The upshot of this view, and the important bit for our purposes, is how matter itself is allowed to underlie qualities and quantities, and so (T) is no longer in place. There is of course no question here of form being in matter, since we have dropped that division; but its substitute is a conglomeration of qualities + matter, and the qualities are “compounded together on” matter. In ch. 15 the metaphor is one of mixing; whether it is mixing or compounding the result seems to be the same: the matter in the bundle is capable of some sort of separate existence apart from the qualities. It helps but does not rid one of the difficulty to say, as Plotinus does at the end of the passage (6.3.8,35-7),

But here what underlies is sterile and inadequate to be being, because the others do not come from it, but it is a shadow, and upon what is itself a shadow, a picture and a seeming.

Yet even a shadowy existence is more than Alexander would have allowed matter on its own, at least if it is an *actual* shadowy existence—Alexander would of course allow that matter on its own has a potential existence. But I take it that Plotinus' matter in the bundle is actual, albeit shadowy. If so, then his ultimate view of sensible substance implies that he would reject (T) as well.<sup>23</sup>

#### D. Neoplatonic commentators

Turning now to the Neoplatonic commentators, I suggest that it is not surprising, given Plotinus' treatment, to find Porphyry, his pupil, affirming without hesitation that form *is* in matter as in a subject (*in Cat.* 78.6-7). In response to a question as to which of the nine senses of “being in something” he has given capture the meaning

something he now means as in a composite substance, to which "substance" and "what" may truly be applied.

It is obvious that Elias agrees with Porphyry, since he baldly concedes that form *is* an accident of matter.<sup>24</sup> He brings in the constituent principle when it's a question of the composite. Ammonius and Olympiodorus give what I shall call a stipulative solution to the problem. They stipulate, instead of arguing, as Alexander did, that what Aristotle means when he says "in something" in the *Categories* is substance in the sense of composite substance. This reading may issue from the restriction of the application of the doctrine of the *Categories* to sensibles, since ultimately sensibles are composite substances in Aristotelian terms. But it has the effect of leaving the possibility open that there is another sense of subject which can underlie an inherent property. In other words, those who adopt the stipulative solution no longer adhere to the τὸδε τι requirement in general, nor, of course, its corollary (T\*), because for them it would *only* hold in the context of the *Categories*, and this is just due to Aristotle's restricted use of "subject" here to mean "composite substance". Once they've made the stipulation, they make use of the constituent principle.

To see what I mean, consider the text of Ammonius. His response is twofold: he says that "the form, even if it is not part of the matter, is yet part of the composite", and that, as such, the form is, in our terms, a constituent condition of the composite and so not in it as in a subject. But nothing here has ruled out form being in matter, since no appeal to the constituent principle can be made in that case, as Ammonius points out—"it is not part of the matter". Olympiodorus' solution is *merely* stipulative; he doesn't even bother to mention the constituent principle.

Simplicius calls for special treatment. For although he uses the stipulative solution as well (see (2)), his remarks in (1a-b) come close to adhering to the τὸδε τι requirement, but are opposed to (T\*). Here's why: (1a) does make the distinction between two ways of underlying—as a composite substance underlies accidents and as matter underlies form—and (1b) speaks of form giving being to matter; but nonetheless form *is* said to be *in* this formless matter. So although it may be arguable that Simplicius is adhering to (T) here, he certainly is *not* drawing the corollary, (T\*).

Be that as it may, we will get clearer on this other conception of subject and how form can be an accident of it by looking at Porphyry *apud Simplicium*, and his solution to Lucius' problem.

## E. Lucius' problem

### Simplicius in *Cat.* 48.1-34

(1) Lucius and his followers also raise a difficulty about calling what is in a subject what is 'not as a part'. "For if we call the complements of the substance," they say, "parts of it, and color, shape, and size complete the being of the sensible body in general and, in general, quality and quantity (for there could be no body without color and shape), while the being of this body, e.g., snow, is completed by whiteness and coldness, it is necessary to make a choice: either not to say that these things are in a subject or that it is not right to assert that 'what is not as a part' is one of those things in a subject. And how, generally, can complements be said [to be] in a subject? For Socrates' shape is not in Socrates as in a subject, but if anything, things which enter already completed things from outside would be in them as in a subject."

(2) In response to this problem Porphyry said, "Subject is twofold, not only according to the Stoics, but also according to the earlier philosophers. For the quality-less matter, which Aristotle called in potentiality, is the first meaning of subject, and secondly, what subsists commonly or peculiarly qualified. For both the bronze and Socrates are subject for things which come to be in them or are predicated of them. Many of the things which come to be in," he says, "are, relative to the first subject, in a subject, e.g., all color, all shape, and every quality is in the first matter as in a subject, not existing as a part of it and incapable of existing separately from it. In the case of the second subject, not all color nor all quality is in a subject, but [they are] whenever they are not complements of the substance. At least white then, in the case of wool, is in a subject, while in the case of snow it is not in a subject, but completes the substance as a part and is rather a subject according to the substance. Likewise also heat is

will take into account other ways Aristotle gets at that distinction, especially the central books of the *Metaphysics*, where he anyway rethinks and supplements the account in the *Categories*.

## F. Final Remarks

In my final remarks I want to bring us back to Philoponus and the "three-dimensional". I suggest, speculatively, that his view is an improvement on Porphyry's. Suppose one is in the end more sympathetic to Porphyry's account than Alexander's, as Philoponus, it is probably safe to say, was. You will have to face a considerable difficulty in explaining how all qualities inhere in prime matter, and so are accidents of it. Take, e.g., the whiteness of a swan, which is an accident of the second subject, the swan, and the whiteness of snow, which is a substantial quality of the second subject, the snow. Now Porphyry would have us understand *both* these whites as being in prime matter as in a subject. Both are colours, and as such, presumably, they require a substrate of a sufficient level of organization in order to be realized in it; minimally, I suppose, a surface. But we cannot allow that prime matter, as such, has a surface; to allow that would mean that it is already enformed in some way, in other words, on a par with the second subjects.

Enter Philoponus, *contra Proclum* 425,6-14:

If, then, the three-dimensional is actually the substance of body as such, and it alone remains unchanged amidst the changes in bodies, as has been shown, then there is no argument to show that incorporeal matter must underlie it as its subject. It itself is the first subject underlying all natural forms, and further it is from it and from the substantial qualities in combination that there come into being bodies which are made real, that is, fire, water and so on. (trans. Sorabji 1988, 29)

In other words, the first subject is not incorporeal matter, and so may be corporeal enough to underlie *all* accidents. Not, to be sure, corporeal enough to satisfy Alexander's τῶδε τι requirement, but perhaps enough so to have a surface.

In an earlier work, Philoponus had put forward a position closer to Porphyry's, but still recognizable as being on the way to that of the *contra Proclum*.<sup>27</sup> At *in Cat.* 65.8-66.5 the first subject is still prime matter, but the second subject is called a "qualityless *body*", and it is this that underlies all qualities, and they are said to accidentally inhere in it. The structure of the solution is basically the same, in that, to use Philoponus' example, the heat in fire is complete of it, and so not an accident, while it does accidentally inhere in the qualityless body. Yet even so Philoponus' conception of the qualityless body is different from Porphyry's qualityless *matter*, since he describes it as having volume in three dimensions (65.17-18). As such it will not be as difficult to conceive of how qualities might inhere in it.

John Ellis  
Memphis State University  
ellisjo@memstvx1



- <sup>11</sup>This clause is difficult, and my conjecture is that the τοῦ ἐν ᾧ here is a reference to Aristotle's text just quoted, where τοῦ ἐν ᾧ also occurs at l. 34. It makes good sense of the passage, since Alexander is obviously stressing the dependence of being a 'this' on form.
- <sup>12</sup>ὑπόστασις here evidently means actual or concrete existence. I take it that this is in opposition to potential existence, which matter has before form comes to be in it. I needn't rely on the troublesome ll. 35-120,1 as evidence, but 120,8-9 makes the point that matter is not a subject in actuality. I will discuss this passage shortly; cf. also other occurrences of ὑπόστασις in Alexander's treatment of the FM problem with this sense, e.g. *Quaest.* I.8 17,10.13.17-19; 18,6.11.12; L17 30,5; I.26 42,16-17. For a brief discussion of the word and its various uses, see Lloyd 1981, 52-3.
- <sup>13</sup>Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.
- <sup>14</sup>cf. also 121,17-18 and *Quaest.* I.26 42,11-14.
- <sup>15</sup>cf. also 121,27-122,4.
- <sup>16</sup>120,26-7 : τὸ δὲ ἔχον ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ τὴν οἰκίαν φυλάσσει οὐσίαν ἔχει τοῦτο. Cf. I.8 18,14: οὠζον τὴν οἰκίαν φύσιν.
- <sup>17</sup>Specifically, to *Mant.* 5, 119,21-122,15.
- <sup>18</sup>I owe this way of putting the condition to Mario Mignucci.
- <sup>19</sup>*Quaest.* I.8 18,30-5 (trans. Sharples 1992): "Moreover, the subject differs from what is in it as in a subject, in that the subject is also able to exist without the things that are in it as in a subject (for even if the wax cannot exist without a shape, it can at least exist apart from the shape which it now possesses), while that which is in a subject is not able to exist if that which is its subject is separated from it."
- <sup>20</sup>6,3,7,12-20. All passages from Plotinus are translated by Armstrong 1987.
- <sup>21</sup>Plotinus' reason for rejecting the form, matter, composite division of course relies on it being a division of *substance*. He will no longer speak of form and matter as "elements" making up a substance, since he now, via the P-series argument, regards such a division as incoherent. The crucial point here is that he no longer uses the form-matter distinction, and that is why he cannot hold T\*. Alexander, as Richard Sorabji has pointed out to me, also rejects the distinction of form and matter as a division of *substance*, since he puts matter outside the categories altogether (in *Metaph.* 464.21-6, followed by Asclepius 380.31-5; cf. Theophrastus *Metaph.* 6.17). But nonetheless Alexander finds the distinction between form and matter useful for analyzing sensible substance, unlike Plotinus, and so he can hold T\*. In other words, the principle does not require that the distinction between form and matter be one as between *substances*.
- <sup>22</sup>6,3,8,14-21.
- <sup>23</sup>It should be noted that Plotinus' ultimate view, as he hints in this passage and puts more clearly in ch. 15, is that sensible substance is, ontologically speaking, on a par with artefacts. As long as the matter in the bundle is given an actual existence apart from the qualities, their union can never be complete—they will always remain accidental unities.
- <sup>24</sup>For another example of Elias' straightforwardness, see Ellis 1990, 301-2. *Phon.* 35
- <sup>25</sup>Of course one would still want to rule out hands and feet from being inherent properties of the subject, so the option would involve *supplementing* the clause. This, as I suggest below, is the option we ought to take.
- <sup>26</sup>There is a parallel passage in Dexippus 23,25f., although neither Porphyry nor Lucius are mentioned. Cf. also Elias 173,24-5, which expresses what I'm calling "Porphyry's solution" in the context of criticizing Porphyry's views, and Philoponus 65,8-66,5, on which see next note.
- <sup>27</sup>For a fuller discussion of Philoponus' various positions, see Sorabji 1988, ch. 2. I am again indebted to Franz de Haas for calling my attention to the passage discussed in this paragraph.
- \*An earlier version of this paper was read at the University of Texas at Austin Ancient Philosophy Workshop, Spring 1992, and I am grateful to many in the audience, especially Steve Strange and Christian Wildberg. I'd also like to thank David Sedley, Mario Mignucci and Richard Sorabji for their extremely helpful criticisms of earlier drafts.

### Alexander Mantissa 5, 119.31-120.17

(1) μήποτε οὐν ἄλλος τις τρόπος τοῦ ἐν τινι παρὰ τὸ ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ἔστιν ὁ τοῦ ὡς εἶδος ἐν ὕλῃ. οὐ γὰρ οἶόν τε τὸ εἶδος ἐν ὕλῃ ὡς ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ εἶναι, εἴ γε τὸ ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ἔστιν, ὃ ἐν τινι μὴ ὡς μέρος ὄν ἀδύνατον χωρὶς εἶναι τοῦ ἐν ᾧ ἔστιν (δεῖ γὰρ τὸ ὑποκείμενον τῷ ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ὄντι τὸδε τι εἶναι), οὐδὲν δὲ πρὸς τὸ εἶναι ἐνεργεῖα τὸδε τι καὶ τοῦ ἐν ᾧ λέγεται εἶναι χωρὶς εἶδους. διὰ τοῦτο γοῦν οὐδὲ ἡ ὕλη αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔχει δύναται, ὅτι μὴδέπω τὸ εἶδος ἔστιν ἐν αὐτῇ. ἕκαστον γὰρ τῶν ὄντων μετὰ εἶδους ἐστὶ τὸδε τι. κατὰ γὰρ τὸ εἶδος πᾶν ἐστὶ τοῦτο δὲ λέγεται.

(2) ὥστε οὐκ ἂν εἴη ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ τῇ ὕλῃ τὸ φυσικὸν εἶδος. τὸ μὲν γὰρ κατὰ τέχνην γινόμενον εἶδος ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ἔστι τῷ τὸδε τι εἶναι καὶ εἶδος ἔχει τὸ ὑποκείμενον, ὡς ὁ τεχνίτης τὸ τεχνικὸν εἶδος ἐμποιεῖ τε καὶ περιτίθειν. οὐ κέτι δὲ τὸ φυσικὸν εἶδος οἶόν τε οὕτως εἶναι ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ λέγειν. οὐ γὰρ τὸδε τι οὐδὲ ἐνεργεῖα ὑποκείμενον ἢ ὕλη καθ' αὐτήν. εἰ οὖν τὸ μὲν φυσικὸν εἶδος οὐκ ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ, καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ δὲ φυσικὸν εἶδος, οὐκ ἂν οὐδὲ ἡ ψυχὴ ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ εἴη.

(3) οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἡ ψυχὴ ἐν σώματι ἀπλῶς γινόμενη, ἐπεὶ κἂν ἐν παντὶ σώματι ἐγένετο, ὥστε καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀπλοῖς, πυρὶ, ἀέρι, ὕδατι, γῆ· τοῦτο δὲ ἀδύνατον. ἀλλ' ἔστιν ὑποκείμενον αὐτῷ καὶ ὕλη τὸ ὀργανικὸν σῶμα, ὃ οὔτε πρὸ τοῦ τῆν ψυχὴν ἔχειν οἶόν τε ὀργανικὸν εἶναι, οὔτε ἀποβαλὼν τῆν ψυχὴν ὀργανικὸν ἔτι. οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀψυχον σῶμα ὀργανικόν. οὐκ ἄρα ἔστι λαβεῖν διὰ τοῦτο ἐν ᾧ ἔστιν ἡ ψυχὴ. σὺν γὰρ ταύτῃ ὄν ὀργανικόν, ὡς ὁ μόλιβδος σὺν τῇ βαρύτητι.

### Alexander Quaestiones 18, 17.8-18.30

(1) πρὸς τὸ μὴ εἶναι τὸ εἶδος ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ ὡς ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ, μὴδὲ τῆν ψυχὴν ἐν τῷ σώματι ἢν λεγόμενον, ὅτι πρὸς τὸ εἶναι τῇ ὕλῃ ἐνεργεῖα τὸ εἶδος αἴτιον (οὐ γὰρ οἶόν τε εἶναι αὐτὴν ἐν ὑπόστασει χωρὶς τοῦ εἶδους), τὸ δ' ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ὄν ἐν τινὶ ἔστιν ἐνεργεῖα ὄντι ὃ δύναται εἶναι καὶ χωρὶς τοῦ ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ αὐτῷ ὄντος.

(2) πρὸς ὃ ἀντέπιπτεν τὸ καὶ τὰ σώματα βοηθεῖσθαι μὲν πρὸς τὸ εἶναι ἐν ὑπόστασει ὑπὸ τῶν συμπερηκτότων, εἴ γε πᾶν σῶμα ἀνάγκη μετὰ σχήματος εἶναι τίνος καὶ χρώματος, ὁμολογεῖσθαι δὲ ταῦτα ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ εἶναι τῷ σώματι. οὐκ αὐτάρκες οὖν πρὸς τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ τινὶ τὸ συντελεῖν τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ αὐτῷ εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἐν ὑπόστασει.

(3) ἢ εἰ μὲν τι ἀπλῶς συντελεῖ τινὶ εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἐν ὑπόστασει, οὐ κεκώλυται τοῦτο ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ εἶναι αὐτῷ, ὡς εἰδείχθη ἐπὶ τοῦ σώματος καὶ τῆς ποιότητος, ἥς χωρὶς ἀδύνατον εἶναι τι ἐν ὑπόστασει σῶμα· εἰ δέ τι εἴη ὡς μέρος συντελοῦν τούτῳ ἐν ᾧ ἔστι, τοῦτο οὐχ οἶόν τε ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ εἶναι τούτῳ οὐ ἔστι μέρος. τὸ δὲ εἶδος τούτῳ ἐν ᾧ ἔστιν, ὡς μέρος συντελοῦν φαίνεται.

(4) δεῖ μὲν γὰρ τῆν ζήτησιν τοῦ πότερον ὡς ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ τινὶ ἔστι τὸ προκείμενον ἢ μὴ ποιεῖσθαι λαβόντας τὸ πρᾶγμα, ἐν ᾧ ἔστι μὲν τοῦτο περὶ οὐ ἢ ζήτησις, ζητεῖται δὲ τὸ πῶς ἔστιν ἐν αὐτῷ. ὃ γὰρ δεικνύς ὅτι τὸ λευκὸν ἐν σώματι ὡς ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ, λαβὼν τι σῶμα, ἐν ᾧ τὸ λευκὸν ἔστι, καὶ δείξας ὄν ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτὸ μῆτε ὡς μέρος μῆθ' ὡς δυνάμενον χωρὶς αὐτοῦ εἶναι εἰδείξεν, ὅτι ἔστιν ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ αὐτῷ. οὕτως δὲ δεῖ καὶ τὸν ζητούντα περὶ τοῦ εἶδους, πότερον ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ἔστιν ἢ μὴ, λαβεῖν τι τοιοῦτο, ἐν ᾧ ἔστι μὲν ἥδη τὸ εἶδος, ζητεῖται δὲ τὸ πῶς.

(5) ἐν μὲν οὖν τῇ ὕλῃ, εἰ καθ' αὐτὴν λαμβάνοιτο, οὕτως ἔστι τὸ εἶδος (διὸ οὐδ' ἂν ζητοῖτο, πῶς ἔστιν ἐν αὐτῇ τὸ μὴδὲ τῆν ἀρχὴν ὄν ἐν αὐτῇ), ἐπεὶ δὲ ἔστιν ἐν τῇ συναμφοτέρῳ οὐσίᾳ τὸ τοιοῦτον εἶδος, χρὴ τοιοῦτό τι προχειρισάμενους ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τῆν ζήτησιν ποιεῖσθαι. ἀλλὰ μὴν ἢν ἂν λάβωμεν συναμφοτέρον οὐσίαν, ἐν αὐτῇ τὸ εἶδος τὸ ὄν ἐν αὐτῇ ὡς μέρος ἐστὶ τοῦ συναμφοτέρου. καὶ γὰρ ἡ ψυχὴ ἐν τῷ ὀργανικῷ σώματι, ἐν ᾧ ἔστιν, οὕτως ἔστιν ὡς μέρος. εἰ δ' ὡς μέρος, οὐκ ἂν εἴη ὡς ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ὄν τούτῳ, ἐν ᾧ ἔστιν οὕτως [ἔστιν], οὐθ' ἡ ψυχὴ οὔτε τι εἶδος ὅλων.

(6) ἢ ἔρεῖ τις καὶ τὸ λευκὸν τοῦ μὲν λευκοῦ σώματος εἶναι μέρος, ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ δ' εἶναι τῷ σώματι ᾧ συντελεῖ πρὸς τὸ εἶναι ἐν ὑπόστασει, διὸ καὶ τὸ εἶδος τῆς δ'

λαβών. καὶ ἔστιν τὸ ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ δωδέκατον τοῦ ἐν τινι σημαινόμενον· πολλὴ γὰρ διαφορὰ ἔστιν τοῦ ὡς ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ πρὸς τὸ ὡς ἐν ὕλῃ. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ἐν οὐσίᾳ ἔστιν καὶ ὡς ἐν οὐσίᾳ συνθέντος· σύνθετος δὲ ἐξ ὕλης καὶ εἶδους ἢ γε φυσικῆ οὐσίας· τὸ δὲ ἐν ὕλῃ εἶδος ὡς ἐν ἀνειδέῳ καὶ μέρει οὐσίας. καὶ τὸ μὲν ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ τὸ εἶναι παρὰ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου λαμβάνει, τὸ δὲ εἶδος δίδωσιν τῇ ὕλῃ τὸ εἶναι· καὶ τὸ μὲν ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ οὐ συμ-πληροῖ τὴν τοῦ συνθέντος οὐσίαν, ὡς δηλοῖ ὁ ὀρισμὸς αὐτοῦ, τὸ δὲ ἐν ὕλῃ συμπληροῖ. ἔτι δὲ λέγω ὅτι τὸ μὲν ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ συμβεβηκὸς ἔστιν καὶ ὑπὸ μίαν τινὰ τῶν ἐννέα κατηγοριῶν τελεῖ, τὸ δὲ εἶδος ὑπὸ τὴν οὐσίαν ἀνάγεται καὶ τὸ ὑποκείμενον...

(2) εἰ δὲ τις τὸ ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ εἶδος περιλαμβάνεσθαι νομίῃσι τῷ λόγῳ, διότι καὶ τοῦτο ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ ἔστιν οὐχ ὡς μέρος αὐτῆς καὶ ἀχώριστόν ἐστιν ἀπ' αὐτῆς, εἴρηται πρότερον, ὅτι τὸ ἐν τινι νῦν ὡς ἐν συνθέντῳ οὐσίᾳ φησὶν, ἐφ' ἧς καὶ ἡ οὐσία καὶ τὸ τί ἐπαληθεύειν δύναται.

### Simplicius in Cat. 48.1-34

(1) Ἀποροῦσι δὲ οἱ περὶ τὸν Λούκιον καὶ τοῦτο πρὸς τὸ μὴ ὡς μέρος λέγεσθαι τὸ ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ. εἰ γὰρ τὰ συμπληρωτικά τῆς οὐσίας, φασὶ, μέρη αὐτῆς εἶναι λέγομεν, συμπληροῖ δὲ ἀπλῶς μὲν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ τὸ εἶναι χρῶμα σχῆμα μέγεθος καὶ ἀπλῶς ποιότης καὶ ποσότης (ἄχρουν γὰρ καὶ ἀσχημάτιστον οὐκ ἂν εἴη σώμα), τοῦδε δὲ τοῦ σώματος ὅσον χιόνος λευκότης καὶ ψυχρότης, ἀνάγκη δυοῖν θάτερον, ἢ μὴ λέγειν ταῦτα ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ἢ μὴ καλῶς ἀποφάσκεσθαι τῶν ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ τὸ μὴ ὡς μέρη εἶναι. πῶς δὲ· καὶ ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ὅλως τὰ συμπληρωτικά δυνατὸν λέγεσθαι; οὐ γὰρ ἡ Σωκράτους μορφή ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ἔστιν τῷ Σωκράτει, ἀλλ' εἴπερ ἄρα, τὰ τοῖς ἤδη τελείοις ἔξωθεν ἐπεισιόντα, ταῦτα ἂν εἴη ἐν ὑποκειμένοις αὐτοῖς.

(2) ταύτην δὴ τὴν ἀπορίαν λύων ὁ Πορφύριος "διττόν, φησὶν, ἔστιν τὸ ὑποκείμενον, οὐ μόνον κατὰ τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους· ἢ τε γὰρ ἄποιοι ὕλη, ἢν δυνάμει καλεῖ ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης, πρῶτον ἔστιν τοῦ ὑποκειμένου σημαινόμενον, καὶ δεύτερον, ὃ κοινῶς ποῖον ἢ ἰδίως ὑφίσταται· ὑποκείμενον γὰρ καὶ ὃ χαλκὸς ἔστιν καὶ ὃ Σωκράτης τοῖς ἐπιγινομένοις ἢ κατηγορουμένοις κατ' αὐτῶν. πολλὰ οὖν, φησὶν, τῶν ἐγγινομένων ὡς μὲν πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον ὑποκείμενον ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ἔστιν, ὅσον πᾶν χρῶμα καὶ πᾶν σχῆμα καὶ πᾶσα ποιότης ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ἔστιν τῇ πρώτῃ ὕλῃ, οὐχ ὡς μέρη αὐτῆς ὄντα καὶ ἀδύνατα χωρὶς αὐτῆς εἶναι· ἐπὶ δὲ τοῦ δευτέρου ὑποκειμένου οὐ πᾶν χρῶμα οὐδὲ πᾶσα ποιότης ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ, ἀλλ' ὅταν μὴ συμπληρωτικά εἰσι τῆς οὐσίας. τὸ γοῦν λευκὸν ἐπὶ μὲν τοῦ ἐρίου ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ, ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς χιόνος οὐκ ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ, ἀλλὰ συμπληροῖ τὴν οὐσίαν ὡς μέρος, καὶ ὑποκείμενον μᾶλλον ἔστιν κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἡ θερμότης τῆς μὲν τοῦ πυρὸς οὐσίας μέρος ἔστιν, ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ δὲ γίνεται τῷ σιδήρῳ, ἐπειδὴ καὶ γίνεται καὶ ἀπογίνεται ἐν τῷ σιδήρῳ ἄνευ τῆς τοῦ σιδήρου φθορᾶς.

(3) ὁ τοίνυν Ἀριστοτέλης τὸ δεύτερον ῥηθὲν ὑποκείμενον ἐνταῦθα λαβὼν τὸ κατὰ τὸ σύνθετον καὶ τὴν ἄτομον οὐσίαν, ὅπερ μὴτε ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ εἶναι φησὶν μῆτε κατ' ὑποκειμένου τινὸς λέγεσθαι, εἰκότως πᾶν τὸ μὴ οὐσιωδῶς ἐπ' αὐτοῦ λεγόμενον, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ συμβεβηκέναι, ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ τούτῳ εἶναι φησὶν, ὡπερ τὴν θερμότητα ἐν τῷ σιδήρῳ· τὰ δὲ συμπληρωτικά ὡς τὴν τοῦ πυρὸς θερμότητα τοῦ μὲν πυρὸς μέρος ἂν εἴποι, ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ δὲ τῇ ἀποίῳ ὕλῃ.