

INDIVIDUAL AND ESSENCE IN ARISTOTLE'S *METAPHYSICS*

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I shall begin with a brief sketch of a theory of essences. This theory, or one very much like it, has been traditionally, and I think correctly, attributed to Aristotle.

Each individual has an *essence*. An essence is *general*, in that more than one individual may have the same essence. An essence is, literally, *what a thing is*; and if this last clause is understood in a suitably general way, there is no puzzle about how what one thing is can be the same as what another thing is. If things are two of a kind, then what one is (say, a horse) is the same as what the other is. Such essences are the *kinds* that things come in. Socrates and Callias share an essence, for they are of the same kind—both are men. Natural objects come pre-sorted, as it were, into kinds; pre-sorted, because the essence of a thing is what it is by its very nature. A thing may belong to many kinds; Callias, for example, is a man, a biped, an animal. But the various kinds each thing belongs to are always arranged in a species-genus hierarchy, so just one of them will be the most specific natural kind that the thing in question comes in. That natural kind is the essence of the individual in question.

As an account of Aristotle's metaphysics, this sketch, even if not universally accepted, is commonplace. Whatever its shortcomings as an interpretation of Aristotle, it has the virtue of understanding Aristotelian essences as non-mysterious: they are simply the fundamental kinds that natural things come in. We may not agree that there *are* such essences, but at least we understand what they are supposed to be.

There are places in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, however, where essences appear to be a good deal more mysterious than the theory sketched above allows. In particular, in Z6 Aristotle sets out to inquire "whether each thing and its essence are the same or different." The path that this inquiry takes is difficult to follow, but the upshot seems to be that, with certain qualifications, each thing is, indeed, the same as its essence. The problems that ensue are obvious. Socrates may be an instance, or a member, of mankind, but he does not seem to be the *same* as mankind.

Three lines of solution to this problem seem initially promising: (1) Socrates may not be *identical* to mankind, but there may be a sense of "same" according to which he could be said to be the same as mankind. Perhaps Aristotle had such a sense in mind. (2) The only sort of essence an individual, such as Socrates, could be literally the same as would be an essence as individual as he is. Thus, if essences were *individual* (and, hence, non-sharable) rather than general, Aristotle could coherently claim that each thing is the same as its essence. Socrates may not be literally the same as mankind, but he may, perhaps, be literally the same as *what-it-is-to-be-Socrates*. (3) Perhaps individuals, such as Socrates, are not in view here at all. If it is only *universals*, such as species and genera, that are under consideration, then there is no problem how each of *them* could be the same as an essence. Socrates may not be literally the same as mankind, but his *species* surely is.

These three lines of solution share a common strategy. Each takes two parts of the problematic equation ("each thing is the same as its essence") as fixed in

accordance with the theory sketched above and then tries to bend the remaining part into line. (1) fixes on individual "things" and general essences, and opts for a sense of sameness other than numerical identity; (2) fixes on individual "things" and numerical identity, and opts for *individual* essences; (3) fixes on general essences and strict identity, and opts for *universal* "things". Each of these lines, whatever its attractions, has severe drawbacks, not the least of which, it seems to me, is its partial conflict with the theory as sketched. I would prefer to work out an understanding of the problematic equation which does not require us to abandon any part of that theory.

In this paper I will examine the problematic equation that Aristotle considers in *Metaphysics* Z6 and consider various interpretations of it. I hope to show that the three lines of solution mentioned above are inadequate, and will propose, instead, a way of understanding the equation to be perfectly consistent with the theory sketched above.

I

Why is Aristotle concerned to defend the claim, with whatever qualifications are required, that each thing is the same as its essence? Aristotle's motivation (however clouded the details may be) is clearly anti-Platonic. The main question of *Metaph. Z*, "What is substance?", is one that Plato would have answered — perhaps did answer — in terms of the theory of Forms or Ideas. Substances — the fully real, independent entities that are the object of Aristotle's search in *Metaph. Z* — are, for Plato, the Forms or Ideas that exist independent both of the perceptible objects that share, or participate, in them and of the minds which have access to them. In Plato's theory, as Aristotle* represents it to us, the Forms are *separate*, apart from their participants. Each thing, in Plato's view, would be distinct from the Form (or Forms) it shares in, and hence (Aristotle concludes) distinct from its *substance*, if Plato is right about what the substances are. Aristotle, on the other hand, seems to want to answer "Essence" to the question "What is substance?", and if each thing is not distinct from its essence, then Aristotle will be holding a position that contrasts clearly with Plato's. Given Plato's theory of the separation of Form from participant, and Aristotle's claim of (let us say) identity of a thing and its essence, Plato and Aristotle cannot *both* be right about what the substances are. Having distinguished his own view from Plato's, Aristotle will be in a position to argue for the superiority of his own view.¹ So much for the importance of the claim that each thing is the same as its essence.

A second preliminary point concerns the qualifications with which Aristotle bedges his claim. He seems prepared to defend the claim at least for what he calls *kath' hauta legomena* — literally, "things spoken of with respect to themselves" — but appears to withhold it from *kata sumbebekos legomena* — literally, "things spoken of coincidentally." The labels, literally translated, defy comprehension; the somewhat looser versions — "genuine unities" versus "accidental unities" — fare somewhat better. Aristotle's examples are clearer still. An "accidental unity," such as a *pale man*, who is so-called (*legomenon*) by way of coincidence or supervention (*kata sumbebekos*), is not covered by the Z6 equation: Aristotle is

not committed to saying that a pale man is the same as his essence. A "genuine unity," such as a *man*, who is so-called (*legomenon*) with respect to himself (*kath' hauton*, viz., *not* by way of coincidence or supervention), is, indeed, the same as his essence. One might profitably reflect on what, in Aristotle's view, would make a *man* a genuine unity and a *pale man* not. At any rate, this qualification will prove to be extremely important in our interpretation of the Z6 equation, and we shall return to it.

Let us begin with the supposition that the essences with which the Z6 equation is concerned are general essences, i.e., sharable by more than one thing. This seems a reasonable supposition, since Aristotle goes on in Z 7, 10, and 17 to identify *form* and essence, and he seems to assert quite unequivocally that different individuals may have the same form (Z8). So different individuals may have the same essence; and such an essence is, in our terminology, general.

Now consider Socrates and his essence, which we will abbreviate as "*E* (Socrates)." According to the Z6 equation, Socrates is the same as *E* (Socrates); and also Callias is the same as *E* (Callias). But if *E* (Socrates) is general, as we have been supposing, and is *shared* by Socrates and Callias, then *E* (Socrates) = *E* (Callias). Socrates then turns out to be the same as *E* (Callias); and, finally, Socrates turns out to be the same as Callias. But Socrates and Callias are not the same thing, so something seems to have gone wrong.

We may, of course, immediately conclude, along the lines of solution (2) above, that the essences under discussion in Z6 are not general, thereby blocking the identity of *E* (Socrates) with *E* (Callias), but that would be premature. For there is a sense in which Socrates and Callias *are* the same (for they are both men) and, what is more, this is a sense of "same" that Aristotle recognizes (cf. *Metaph.* Δ 9, 1018a5-9, *Top.* 103a6-39; cf. also *Metaph.* Δ 6, 1016b31ff on "one"). One man and another, Aristotle tells us, are not the same in number, but they are the same in species. A man and a horse, while not the same in either number or species, are the same in genus. If we contrast *numerical* sameness, on the one hand, with *specific* and *generic* sameness, on the other, then we can resolve our difficulty by noting that Socrates and Callias are specifically (and, *a fortiori*, generically) the same. The conclusion, that Socrates and Callias are the same, is no longer unwarranted, and so the identity of *E* (Socrates) with *E* (Callias) need not be blocked. General essences are still in the running.

For all its attractiveness, this first resolution of the difficulty must be abandoned.² The price of making palatable the claim that Socrates is the same as Callias is to make the Z6 equation too weak to be of much interest. If it is only specific or generic, as opposed to numerical, sameness that comes into play in the Z6 equation, then the claim that each thing is the same as its essence amounts to no more than that each thing is specifically or generically the same as its essence. But then each thing will be the same, in this sense, as all sorts of things, and we will have been told nothing special about the thing's essence. Thus, Socrates is generically the same as (1) Callias, (2) the species *man*, (3) Bucephalus, (4) the species *horse*, etc., and not all of these are his essence.

Further, recall that the Z6 equation is intended to be part of an anti-Platonic argument. Aristotle wishes to establish his own theory of substance (that substance is essence) as against Plato's, and one step in this argument is the Z6 equation of each thing and its essence. But if the sameness of the Z6 equation is weak-

ened to specific/generic sameness, then the theory of substance as essence will have to be similarly weakened or it will not follow from the premises intended to support it. In this case, the conclusion that substance is essence, which purports to tell us what substance *is*, will tell us only what substance is specifically or generically the same as. And this does not tell us very much—certainly less than what Aristotle intends to tell us. So we cannot invoke a sense of “same” other than numerical sameness to help us out. The difficulty produced by applying the Z6 equation to general essences persists.

Another way of trying to keep general essences in the picture is, along the lines of solution (3), to restrict the range of “each thing” in the Z6 equation. In wondering whether each thing (*hekaston*) is the same as its essence, Aristotle may have had in mind not such things as Socrates and Callias but such things as *man* and *horse*. If we suppose that by “each thing” Aristotle means each *universal* rather than each *particular*, then our problem about Socrates and Callias being the same will not arise, since neither of them will have been identified with an essence by the Z6 equation. For reasons that will become apparent below I will call the interpretation which takes “each thing” to mean each universal the *abstract* interpretation of the Z6 equation; the alternative I will call the *concrete* interpretation.³

The abstract interpretation has much to recommend it. For one thing, it blocks the unwanted inference to the conclusion that Socrates and Callias are numerically the same. For another, it allows the essences under discussion in Z6 to be general, since the essence of a universal, such as *man*, will itself be universal and hence sharable. For a third, it avoids the apparent category mistake that the Z6 equation, on the concrete interpretation, seems to make. After all, an essence seems to be an abstract entity of some kind, so how can a concrete particular, such as Callias, be numerically identical to his essence? Universals, however, are abstract entities, and thus are things of just the right type to identity with essences. The Z6 claim as applied to universals would, e.g., identify *man* with *rational animal*; so understood, the equation seems eminently reasonable.

But is the abstract interpretation even *possible*? How could Aristotle mean “universal” by *hekaston*, the word he typically uses for particulars (*kath' hekasta*) as opposed to universals (*ta katholou*)? He could, because he sometimes does. In the biological works, it is individual *species* that are often referred to as a *kath' hekasta*, and species are, if not the only universals in Aristotle's purview, certainly the ones to which the Z6 equation would most of all be intended to apply.⁴ So Aristotle could have meant “each universal”; the question remains, however: Did he? I believe that there are compelling reasons for concluding that he did not.

For one thing, our effort to make room for general essences in Z6 has thus far ignored the various passages in which Aristotle *seems* to be talking about individual essences. For example, at 1032a8 we find *E* (Socrates); at 1029b14-15 we meet *E* (you); later, in Z15 (1039b25), we discover *E* (this house); in another book of the *Metaphysics*, Δ18 (1022a27), there is *E* (Callias). It is not certain that these references are all to individual essences; but if there *is* such a thing as *E* (Socrates), as opposed to *E* (man), it is difficult to see how Aristotle could fail to be raising a question about Socrates and *E* (Socrates) in wondering whether the Z6 equation holds.

A more telling objection to the abstract interpretation is this. Aristotle finds

it necessary to restrict the Z6 equation to *kath' hauta legomena*. Thus, Aristotle must suppose that the equation does *not* hold for a *kata sumbebekos legomenon* such as *pale man*. But if we consider the abstract interpretation of the equation

$$\text{Pale man} = E(\text{Pale man})$$

we will see that Aristotle can no more find fault with it than he can with any instance of the equation applied to *kath' hauta legomena*. Aristotle would have had no reason to qualify the Z6 equation as he did if the abstract interpretation were right.

Consider an instance of the Z6 equation that Aristotle accepts:

$$\text{Man} = E(\text{Man}).$$

On the abstract interpretation, this claim identifies the universal *man* with the universal *rational animal* (say), which is *what it is to be a man*. This equation, on the abstract interpretation, would be quite acceptable to Aristotle. But on the abstract interpretation, the equation

$$\text{Pale man} = E(\text{Pale man})$$

identifies the universal *pale man* with the universal *rational animal with such-and-such a surface* (say), and this equation is as acceptable as the earlier one. On the abstract interpretation, the Z6 equation seems equally valid for *kata sumbebekos* as well as *kath' hauta legomena*.

One might object that, for Aristotle, there is no such thing as *E* (pale man), and *that* is what is wrong with the application of the Z6 equation to *kata sumbebekos legomena*. But given the abstract interpretation's understanding of essences, it is not at all clear that Aristotle would deny that there is such a thing as *E* (pale man); and, what is more, Aristotle's worry is not just that the Z6 equation, applied to *kata sumbebekos legomena*, fails to hold, but that, e.g., *pale man* and *E* (pale man) are *different* (*hoion leukos anthropos heteron kai to leukoi anthropoi einai*: 1031a20-21). It would be perverse for Aristotle to maintain that two things are (merely) different from one another if he were in a position to make the stronger claim that one of them does not exist. More to the point, non-existence of, e.g., *E* (pale man) is never given as a reason for rejecting this instance of the Z6 equation.

Perhaps the point can be clarified as follows. On the abstract interpretation, for any universal, *F*, the essence with which it is identified, *E* [*F*], provides necessary and sufficient conditions for something's being *F*. Thus, being a rational animal is necessary and sufficient for being a man. Now it is easy to see that the situation does not change when we go on to such universals as *pale man*. Being a rational animal with such-and-such a surface is necessary and sufficient for being a pale man. Whatever argument there may be, on the abstract interpretation, for identifying *F* with *E*[*F*] seems to apply equally well whether *F* is a *kath' hauta* or a *kata sumbebekos legomenon*. We must therefore return to solution (2) and the concrete interpretation.

The concrete interpretation seems to push us into the camp of individual essences.⁵ Such essences are problematic, however. For although they seem to

offer a neat solution to our problems with the Z6 equation, they run into troubles of their own when confronted with Aristotle's thesis of the indefinability of individuals⁶ and his equation of definition and essence.⁷ Individuals, of which there is no definition, would have to have non-sharable essences, which, by virtue of their not being shared, would indeed serve to define those individuals. Defenders of individual essences must extricate Aristotle from this self-contradictory position.

It is not my purpose in this paper to show that Aristotle did not countenance individual essences (although I suspect that he did not). I wish only to defuse one line of argument in favor of individual essences by showing that the Z6 equation does not require them. What we have seen so far, in effect, is that two ways of trying to show this — by appeal to a weaker sense of "sameness" than numerical identity, and by appeal to the abstract interpretation of the equation — do not succeed. If our only remaining way of resolving our puzzle about the Z6 equation is to follow solution (2), then we must concede that Aristotle did, indeed, embrace individual essences. Our project, then, will be to produce a viable alternative to solution (2).

II

As noted above, solution (2), with its individual essences, seems the inevitable outcome of (a) treating the left-hand-side of the Z6 equation as including reference to individuals, such as Socrates and Callias, while at the same time (b) understanding the sort of sameness involved to be numerical identity. But a solution which adheres to (a) and (b) without individual essences may still be possible. At any rate, Michael Woods,⁸ following some suggestions of G. E. L. Owen,⁹ has offered an interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine of essence in the central books of the *Metaphysics*, and in particular in Z4-6, which seems capable of providing just such as solution. Thus, a brief look at this interpretation will be in order.

The Owen-Woods line of interpretation is that the Z6 equation, in effect, is to be understood in terms of a theory of predication that treats, e.g., "Socrates is a man" as an identity-statement. In a "strong" (i.e., essential) predication, such as "Socrates is a man," there is reference to only one individual, viz., Socrates. The predicate expression picks out, not an individual, but a species-form—the essence of the individual in question. And yet, according to the Owen-Woods line, Aristotle's doctrine was the "extremely paradoxical" one that "Socrates is a man" is a statement of identity and that since Socrates and Callias are both men they are both identical to the form *man*.

Woods and Owen take this doctrine, paradoxical as it seems, to be a plausibly Aristotelian reaction to Platonic worries of the Third Man variety. In a "weak" (i.e., accidental) predication, such as "Socrates is pale," the subject and predicate expressions introduce two distinct items¹⁰ and the predicate is not predicated of itself.¹¹ In a strong predication, such as "Socrates is a man," where the predicate is self-predicable, the subject and predicate expressions introduce only one item, for Socrates is identical to his essence, and essence is what is introduced by the predicate of a strong predication. Thus, Aristotle blocks the Third Man Argument by maintaining that of the argument's two crucial assumptions, viz., Non-Identity and Self-Predication, the former holds for weak predications but fails for strong ones, while the latter holds for strong predications but fails for weak ones. There is no predication for which both assumptions hold. So Aristotle need not

fear the Third Man.

This is a very attractive picture of Aristotle's motivation, but it does little to relieve one's perplexity over the doctrine that has been attributed to Aristotle. Aristotle has been made to say that Socrates and Callias are *both* identical to one and the same essence, viz., the species-form *man*. But since no *two* things can be numerically identical to one and the same thing, Aristotle cannot seem to avoid, on the Owen-Woods line, identifying Socrates with Callias. Perhaps in

- (i) Socrates is a man
- (ii) Callias is a man

we should take the predicate, *a man*, although it is the same in (i) and (ii), as designating different items in (i) and (ii). If we do this we will be able to treat (i) and (ii) as identity-statements without having to conclude that Socrates = Callias. And the predicate expression shared by (i) and (ii) may indeed seem to designate different items, for the man that Socrates is said to be is not identical to the man that Callias is said to be.

At this point, however, we should be clear that the characterization of (i) and (ii) as identity-statements will be defensible only if (i) and (ii) are regimented as

- (i') Socrates = man₁
- (ii') Callias = man₂

where the subscripts indicate that man₁ ≠ man₂, which prevents the inference to "Socrates = Callias." But if man₁ ≠ man₂, what is the relation between these two items? Man₁ is the essence of Socrates, and man₂ is the essence of Callias; if these are not identical, they seem to be individual essences, and we will be pushed once again to solution (2). What is worse, as far as the Owen-Woods line is concerned, is that we can also say:

- (i'') Man₁ is a man
- (ii'') Man₂ is a man.

(Indeed, (i'') follows from (i) and (i').) But (i'') and (ii'') are both *strong* predications, and as such will require being treated, if Owen and Woods are right, as identity-statements. Thus, their common predicate, "a man," will no more designate *one thing* than did the predicate common to (i) and (ii). In fact, there will be no way to say, in any kind of predicational statement Aristotle recognizes, what it is that Socrates and Callias have in common. Of course they are both men, common sense rushes in to say, but the statements that tell us this — viz., (i) and (ii) — do not predicate anything of them in common, for man₁ ≠ man₂.

Aristotle should thus look askance at the gift of an identity theory of predication, even if only a partial theory, for such a theory would go nowhere. In addition to the problem mentioned above -- of failing to explain the predication of anything *in common* -- there is also the familiar difficulty that identity theories of predication all seem to presuppose predication rather than to explain it. I believe it can also be shown, although I will not attempt to do so here, that Aristotle could have no reason for treating strong predications as identity-statements that does not carry over to weak predications, so that all predications, weak or strong, would

be statements of identity. If Socrates ends up being identical not only to his essence but also to his accidents we have surely gone too far.

I have thus far been assuming that the Owen-Woods line adheres to both of features (a) and (b) above, and have found the line impossible to follow. That assumption may, however, be mistaken. Thus, Woods writes:¹²

When we use a proper name like 'Socrates' to pick out an individual man, what we pick out is always the form The essence of Socrates is simply the form man, an essence which he shares with Callias The essence of Callias is the essence which he is -- the name 'Callias' picks out that essence or form, though it picks it out in its occurrence in a particular piece of matter.

And Owen says that Aristotle's treatment of strong predications as statements of identity "helps to persuade him that the primary subjects of discourse cannot be individuals such as Socrates, who cannot be defined, but species such as man."¹³ It now appears that when one says "Socrates is a man" one is, indeed, producing a statement of identity, but without referring to Socrates at all. "Socrates" in this context refers to the essence all men share. Thus, the Z6 equation is only *apparently* about individuals, after all. The Owen-Woods line has taken us, by a roundabout route, back to the abstract interpretation of the Z6 equation. Since we have already found sufficient reason to reject that interpretation, we are as yet without an alternative to individual essences.

III

I would like to suggest that the Z6 equation be interpreted as making, albeit in a rather misleading way, a good, recognizable, Aristotelian point about individuals, their identity conditions, and general essences. Aristotle, as we have seen, is clearly taking a position that is opposed to Plato's, so we may perhaps use the anti-Platonic thrust of Z6 as a foothold. In Platonic metaphysics, we may assume—using Aristotelian terminology to express Plato's position—an individual, such as Callias, really has no essence at all. Callias is just a participant in a variety of Forms, and it is the Forms, rather than their participants, that have determinate natures, or essences. If this is Plato's view, then Aristotle may safely conceive of the Platonic notion of *participating in a Form* as being roughly the same as his own notion of having a property accidentally, "by way of supervention" (*kata sumbebekos*). Thus, there can be, for Plato, no *formal* answer to the question "What is it to be Callias?" That is, any answer such as "to be a man," or "to be pale," etc., would only mention something that *supervenes* in Callias and which, conceivably, Callias could lack.

A Platonist attempting to provide identity conditions for Callias, then, would have no real requirements to impose. To be identical to Callias one need not be pale, for Callias need not participate in the Form *Pale*; nor need one be a man, for Callias need not participate in the Form *Man*, either. Any candidate for the role of Callias' essence ("what-it-is-to-be-Callias") expressed in general terms (e.g., *that man, that pale thing*, etc.), fails to provide an answer, if the Platonic position is accepted. No description in general terms provides necessary conditions for being identical to Callias. In Aristotle's terminology, as I understand it, this Platonic position can be put as follows: no individual thing is the same as its essence.

In opposition to this, Aristotle maintains that, at least as far as *kath' hauta legomena* are concerned, each individual is the same as its essence. The qualifica-

tion is important, for it limits, in effect, the *descriptions* serving to pick out the individuals for which the equation holds. *Man* is a *kath' hauto legomenon*, and so provides us with a description which picks out an individual, e.g., *this man*, Callias, for which the equation holds; *pale man* is not a *kath' hauto legomenon*, and so the description "this pale man" will not be part of any acceptable instance of the equation.

The equation itself, as I have said, provides necessary conditions for being identical to the individual in question. In order to be Callias, i.e., to be identical to Callias, an individual must be the same *man* as Callias. (Contrast: to be Callias one need not be the same *pale man* as Callias, since Callias may cease being a pale man without ceasing to be Callias.) And a man is what Callias is; in Aristotle's terminology, *man* is Callias' *ti en einai*, or essence. Aristotle seems to conclude from these two facts that to be identical to Callias is to be the same *essence* as Callias, and so, as he puts it, the individual (e.g., Callias) is the same as its essence.

It may appear that Aristotle is here guilty of the fallacy later to be diagnosed as the confusion of class membership with class inclusion. For holding that Callias is identical to his essence is tantamount to holding that Callias is an essence (in general, x is identical to an F if, and only if, x is an F), and Aristotle seems to have reached this conclusion from the premises that *Callias is a man* and that *man is an essence*.

Aristotle would be guilty of a fallacy, however, only if he understood the equation — which is tantamount to saying that, e.g., Callias is an essence — as claiming that a flesh-and-bones spatio-temporal individual such as Callias is identical to an abstract entity (as essences are traditionally conceived). But, if I am right, Aristotle did not understand the equation in this way. Rather, as Aristotle intended it, the equation comes to this: to be identical to Callias is to be *the same man* as Callias, for *man* is the essence of Callias.

We are now in a position to reconsider whether the essence Aristotle identifies "each thing" with is individual or general. The question may still seem to have no satisfactory answer, but on our interpretation of the equation this poses no problem. Aristotle is interested in the conditions under which something is the same individual as Callias, so you might say that the essence which provides the answer is individual. But this would be very misleading, since the description which specifies the essence will be a general one, applicable to other individuals as well. The idea of an individual essence is expressed in a formula such as this: x and y are identical if, and only if, x and y have the same essence. But Aristotle's equation, which talks not of "having" an essence but of "being the same" as an essence, suggests a rather different formula:

x and y are identical if, and only if, x and
 y are the same E (where " E " specifies the
ti en einai of x , "what x is").

E is, of course, a general essence, such as *man*, or *horse*. But the things whose identity conditions are stated in terms of such essences are individuals, such as Callias, or Bucephalus. The essences that figure in Aristotle's equation are, if you like, at once individual and general. Socrates and Callias are not the same man, and (hence) not the same essence; but Socrates and Callias are both *men*, and so they have the same (general) essence.

To the extent to which individual essences emerge from this interpretation of the Z6 equation, then, they will do little of the work that is ordinarily expected of such entities. They will not, for example, *individuate* things and help to pick out those same things in other possible worlds. One might express Aristotle's view in this way: an individual in another possible world is Socrates just in case he is *the same man* as Socrates, but there is no description purely in general terms that will pick out just Socrates, and no one else, in all possible worlds. The descriptive part of an "individual essence" will always be applicable, in principle, to more than one individual.

I have argued that the Z6 equation should not be taken as the literal expression of an arcane or indefensible view about individuals and their essences, but as a somewhat misleading way of putting a perfectly sane and plausible position. The argument thus far has been that none of the *literal* readings of the equation provides a plausible, or plausibly Aristotelian, philosophical point for Aristotle to be making, and so some non-literal reading is justified. The reading suggested seems not to strain the text excessively, and attributes to Aristotle just the sort of anti-Platonic position that one would expect in the context. I will conclude with a few comments on the fit between this interpretation of the equation and the context in Z6.

To deny the application of the Z6 equation to spatio-temporal particulars, Aristotle suggests, is to accept a Platonic metaphysics of "separation" between a thing and its essence. But even the Platonist, Aristotle goes on to argue, must find the equation applicable to *something*, on pain of facing an infinite regress (1031b 28-1032a4). Presumably, the Platonist will have to allow the equation to apply to the Forms. On the present interpretation of the equation, what the Platonist will be accepting is the claim that the Forms have determinate natures or essences. If the Platonist were to deny this, he would be left with Forms devoid of explanatory value. Of course the Platonist will gladly allow the application of the equation to such "individuals" as the Forms; he would merely insist that it has no application to spatio-temporal individuals.

Aristotle offers no reason why Plato should be unable to allow the application of the equation to the Forms. Indeed, he seems to invite the Platonist to accept the equation. If this is right, the regress with which Aristotle threatens his opponent in Z6 is one that the opponent can meet.¹⁴ So interpreted, Z6 does not offer a knock-down argument against the Platonic opposition.

Nor, I would contend, does Aristotle here intend to offer such an argument. His purpose, rather, is to show that his own view, that the "primary and self-subsistent things" (*protá kai kath' hautá legomena*) are identical to their essences, is one that his opponent must also share. There will still be disagreement about *what* the substances are, with the Platonist holding out for Forms, while Aristotle (on this interpretation) opts for individual specimens of natural kinds. But the importance of the Aristotelian notion of essence will have been established, for both sides will have to agree that substances are the same as their essences. Aristotle has argued, in effect, that the notion of essence is one that his opponent cannot get along without. What is left unstated in Z6, but is abundantly clear, is that Aristotle believes that he is not himself similarly committed to Platonic Forms. The battle between Aristotle and his Platonic opponent may still rage on, but the argument of Z6 has provided Aristotle with a crucial dialectical advantage.¹⁵

Footnotes

1. As we shall see below (in III) part of this superiority consists in the fact that Plato is forced, so Aristotle thinks, to accept the claim that each *Form*, at least, is the same as its essence. Thus, Plato's metaphysics requires Aristotelian essences, while Aristotle's can do without Platonic Forms.
2. I was greatly assisted in seeing this point by discussions with Alan Code.
3. For a brief consideration of the history of these two interpretations, cf. H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy* (New York, 1962), n. 246, pp. 337-339.
4. Cf. *De Partibus Animalium*, I, 1.
5. The idea that individual essences or individual forms are part of Aristotle's metaphysics has been widely discussed, and perhaps not all the discussants have the same thing in mind. I conceive of *individual* essences as being property-like entities that are capable of *individuating*; thus, if *E* (Socrates) is an individual essence, then anything, in any possible world, that has *E* (Socrates) is Socrates. This is what I mean by calling individual essences non-sharable. But a recent proponent of individual essences in Aristotle, Edwin Hartman, apparently has something less extravagant in mind: cf. his "Aristotle on the Identity of Substance and Essence," *Phil. Rev.* 85 (1976), pp. 545-561, and *Substance, Body, and Soul* (Princeton, 1977), ch. 2, esp. pp. 61-64. I find much in Hartman's interpretation to agree with. The sort of traditional "individual form" interpretation to which I am seeking an alternative is to be found, most recently, in Edward D. Harter's "Aristotle on Primary OUSIA," *archiv fur Geschichte der Philosophie*, 57 Band 1975 Heft 1, pp. 1-20.
6. Cf. *Metaph.* Z10, Z15.
7. Cf. *Metaph.* Z4.
8. In "Substance and Essence in Aristotle," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 75 (1974-5), pp. 167-180.
9. In "The Platonism of Aristotle," British Academy Lecture 1965, reprinted in *Studies in the Philosophy of Thought and Action* (Oxford, 1968) ed. P. F. Strawson, pp. 125-150.
10. And so the so-called "non-identity" assumption holds: Socrates and his pallor are two different things.
11. For *pallor* is not pale; thus, the so-called "self-predication" assumption does not hold in this case.
12. Woods, *loc. cit.*, pp. 177-178.
13. Owen, *loc. cit.*, p. 137.
14. Hence, it seems to me unlikely that the regress Aristotle here envisages is the Third Man, since he seems to have thought that Plato could not avoid the Third Man by simply accepting the notion that Forms are identical to their essences. Yet he offers the Platonist an easy way out of the regress in Z6: to accept the Z6 equation.
15. This paper was presented as part of a symposium on Aristotle on Form and Essence sponsored by the Departments of Philosophy of the University of Wisconsin (Milwaukee) and Marquette University in February, 1979. It was thoroughly discussed and criticized by two commentators, Robert Heinaman and Terry Penner. Unfortunately, publication deadlines have prevented me from taking their comments and criticism into account on this occasion.