

On Gill's view Aristotle can vindicate the composite substance's status as a genuine unity by distinguishing its functional matter from the matter from which it was generated, and showing that neither the functional matter nor the original matter are related to the form in such a way as to entail that material composites are accidental unities. The functional matter is defined by reference to its capacity to function, and hence by reference to the form of the substance. It does not have a nature of its own distinct from that of the form, and so the fact that living things have functional matter does not make them accidental unities. This, however, is not the matter from which they came to be. That matter is something that has a nature of its own prior to becoming the composite. Although prior to the change it makes sense to refer to that matter as an individual, it simply cannot be the case that it survives as an individual after the new substance has come into being. No individual substance is composed of individuals. Once the composite exists, the matter survives not as a separately existing substance with a nature of its own, but rather as a universal possessed by the composite. For the matter to exist in potentiality after the coming to be of the new substance is for that substance to have the potentialities of the original matter. The preexisting matter had defining powers or potentialities, which prior to the change were possessed essentially by the matter itself. After the change they are accidental properties of a new substratum, namely, the new substance. As such, the matter is in fact a universal property that, although possessed by the composite, is not part of the nature of the composite. The nature of the composite substance is definable by reference to its form alone, and the composite itself is not an accidental composite of some original matter and form. On this view, then, the persistence of the original matter consists in the possession by the substance of a kind of universal property.⁸

From: *Form, matter, and mixture in Aristotle.*

By Frank A. Lewis, Robert Bolton.

Page 228.

Wiley-Blackwell, Hoboken, New Jersey. 1997.