

# Aristotle on Sameness

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Aristotle's points about sameness or identity are as follows:

1. Aristotle speaks of different senses of same (ταὐτόν) in some of his works but it seems that the most comprehensive division is found in *Topics* (I, 7, 103a7-25) where he mentions three kinds of sameness: numerically, specifically and generically besides a fourth kind he calls 'in view of unity of species.' The numerically sameness on which there is the greatest agreement (To.<sup>1</sup>, I, 7, ^103a25) and is the strictest sense of sameness (To., H, 1, 151b26-27) occurs when there is more than one name but only one thing. Specific sameness occurs when while there is more than one thing, they present no differences in respect of their species. Likewise, generic sameness occurs when there is more than one thing but they fall under the same genus. Aristotle also speaks of a sameness 'in view of unity of species' like the sameness of water from the same spring. We discussed this under the name of 'family resemblance.' In *Metaphysics* (I, 1054a32-b2) he also speaks of a sameness 'both in formula and in number as well as a sameness in the formula of the primary substance. We also observe Aristotle distinguishing sameness from likeness because the former occurs in substance while the latter in quality. (Met., Δ, 1021a11-12) There are several other senses of sameness in book Δ of *Metaphysics*. One sense is accidental sameness in which two things are called the same either because they are accidents of the same thing or because one is the accident of the other. (Met., Δ, 1017b27-29) In another sense, a complex notion is considered as

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations in this paper:

Met.	<i>Metaphysics</i>
To.	<i>Topics</i>

the same of either of the simple notions. (Met., Δ, 1017b30-33) He also speaks of a general rule of being the same: ‘Things are said to be the same by their own nature in as many ways as they are said to be one’ like being one in matter or substance. (Met., Δ, 1018a4-7)

2. ‘We know things in so far as they have the same unity and identity and in so far as some attribute belongs to them universally (ἢ καθόλου τι ὑπάρχει).’ (Met., B, 999a28-29)
3. Herman Weidemann<sup>2</sup> believes that in Met., Z, 11 (1037a33-b7) only primary substances are considered to be identical with what it is for each of them to be. This, however, is not the same as primary substance in *Categories* but is rather meant to cover the individualized substantial form of each thing (τὸ εἶδος τὸ ἐνόν), like the soul of a man (1037a28-29). Therefore, ‘if we take substance which is ‘primary’ in this sense and ‘say just what it is,’ we must indeed be producing a statement of identity. ... To say of a man that he is essentially an animal of such and such a kind is not to mean, however, that the man in question is identical with what he is said to be essentially.’<sup>3</sup> Thus, while an essential predication in which the subject is the primary substance of *Metaphysics Z* (i.e. substantial form) and the predicate just what it is, is ‘genuine statement of identity,’ the predication in which the subject is primary in the sense of the *Categories* and the predicate its secondary substance, is a predicative statement in a strict sense.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Weidemann, Herman, In Defence of Aristotle’s Theory of Predication, *Phronesis*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1980, p. 82

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 84

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.