

**Annotated Abridgment of Leonard J. Eslick's "Aristotle and the
Identity of Indiscernibles"
by Anthony J. Damiani
Book Notes V09BN**

3-LETTER CODE: GRK

TOPIC: Ancient Greek Philosophy

SUBJECT: Plato and Aristotle

SUBSUBJECTS: Essence and Existence, Form and Matter, Individual and Universal, Substance Theory

ORIGINAL LOCATION and FILE NAME (of PDF used for typing): W009 A distinction.PDF

CONTENTS:

Critique of pure monistic viewpoints

Central question: In what way does Being admit of difference?

In Plato, all difference is external to essence, falls into domain of nonbeing; Platonic material principle is indeterminate quantitative relationship

Problem of numerically distinct individuals sharing essence; only possible through lack of identity between individual subjects and their essence

Classical Platonic solution: accidental multitude through imaging in receptacle defined by privation

Aristotle's rejection of Platonic receptacle theory: problem of unreality of individuals and unknowability of essence

Aristotle's solution: matter as potency rather than privation; concept of potential ousia (substance); achievement of intelligibility in flux

ARTICLE QUOTED FROM:

- Leonard J. Eslick, "Aristotle and the Identity of Indiscernibles," in *The Modern Schoolman*, Vol. 36, Nov. 1958-May 1959

AD HANDWRITING: Handwritten by AD

COMPLETENESS: Full Paper, annotated abridgment of a few pages from an article

PUBLISHABILITY: No, already published

RETYPE, REFORMAT, AND EDITED by IT 2025

NOTES:

- **RETYPE BOOK NOTES (V09BN).**
- This is an annotated abridgment of pp. 279-283 of “Aristotle and the Identity of Indiscernibles,” by Leonard J. Eslick. The first two sentences, the words ‘(pure consciousness)’, and a couple of question marks are by AD, which seems to suggest AD was questioning some of the statements in the article.
- All spelling, capitalization, and punctuation in this retyped version have been corrected to conform to the article; corrections are in [square brackets]. Italicization added to conform to the article as published.

ANNOTATED ABRIDGMENT OF LEONARD J. ESLICK'S "ARISTOTLE AND THE IDENTITY OF INDISCERNIBLES"

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A distinction between essence and existence is a refutation of those pure viewpoints such as Parmenidean, the Advaitist, etc . . . which many find intolerable . . . and that it does violence to our experience of a differentiated and dynamically interrelated multiplicity[.] Then the task is to explain how and in what ways being admits of difference. Does being admit of essentially or formally differentiated beings or only differences that are material; extra formal[?]

In Pl. [Plato] the separation between sensibles and the essential principles[,], the Forms, and the further separation between the Forms and their Essential principle[,], the One, makes all difference[s] fall outside of essence into the domain of *relation*, of existing nonbeing or prime matter?

If the essence of beings is simple unity[,], they can't be a differentiated manifold in virtue of their essence but only by the power of a principle other than essence and contrary to it? and which receives by way of imaging.

The Pl. [Platonic] ["material["] principle of otherness and differentiation is indeterminate quantitative relationship[.]

If there are many individuals possessing the same essential nature (pure consc [consciousness]) but distinct in number -- the[ir] essence itself can't account for their numerical distinction. Such a multitude will only be possible if there is some lack of identity between the individual subjects and their own essence[.]

Is there more than one way in which this lack of identity can be conceived[?]

In the classical form of the doctrine in Plato in which an accidental multitude is possible only by the imaging of the perfection in a receptacle which is defined by privation[.] Such a receiving subject has no potentiality for becoming the essential perfection really and intrinsically. It can only mirror or reflect it in terms of a shadowy, unreal[,], plane of existence.

Of course Aristotle rejected the Platonic separation or receptacle theory as undermining both the knowledge of reality and the reality of things. The individual whose essence is separated from it is unreal -- and the separated essence is unknowable.

As separated from matter and subsistent in its own right -- the Form becomes a unique and indefinable individual -- not only that -- but impossible to be predicable of the many. To have knowledge of the individual is to have knowledge of its essence.

For Aristotle tells us that "each individual thing is one and the same with its essence and not merely accidentally so".

If the Platonic separation is to be overcome so that sensible things can have an essential core of intelligible and necessary being in their own right in spite of their contingency and change[,], there the matter in regard to form must be *potency* rather than privation. Matter must be potential *ousia* (substance).

So conceived[,] (the sensible) it can enter the order of essence itself and the flux can acquire respectability
i.e., substantiality and intelligibility[.]

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