

Does Aristotle's 'Being Is Not a Genus' Argument Entail

Ontological Pluralism?

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This paper differentiates between two readings of Aristotle's argument that unity and being are not "genē" (UBANG for short). On the first reading – proposed by commentators such as Ackrill, Shields, Loux, and McDaniel - UBANG entails the proposition that there are no features that characterise all beings insofar as they are, referred to by its contemporary proponents, including McDaniel, as 'ontological pluralism'. On the second reading – proposed here - UBANG does not entail this proposition. The paper argues that only on the second reading does Aristotle's argument secure its conclusion, that the second reading is, in fact, the correct reading of UBANG, and that anyone who thinks that UBANG succeeds and entails ontological pluralism probably equivocates between two different senses of 'genos'.

1. Ontological Pluralism, Non-Univocity of 'Being', and UBANG

Kris McDaniel wants us to sharply distinguish between these two sentences:

(S1): There are entities x and y such that x exists in one way, whereas y enjoys a distinct kind of being.¹ [*"ontological pluralism"*]

(S2): There are several senses of the words "being," "there are," etc., each of which corresponds to some way of existing, some distinct kind of being. There is no other sense of "being," "there are," etc. besides these.² [*"non-univocity of 'being'"*]

¹ Kris McDaniel, "Ways of Being," in D. J. Chalmers, D. Manley and R. Wasserman (eds.), *Metametaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009), 299.

² *Ibid.*

(S1) talks about objects to which words such as ‘being’ and its cognates (‘to be’, ‘to exist’, *etc.*) refer in an assumed language: say, in English. Although this may not be fully clear without context, it asserts that there are no features that characterise all these objects insofar as they *are*; that there is, instead, a number of such sets of features, each of which characterises some beings but not others. Following Turner³ – but McDaniel, too, has adopted this appellation since writing his seminal “Ways of Being”⁴ - I shall call the proposition expressed in (S1) “ontological pluralism.” (S2), by contrast, makes no claim about whether or not there is a set of features that characterises all beings insofar as they are. What it claims is that, in the assumed language, words such as ‘being’ and its cognates have many senses, not a single one of which pertains to all objects that these words refer to. I shall call the proposition expressed by (S2) the thesis of the ‘non-univocity of ‘being’.’ It is important to McDaniel that we distinguish (S1) from (S2), because ontological pluralism and the non-univocity of ‘being’ are at tension: (S1) employs the general sense of ‘being’ denied by the non-univocity of ‘being’ (“There *are*...”). Following Matthews,⁵ McDaniel calls the failure to see this an instance of the “Sense-Kind Confusion.” He implies that proponents of ontological pluralism should, therefore, be as wary of the non-univocity of ‘being’ as - McDaniel proceeds to argue – Heidegger, his exemplary ontological pluralist, was.

There are deeply entrenched ways of reading Aristotle – another of McDaniel’s and Turner’s historical recruits to ontological pluralism - as advocating ontological pluralism and the non-univocity of being. Interestingly, in order to motivate either advocacy, readers belonging to each tradition have time and again turned to one and the same argument of

³ Jason Turner, “Ontological Pluralism.” *The Journal of Philosophy* 107, (2010), 5-34.

⁴ See Kris McDaniel, *The Fragmentation of Being* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2017), 4.

⁵ Gareth Matthews, “Senses and Kinds.” *The Journal of Philosophy* 59 (1972), 149-157.

Aristotle, the most famous formulation of which can be found in *Metaphysics*, Beta 3, that “it is not possible for either one (*to hen*) or being (*to on*) to be a single kind (*genos*) of beings.”⁶ I shall refer to this argument as ‘UBANG’ – for ‘unity and being are not *genē*.’ (Because one thing that what will concern me in this paper is precisely the meaning of “*genos*” in the relevant passage, and because there is a degree of interpretation in every translation, I will, in the interest on not prejudging our questions, refrain from translating Aristotle’s Greek behind Madigan’s “kind” above from now on - that’s “*genē*” in plural.⁷)

As for the first tradition, McDaniel himself acknowledges UBANG in the Introduction to his systematic defence of ontological pluralism - *The Fragmentation of Being* - as one among three historically dominant motivations for embracing ontological pluralism, the “logical” one:

some historically prominent champions of ontological pluralism have had what can be broadly construed as logical motivations for the doctrine as well. Consider, for example, Aristotle’s argument that being is not a genus, which turns on complicated logical and metaphysical issues...⁸

⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, III, 3, 998b21-22. That’s Arthur Madigan’s translation of Book Beta, on which I will generally rely throughout (noting all minor deviations).

⁷ I will, however, sometimes change its case to nominative, so that it works better with the surrounding English.

⁸ McDaniel, *The Fragmentation of Being*, 8. McDaniel’s Latinate “genus” follows Ross’s translation of “*genos*.” It is worth noting that, several pages earlier, McDaniel considers UBANG as arguing against a specific version of the thesis that “being fragments” – thus, presumably, against a specific version of ontological pluralism. See *Ibid.*, 3. I am not sure how these two proposals hang together. Maybe the thought is that UBANG argues both that some

Since, beyond offering a brief summary of UBANG and noting two different interpretations of one of its premises, McDaniel does not explain how exactly the conclusion of UBANG supports ontological pluralism, I take it that he regards it as self-explanatory that Aristotle's "*genos*" is to be understood in the G1 way:

G1: *F* is a *genos* iff there is a set of features that characterises all objects called '*F*' insofar as they are *F*.

Thus, supposing that we can assume that distinct entities *x* and *y* satisfy the conditions for being, asserting that being is not a *genos* entails that all objects for which we use the term 'being' do not have any features in common - precisely what ontological pluralism claims is the case. (Consider that if less than two objects satisfied the conditions for being, then, although it might still be the case that being is not a *genos*,⁹ it could not be the case that "[t]here are entities *x* and *y* such that *x* exists in one way, whereas *y* enjoys a distinct kind of being"¹⁰ – however, since anything satisfies these conditions, I believe that it's fine for those readers of UBANG who enjoy the G1-understanding of *genos* to speak of this argument in a language that suggests a direct entailment to ontological pluralism, even though, strictly speaking, the aforementioned auxiliary assumption is also needed.)

Besides McDaniel, this reading of UBANG was endorsed by such prominent Aristotle scholars as Ackrill, who claims that "[i]n [*Metaphysics* 998b22] [Aristotle] seek[s] to show that 'being' cannot be a genus, that is, *in effect*, that there must be irreducibly different kinds

versions of ontological pluralism are false and that some are true? At any rate, in this paper I shall be concerned only with the second line of reasoning.

⁹ If there was no such an object of which we could say that it exists. If there was exactly one such an object, it would follow that being is a *genos* (in the G1 sense).

¹⁰ McDaniel, "Ways of Being," 299.

of beings,”¹¹ and Shields, who reads UBANG as attempting – albeit unsuccessfully - to motivate a “controversial doctrine about the homonymy of being which no simple appeal to semantic intuition can sustain”¹² inasmuch as the claim that this doctrine makes is not on the meaning of ‘*to on*’ as the ancient Greeks in fact used this expression and its cognates but rather on how we *ought to* speak of being considering, or so Shields’ Aristotle would have us believe, that it breaks down into several fundamental kinds or ways.¹³ In a similar vein, Loux contends in a recent essay that in “tell[ing] us that neither being nor one is a genus (998b21-27),”

[Aristotle] wants to deny that, taken by themselves, the terms “being” and “one” signify any genuinely explanatory universals or kinds. The contrary view, he would likely

¹¹ John L. Ackrill (ed.), *Aristotle's Categories and De Interpretatione* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 81. Emphasis altered. Incidentally, Loux cites this very sentence as suggestive of an inference from UBANG to the non-univocity of ‘being’. This, however, strikes me as a rather forced reading, especially since, as Loux immediately recognises: “[i]n fairness to Ackrill... it should be pointed out that he later speaks of [the non-univocity of ‘being’] without suggesting that the relevant entailment holds.” Michael J. Loux, “Aristotle on the Transcendentals.” *Phronesis* 18 (1973), 231.

¹² Christopher Shields, *Order in Multiplicity: Homonymy in the Philosophy of Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press 1999), 218.

¹³ Thus, like McDaniel, Shields’ Aristotle does not dispute the possibility that ‘being’ might be employed in the same sense across different categories. However, he holds that whoever speaks of being in this fashion speaks ‘shallowly’ – i.e. not truthfully to the matter at hand. For Shields’ Aristotle doctrine of meaning, which enables him to say things like this, see Chapter 3 of Shields’ *Order in Multiplicity*. For Shields’ analysis of UBANG itself see *Ibid.*, 247-260.

claim, has its source in a grammatical illusion: we find abstract singular terms here and conclude that there must be universals answering to those terms.¹⁴

As for the second tradition – I repeat after Loux himself -

Porphyry... tells us that if being were a single genus of things, objects would be called beings univocally. A few lines down, he says that since there is no one first genus, but ten, the name ‘being’ is common to items from different categories, but the definition corresponding to that name is not. [...] Ockham repeats Porphyry’s remarks... almost verbatim...¹⁵

More recently, Berti goes as far as to claim that

[i]n the whole *Corpus Aristotelicum* there is – as far as I know – only one passage where Aristotle makes an attempt to prove that being is not univocal, at *Metaphysics* B3, 998b22-27.¹⁶

Berti complains that, with an exception of Shields, who “arrived at the conclusion that [the passage] does not reach its aim, *i.e.* it does not demonstrate that being has a multiplicity of meanings” – mistakenly, he thinks -

¹⁴ Michael J. Loux, “Being, Categories and Universal Reference in Aristotle,” in L. Haaparanta and H. J. Koskinen (eds.), *Categories of Being: Essays on Metaphysics and Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012), 31.

¹⁵ Loux, “Aristotle on the Transcendentals,” 231-232.

¹⁶ Enrico Berti, “Being and Essence in Contemporary Interpretations of Aristotle,” in A. Bottani, M. Carrara, and P. Giaretta (eds.), *Individuals, Essence, and Identity: Themes of Analytic Metaphysics* (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers 2002), 81.

none of [the contemporary] interpreters [of Aristotle], and... the many others who treated the problem of the semantic multiplicity of being in Aristotle, engaged in a close analysis of the passage of *Metaph. B*, where Aristotle tries to establish the reasons of this multiplicity.¹⁷

The appropriation of UBANG by the second tradition has been challenged by Loux, who argues that not only does UBANG not entail the non-univocity of ‘being’, “Aristotle [also] nowhere so much as suggests that the entailment holds,”¹⁸ as well as by all those commentators who remain (vocally) unpersuaded that Aristotle accepts the non-univocity of ‘being’ in the first place.¹⁹ By contrast, the employment of UBANG as an argument that entails ontological pluralism, has, as far as I know, passed entirely undisputed. Yet, with due respect to McDaniel, Ackrill, Shields, and Loux, this is exactly what I am going to do in what remains of this paper. I shall argue that, on the reading of UBANG required by its employment in the task of motivating ontological pluralism – I shall call this the ‘Entailment Reading’ - UBANG fails to

¹⁷ Berti, “Being and Essence,” 84.

¹⁸ Loux, “Aristotle on the Transcendentals,” 232.

¹⁹ E.g., David Charles, “Some Comments on Prof. Enrico Berti’s Paper ‘Being and Essence in Contemporary Interpretations of Aristotle,’” in A. Bottani, M. Carrara, and P. Giaretta (eds.), *Individuals, Essence, and Identity: Themes of Analytic Metaphysics* (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers 2002), 109-126. For two classical papers that argue for this view see Terence H. Irwin, “Homonymy in Aristotle,” *Review of Metaphysics* 34 (1981), 523-544, and Paul Grice, “Aristotle on the Multiplicity of Being,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 69 (1988), 175-200. Loux, too, though for a long time a member of the non-univocity camp, expresses his sympathy for Irwin’s and Grice’s position in “Being, Categories, and Universal Reference in Aristotle,” 29.

secure its conclusion (although for different reasons that Shields thinks²⁰); and I shall argue for a reading of this argument, which removes the cause of this failure, but which does not entail ontological pluralism (with or without the auxiliary assumption).

The plan of action is as follows. In Section 2, I lay out the Entailment Reading of UBANG and I argue that, on this reading, UBANG fails due to the falsity of one of its premises. In Section 3, I describe my ‘No Entailment Reading’, which explicates “*genos*” in UBANG in the G2 way:

G2: *F* is a *genos* iff (i) there is a set of features that characterises all objects called ‘*F*’ insofar as they are *F*, and (ii) *F* can be substituted for *g* in an SDG definition.

I will explain what I mean by an ‘SDG definition’ - and the *g*-variable in it - in due course. Essentially, though, it is the kind of definition typically exemplified by Aristotle as ‘a human being is a rational animal’ (where the *g*-variable takes the value of an ‘animal’). The thing to note now is that G2 is basically G1 with an added clause: on the G1-interpretation, something could be a *genos* regardless of whether or not it could be cited in definitions of any type. I argue that, on the No Entailment Reading, the formerly false premise of UBANG is now true, and that denial that unity and being are *genē* in the G2 sense does not entail ontological pluralism. In Section 4, I show that even though, on my No Entailment Reading, UBANG supports neither the non-univocity of ‘being’ nor ontological pluralism, it still serves at least two other important functions in Aristotle’s philosophy. So, we are free to apply the principle of charity, which recommends the No Entailment Reading over the Entailment Reading. In Section 5, I argue that anyone who thinks that UBANG succeeds and entails ontological pluralism probably

²⁰ I am in agreement with Berti that Shields’ critique of UBANG rests on an ultimately unconvincing interpretation of one of its premises ((3) below). Cf. Berti, “Being and Essence,” 84-92.

understands the word ‘*genos*’ equivocally (in, depending on need, either the G1 or the G2 way), and, further, that, although Aristotle himself was not such a person, the confusion to which any such person would succumb is very much invited by the ambiguity that characterises his own use of this term beyond UBANG.

2. UBANG and *Infimae Species*

In *Metaphysics*, Beta 3, Aristotle argues as follows:

[C:] [I]t is not possible for either one or being to be a single [*genos*] of beings. [2:] For it is necessary both for the differences of each [*genos*] to be and for each of them to be one, [3/6:] but it is impossible either for the species of the [*genos*] to be predicated of their own differences or for the [*genos*] to be predicated apart from its species. So, if [1:] one or being is a [*genos*], no difference will be either a being or a one.²¹

The argument – UBANG - is straightforwardly analysed as a *reductio ad absurdum*: a type of argument that assumes the truth of all but one of its premises, that argues that its premises jointly entail a contradiction, and that concludes from the contradiction that the premise whose truth value it has left undetermined is, in fact, false.

UBANG consists of the following premises:

- (1) Unity and being are *genē*.
- (2) Unity and being hold of all differences between species.
- (3) No *genē* hold of differences between their species.
- (4) If *F* is a *genos*, then there are differences between species of *F*.

²¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, III, 3, 998b21-27. Added numerals and the letter indicate the steps of UBANG I will discuss below.

(1) is the premise whose truth value UBANG puts in question. Let us suppose – as McDaniel, Ackrill, Shields, and Loux seem to do - that Aristotle’s *genos* is to be understood in the G1 way. On this supposition, (1) means: there are such sets of features that characterise every one thing insofar as it is one and every being insofar as it is.

As for (2), I render Madigan’s “difference” and Aristotle’s “*diaphora*” more explicitly as ‘difference between species’ because it is incontrovertible in Aristotle scholarship that “*diaphora*” designates here a set of features by which we distinguish between species of a single *genos*. For example, Aristotle typically distinguishes human from non-human animals by speaking of rationality that the former species of animals supposedly has and the latter lack. However, not every set of features – not every *genos* in the G1 sense – can be employed in this capacity. Only *genē* in the G1 sense that are tantamount to essential, but not to accidental, features of some object, could be considered by Aristotle as species - “*eidōs*” (Plato’s term for Form). Since every difference between species is intended to separate some features that contribute to an “*eidōs*” from others (those marked off by *genos*), this means that they are, again, only *genē* in the G1 sense that pertain to essential, but not to accidental, features of some object that could be considered by Aristotle as differences between species (as opposed to merely accidental differences). The question of what distinguishes essential from accidental features of objects is not one I want to settle in this paper, but - just to illustrate - it is not counterintuitive to think that although we may divide some objects belonging to a single *genos* by whether or not they are tanned or currently submerged in water, there is no such a species that would not survive gaining or losing its tan or stepping in or out of water. The reason why I am articulating this constraint on differences between species, is that it will become important to us soon that the number of all differences between species is *finite*: they end at accidental features of objects such as (on my illustration) being tanned or currently submerged. (If *genē* could be divided by the differences between species infinitely, my counterexample to the

premise I will challenge would not work.²²) Thus, (2) claims, in effect, that if something is characterised by such a distinguishing set of (essential) features, it *is* and is some *one* thing. Since it is plausible that, as long as something exhibits rationality, for example, it will also exhibit being and unity, my concern in this paper is not with this premise.

Of all UBANG's explicit premises, (3) – “No *genē* hold of differences between their species”²³ – is the one whose meaning, let alone the truth value, is perhaps most difficult to determine. (3) effectively denies that sentences such as ‘Rationality is an animal’ and ‘Having stripes is a cat’ (supposing there is an *eidos* for striped cats) can express true propositions. Since both sentences sound absurd, (3) is certainly plausible. But it is far from self-evident whether all sentences of this type will sound absurd. Nor is it self-evident what exactly is wrong with the kind of absurdity that sentences such as these evince.²⁴ Aristotle answers neither of these questions in *Metaphysics*. In *Topics*, however, he writes:

[I]t seems that that the genus is predicated, not of the differentia, but of the objects of which the differentia is predicated. Animal (e.g.) is predicated of man and ox and other terrestrial animals, not of the differentia itself, which we predicate of the species. For if animal is to be predicated of each of its differentiae, then many animals will be

²² See footnote 35.

²³ This is my rendition of Aristotle's “it is impossible... for the [*genos*] to be predicated apart from its species.” I again agree with Berti (“Being and Essence,” 87) that the first clause of this proposition – “it is impossible... for the species of the [*genos*] to be predicated of their own differences” – “is irrelevant to what Aristotle is proving. Nobody claims that Being and One are species, and probably it is made for the sake of completeness.” Ross and Madigan also advocate this view in their respective commentaries.

²⁴ That's McDaniel's nice point. Cf. McDaniel, *The Fragmentation of Being*, 8.

predicated of the species; for the differentiae are predicated of the species. Moreover, the differentiae will be all either species or individuals, if they are animals; for every animal is either a species or an individual.²⁵

Since I am not really concerned with (3), either, let me simply quote an interpretation of this passage I favour, courtesy of Berti:

If the *genus* ‘animal’ could be predicated of its difference ‘rational’, then rational would be [...] a particular instance of the *genus* ‘animal’. In this case, the *genus* ‘animal’ would enter in the definition of ‘rational’, so that the ‘rational’ would be defined as an animal with another particular difference. Now, as the *genus* and the difference must be both predicated of the species ‘man’, two ‘animals’ would be predicated of this species, *i.e.* the *genus* ‘animal’ and the difference ‘animal’, or - as Aristotle himself says - ‘many animals’ (*polla zoia*). The animals would be as many as the differences of which the *genus* ‘animal’ can be predicated. But in this way only *genera*, and no difference, would be predicated of the species. There would remain nothing which could distinguish the species of the *genus* from one another. In other words, if the *genus* could be predicated of the difference, the difference would become itself a species and would lose its function of distinguishing one species from the other species of the *genus*.²⁶

(4) – “If *F* is a *genos*, then there are differences between species of *F*” – is the last premise of UBANG and one on which, for a change, I do want to focus in this paper. (4) can

²⁵ Aristotle, *Topics*, VI, 6, 144a33-144b3. (In translation of Arthur Wallace Pickard-Cambridge, whose Latinate ‘differentia’ corresponds to Aristotle’s *diaphora*, Madigan’s difference, and to my difference between species.)

²⁶ Berti, “Being and Essence,” 91.

be paraphrased as follows. ‘Suppose that animals - for instance - are a *genos* (on the G1-interpretation, that there is, as it were, a set of animal traits).’ ‘Then, there will be a set of non-accidental features that some animals have and others don’t: rationality, for instance.’ Admittedly, in contrast to the preceding three premises of UBANG, nothing in the excerpted passage from *Metaphysics*, Beta 3 explicitly states (4). However, what the passage does make explicit is that the contradiction that UBANG is attempting to elicit is supposed to depend on a violation of (3), (6):

(6) Unity and being hold of differences between their species. (“[B]ut it is impossible... for the [*genos*] to be predicated apart from its species.”) But (6) can be true only if (5) is:

(5) There are differences between species of unity and being. Nowhere in his body of work does Aristotle argue for (5), and that is because, I believe, (5) is false, as I will show towards the end of Section 3. If that is right, the only appropriate way for Aristotle to motivate (5) would be to somehow derive it from UBANG’s allegedly inconsistent premises. (Consider that, were (5) to function as a premise of UBANG, its so far alleged falsity would preclude the attempted *reductio* of (1).) But it is hard to see how the explicit premises of UBANG (1)-(3) could lead us to (5) on their own.²⁷ So, an additional tacit – and true - premise is needed to connect them. (Again, were the premise false, it would not follow that (1) is.) And it is incumbent on the reader of *Metaphysics* to find this tacit premise.

²⁷ Note that even though, if UBANG’s premises really are jointly inconsistent, then anything - including (5) – follows from them in classical logic, our question now is how to generate the inconsistency in the first place. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers of this paper for pressing me on this point.

We can see that (4) – linking (5) with (1) – is just what is needed by briefly considering the alternatives. Consider, first, the two *obvious* alternatives to (4), linking (5) with (2) and (3), respectively:

(4*) If F holds of all differences between species, then there are differences between species of F .

(4**) If no *genē* hold of differences between their species, then there are differences between species of unity and being.

The pairing of (2) with (4*) does, by *modus ponens*, give us (5), as does the pairing of (3) with (4**). However, I do not see how a convincing argument in favour of either (4*) or (4**) might proceed. In fact, both conditionals are false – again, I will demonstrate this towards the end of Section 3 - as will be any alternative conditional that proceeds from a true antecedent (or, in case of (4*), true instantiation thereof) to (5), which, as we shall later see, is false. Since I do see how a convincing argument in favour of (4) might proceed – its development will be the main task of Section 3 – I contend that we ought to accept (4) as the final premise of UBANG.

For consider, second, that any *unobvious* alternatives to (4) are ruled out, if not by their falsity, then by considerations of argumentative economy and charity. As for the argumentative economy, consider that even if indefinitely many unobvious alternatives to (4) will prove to be true, they will invariably serve to complicate UBANG for no good reason. Consider, for example, the following:

(4***) If F is a *genos* and unity and being hold of all differences between species, then there are differences between species of F .

(4****) If F is a *genos* or pigs fly, then there are differences between species of F .

It is easy to see that, unlike (4*) and (4**), (4***) and (4****) are just as convincing as (4). In other words, if (4) is true, as I hope to show in Section 3, then, surely, so will be (4***) and

(4****). For, neither addition to (4)'s antecedent (“*and* unity and being hold of all differences between species;” “*or* pigs fly”) has the power to make it true while the consequent is false: assuming that, although unity and being hold of all differences between species, they are not *genē* in the sense I will employ to render (4) true (as the No Entailment Reading of UBANG will show), and, indeed, that pigs don't fly. Still, the employment of either (4****) or (4*****) in place of (4) would result in UBANG's including as many steps as the version of UBANG that employs (4) *plus* the additional step where we apply the inferential rules for conjunction introduction and for disjunction introduction, respectively. We now get to the consideration of charity. This can be made very quickly: why attribute to Aristotle less command over his own argument than we, consistently with the text, can? So, the tacit premise of UBANG must be no other than (4).

UBANG argues as follows.

By *modus ponens*, (1)²⁸ and (4)²⁹ give us:

(5) There are differences between species of unity and being.

(2)³⁰ and (5), then, give us:

(6) Unity and being hold of differences between their species.

But (6) and (1) might give us:

(7A) Some *genē* hold of differences between their species.

And (6) and (3)³¹ might give us:

²⁸ “Unity and being are *genē*.”

²⁹ “If *F* is a *genos*, then there are differences between species of *F*.”

³⁰ “Unity and being hold of all differences between species.”

³¹ “No *genē* hold of differences between their species.”

(7B) Neither unity nor being is a *genos*.

From both variants of (7) we can then infer (helping ourselves to (3) and (1), respectively):

(8A) Some *genē* hold of differences between their species and no *genē* hold of differences between their species.

And:

(8B) Neither unity nor being is a *genos* and unity and being are *genē*.

Since both (8A) and (8B) are self-contradictory, at least one of the four premises of UBANG must be false (although in the excerpted passage from *Metaphysics* Aristotle focusses on just the second one – “no difference will be either a being or a one” – it could, of course, be any one of the four or more). Since Aristotle assumes that there are sufficient grounds for taking (2), (3), and (4) to be true, he can conclude from either (8A) or (8B) that

(C) Neither unity nor being is a *genos*.

Now, on the reading of UBANG I have just related, UBANG does, as McDaniel, Ackrill, Shields, and Loux maintain, entail ontological pluralism (as long as we can assume that distinct entities *x* and *y* satisfy the conditions for being – but I do not see why we could not.³²) Since we have assumed that Aristotle’s *genos* is to be understood in the G1 way³³ and that at least two objects satisfy conditions for being – the auxiliary assumption – ontological pluralism follows: all objects for which we use the term ‘being’ do not have any features in common. Hence, I call this reading of UBANG the Entailment Reading.

³² See Section 1.

³³ “*F* is a genus iff there is a set of features that characterises all objects called ‘*F*’ insofar as they are *F*.”

However, on the Entailment Reading, there is a problem with UBANG. It is not the case that (2), (3), and (4) are all true. Specifically, I shall now argue, (4) is false. But if so, (8A) and (8B) could be as much a result of the falsity of (1) as of the falsity of (4). In effect, the negation of (1) - (C) - does not ensue.

Take any number of objects known to scholastic philosophers as ‘*infima species*’, the sole differences between which are accidental, rather than essential, in nature. For example, suppose that Southern black-bellied whistling ducks (*dendrocygna autumnalis autumnalis*) are an *infima species*. (From the perspective of the taxonomy of ducks this appears to be true³⁴ – but I am not really a duck expert nor do I take position here on when exactly a *genos* in the G1 sense is essential, and when accidental, for something.³⁵) Clearly, Southern black-bellied whistling ducks satisfy the conditions for being a *genos* in the G1 sense: all individual ducks

³⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black-bellied_whistling_duck.

³⁵ Thus, for example, someone might hold that there is a duck belonging to *dendrocygna autumnalis autumnalis* (DAA) for whom it is essential that it is male or female, in which case DAA would not be an *infima species* - rather, being *male* DAA or *female* DAA would be *infimae species*. However, it suffices for our purposes if we agree that there is at least one difference that is not essential to any member of DAA, ensuring that DAA cannot be divided infinitely according to differences between species as opposed to merely accidental differences. How about *being currently submerged in water*? Consider that if DAA could be divided according to differences between species *ad infinitum*, my counterexample would not work – in fact, it would lend some support to the presently considered version of (4), where “*genos*” is understood in the G1 way. For then, even some of those *genē* in the G1 sense that, for whatever reason, appear to be *infimae species* would demonstrate essential differences between each other. So, why not species of unity and being?

of this type have a set of features in common in virtue of which we call them ‘Southern black-bellied whistling ducks’. And, although they are so marvellously singular, they exist:



Fig. *Dendrocygna autumnalis autumnalis*.

So, we have a case – in fact, at least as many cases as there are *infimae species* – where, although *F* satisfies conditions for being a *genos* in the G1 sense, it is not the case that there are differences between species of *F*. So, whilst (C) entails ontological pluralism (with the auxiliary assumption), this holds little philosophical interest since UBANG fails: one of its incontrovertible premises – (4) – is false.

3. *Genos* and SDG Definitions – Rehabilitating UBANG

But, of course, I have already indicated that I can think of a suitable justification for (4).

Suppose that *genē* are not any nameable sets of features of objects (as we have supposed so far, following McDaniel, Ackrill, Shields, and Loux), but that they are, as it were, *species* of nameable sets of features of objects. Specifically, take *genos* to be such a nameable set of features of objects that can be substituted for *g* in the formula below:

$$s =_{\text{(def)}} d \ \& \ g$$

The formula can also be expressed verbally as ‘*species* is a *differentiated genos*. In this formula, *s* (*species*), *d* (*difference between species*), and *g* (*genos*), all stand for nameable sets of features

of objects, and so, for *genē* in the G1 sense. But they do not stand for *just* that. Rather, they stand for *genē* in the G1 sense *relative to each other*. Thus, a nameable set of features of objects can take place of *species* only if two other nameable sets of features of objects take place of *difference between species* and *genos* in the same instantiation of the formula; a nameable set of features of objects can take place of *difference between species* only if two other nameable sets of features of objects take place of *species* and *genos* in the same instantiation of the formula; finally, a nameable set of features of objects can take place of *genos* only if two other nameable sets of features of objects take place of *species* and *difference between species* in the same instantiation of the formula.³⁶

³⁶ As I noted in Section 2, although not everyone endorses such ‘relativist’ interpretations of “*genos*” and “*eidos*” in UBANG, everyone I have read on UBANG in effect accepts the relativist interpretation of “*diaphora*.” Aristotle commentators who would go with me all the way – and who should thus be committed to something like my No Entailment Reading – include Loux (before he wrote “Being, Categories, and Universal Reference in Aristotle”) and Madigan. Cf. “For Aristotle, a genus is a kind or sort whose members belong to a variety of less general kinds or species.” Loux, “Aristotle on the Transcendentals,” 225. In his initial summary of UBANG, Madigan uses a turn of phrase that seems ambiguous between the two interpretations of “*genos*,” between which I distinguish here. UBANG, he says, “argues against the claim that the Platonic one and being are kinds. One and being are predicated even of their differences and species; but kinds are not said of their differences and species; hence one and being are not kinds.” But later he offers this helpful clarification: “To speak of something as a kind presupposes some determinate content and a contrast between that determinate content and the contents of other things. Thus to speak of substance as a kind presupposes a contrast between it and the other kinds. Being and one fail to be kinds in this sense. To speak of being

The relationship between *species*, *difference between species*, and *genos* in the same instantiation of the formula is as follows. Whereas all objects that exhibit the set of features serving as *species* are members of the class of all objects that exhibit the set of features serving as *genos*, only some – but not all - objects that exhibit the set of features serving as *genos* are members of the class of all objects that exhibit the set of features serving as *species*. By contrast, although all objects that exhibit the set of features serving as *species* are members of the class of all objects that exhibit the set of features serving as *difference between species*, it is possible – though by no means necessary – that there are no objects that exhibit the set of features serving as *difference between species* and that do not exhibit the set of features serving as *species*.³⁷ Finally, all objects that exhibit the set of features serving as *species* are, in fact, the only members that the class of all objects that exhibit the set of features serving as *difference between species* and the class of all objects that exhibit the set of features serving *genos* have in common. More precisely, some objects that exhibit the set of features serving as *genos* do not exhibit the set of features serving as *difference between species*.³⁸

as a kind implies no such contrast, for all things are beings. To speak of one as a kind implies no such contrast, for all things are ones. As terms of universal extension, one and being are too broad to count as kinds.” Arthur Madigan, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics. Book Beta and Book Kappa 1-2* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press 1999), 73; 75.

³⁷ To illustrate, whereas Aristotle’s exemplary definition would fail to define human beings if human beings were all animals that there are, it would not fail to define human beings if human beings were all rational beings that there are.

³⁸ I believe that it’s fine for all objects that demonstrate the set of features serving as *difference between species* above to demonstrate the set of features serving as *genos* above. Again, whereas Aristotle’s exemplary definition would fail to define human beings if all animals were

Last but not least, let species, difference between species, and - for the same reason as difference between species³⁹ - *genos* designate only essential, as opposed to accidental, features of objects.

Note that, spelled out thusly, the formula above is really a recipe for a certain type of definition, to which I refer here as an ‘SDG definition’ and which crops up in many places in Aristotle’s work. Aristotle believes that we learn about the nature of each species by finding out about its *genos* and difference from other species of the same *genos*. This is not an unattractive belief. Supposing striped cats (*s*) are a genuine species, what are they? They are cats (*g*) that have stripes (*d*). Had they existed, what sort of things would the members of the species that the mythical Pegasus could be said to be a member of be (*s*)? Well, basically, they would be horses (*g*) with wings (*d*).

The proposed recalibration of the meaning of ‘*genos*’ aligns well with a definition of this term Aristotle offers in *Topics*:

A [*genos*] is what is predicated in the what-it-is of many things *which are different in species*. (Let us say that those sorts of things are ‘predicated in the what-it-is’ which it would be appropriate to give as answers when asked what the thing in question is, as it is appropriate in the case of a man, when asked what it is, to say that it is an animal.)⁴⁰

Crucially, it has two major implications for the issues of concern.

rational, it would not fail to define human beings if all rational beings were animals. Incidentally, I believe that this is the only substantive difference between *genē* and differences between species.

³⁹ See Section 2.

⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Topics*, I, 5, 102a31-36. Translation is courtesy of Robin Smith and italics are mine.

The first implication is that (4) above – ‘If F is a *genos*, then there are differences between species of F ’ - is now (trivially) true. Consider that a part of our terminological recalibration amounted to affirming a more general version of (4):

(4’): If F is a *genos*, then there are species of F and differences between species of F .

(For, on the understanding of *genos* now assumed, necessarily, things are *genē* relative to other things’ being species and differences between species.) And from (4’), (4) follows. This means that, as long as (2) and (3) are true, UBANG succeeds. It now argues, in effect, that ‘unity and ‘being’ – perhaps, more generally, all words that are applicable to anything (Loux calls such words ‘T-words’⁴¹) – cannot pick out a set of features of objects that is a possible value of g above. For a set of features of objects can be a value of g only if another set of features of objects can be a value of s in the same SDG definition, and if yet another set of features of objects can be a value of d in the same SDG definition. But if our proposed substitution for g was exhibited by all objects, then we would run out of objects required for other sets of features to satisfy the requirements for being substitutable along its side for either s or d . Recall that only *some*, but not *all*, objects that exhibit the set of features serving as g in an SDG definition could exhibit the sets of features serving as s and d in the same SDG definition. So, no set of features possessed by everything can be substituted for g in the formula above.

The second implication is that UBANG no longer underwrites ontological pluralism (with or without the auxiliary assumption that two distinct objects, x and y , satisfy conditions for being). To say that being is not a *genos* now only means to say that, even if all referents of the term ‘being’ had, as beings, a set of features in common, then being could not figure as g in any SDG definition. But this conditional proposition is compatible with ontological pluralism *as well as* with its negation - call it ‘ontological monism’ - claiming that all referents

⁴¹ Loux, “Aristotle on the Transcendentals,” 226.

of the term ‘being’ have, as beings, a set of features in common. Although saying that being is a *genos* entails ontological monism (according to both definitions of *genos* considered here), the reverse does not hold. Ontological monism does not claim that being is substitutable for *g* in any SDG definition. So, we cannot get a negation of ontological monism – ontological pluralism - from denying that being is a *genos* in the *G2* sense (*modus tollens*-way).

Thus, on the No Entailment Reading, UBANG succeeds. But it does not entail ontological pluralism.

Incidentally, we can now appreciate that (5) above – “There are differences between species of unity and being” – is false, as are the two obvious alternatives to (4) we discussed in Section 2: (4*)⁴² and (4**) ⁴³. As for (5), consider that, with or without or terminological recalibration – which keeps the meaning of ‘difference’ or ‘*diaphora*’ constant – in order for there to be a difference between species of *F*, *F* must be a possible value of *g* in an SDG definition and some other set of features must be a possible value of *s* in the same SDG definition. But UBANG, on its No Entailment Reading, shows this to be impossible if for *F* we substitute either unity or being. So, (5) is false. As for the two conditionals (4*) and (4**), recall that we have conceded to Aristotle the truth of an instantiation of (4*)’s antecedent (“unity and being hold of all differences between species”) and (4**)’s antecedent (‘no *genē* hold of differences between their species’). Since we now know the relevant instantiation of (4*)’s consequent and (4**)’s consequent – (5) – to be false, this means (4*) and (4**) allow

⁴² “If *F* holds of all differences between species, then there are differences between species of *F*.”

⁴³ “If no *genē* hold of differences between their species, then there are differences between species of unity and being.”

us to proceed from true premises to a false conclusion, in which case neither conditional can be true.

4. The Indifference of Essence to Existence and the Seventh *Aporia*

Although we have not established that the No Entailment Reading is the correct reading of UBANG, yet, two considerations already strongly suggest this. First, whereas on its Entailment Reading UBANG fails, on the No Entailment Reading it succeeds. So, the principle of charity recommends that we accept the No Entailment Reading and reject the Entailment Reading. Second, whereas the interpretation of the meaning “*genos*” in UBANG employed by the No Entailment Reading (G2) fully aligns with a definition of this term Aristotle offers in *Topics*, the interpretation of the meaning of this term employed by the Entailment Reading (G1) aligns with it only partially (it disregards the relation of this concept to concepts of species and of difference between species). In order for us to be able to reject the Entailment Reading and accept the No Entailment Reading, however, we need to answer the following question: if UBANG does not adjudicate between ontological pluralism and ontological monism (nor, the way I see it, between the non-univocity and the univocity of ‘being’⁴⁴), why should we – and, more importantly, Aristotle – care that neither unity nor being is a *genos*?

⁴⁴ Loux (“Aristotle on the Transcendentals,” 232) holds that none of the historical supporters of the UBANG’s supposed entailment of the non-univocity of ‘being’ (see Section 1) “presents any argument of his own to support the claim that [UBANG] entails [the non-univocity of ‘being’]. The claim of entailment is always made in passing, as though it were too obvious to explicate or defend.” I must say that even though I found Berti’s reconstruction of UBANG convincing – I have even quoted from it at length in Section 2 – I could not find a single paragraph in his interesting paper, where it would be explained how exactly the conclusion of UBANG contradicts the claim that ‘being’ has a single univocal sense.

There are, in fact, two largely uncontroversial answers to this question – I hope I’ll be excused for only mentioning the first answer⁴⁵ and focussing on the second one.

First, in Book Beta of *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle cites the conclusion of UBANG to support the claim that existence is not included in the essence of anything. In Barnes’ translation: “But existence is not the essence of anything; for the things that exist do not constitute [*genos*].”⁴⁶ Aristotle’s idea seems to be that, if SDG definitions spell out the nature or the essence of various *genē* in the G1 sense, then being’s failing to figure in any such a definition as a *genos* supports the thesis that being is not included in *any* essence or nature. I’ll call this thesis the ‘thesis of indifference of essence to existence’.⁴⁷ Historically, the question of whether essence is indifferent to existence in this way intrigued many philosophers and, indeed, proved highly controversial. Anselm, for example, is commonly understood to contest it when offering his ontological argument for the existence of God,⁴⁸ as is Descartes who also

⁴⁵ I am indebted to one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting it to me.

⁴⁶ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytic*, II, 7, 92b13-14.

⁴⁷ As Barnes remarks, Aristotle needs here “the further claim that ‘existence is not a difference’” (the remaining part of the definiens in an SDG definition). But he suggests that Aristotle can derive it from the plausible claim that underpins (2) in UBANG that “*being* is predicated of everything.” For, if so, it “cannot differentiate one set of things from another,” granted the constraints on items in an SDG definition spelled out in Section 3. Jonathan Barnes, *Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press 1993), 215.

⁴⁸ “[I]f that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, exists in the understanding alone, the very being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, is one, than which a greater can be conceived. But obviously this is impossible. Hence there is no doubt that there exists a being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in

offers a version of this argument.⁴⁹ Anselm's and Descartes' arguments for the existence of God have, in turn, been famously contested by Kant in the first *Critique*, and for just this reason.⁵⁰ More recent advocates of some version of the thesis of indifference of essence to existence include Frege and Russell. Thus, it seems clear that, if UBANG has anything to contribute to this long-going conversation – just how much is a question beyond the scope of this paper - it proves of acute philosophical interest, its lack of engagement with questions of the univocity versus the non-univocity of 'being' and of ontological monism versus ontological pluralism notwithstanding.

Secondly, Book Beta of *Metaphysics* (in which we find UBANG) consists of a string of problems that seem to invite two mutually exclusive solutions, neither one of which is fully satisfactory and the sage adjudication between which falls in the remit of the "first science" or "knowledge"⁵¹ (*episteme*) - the kind of knowledge, Aristotle argues in Book Alpha, that most deserves the name "wisdom" (*sophia*). The "first science" searches for the "first principles

reality." Anselm, *Proslogium*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane (Chicago IL: The Open Court Publishing Company 1903), 8. Alvin Plantinga is a notable dissenter to this common understanding, alongside several others. But see Chris Heathwood, "The Relevance of Kant's Objection to Anselm's Ontological Argument." *Religious Studies*, 47 (2011), 345-357. Cf. Alvin Plantinga, "Kant's Objection to the Ontological Argument." *The Journal of Philosophy*, 63 (1966), 537–546.

⁴⁹ For example, in the Fifth Meditation.

⁵⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2007, A598-600/B626-628).

⁵¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, VI, 1, 1026a16, 1026a29.

(*arkhai*) and causes (*aitiai*)”⁵² of things. These, Aristotle explains, are the sort of principles and causes that are not constrained by any of the remaining principles and causes, but which, rather, constrain them. Aristotle argues that such fundamental principles and causes are, in fact, the *most general* principles and causes: “knowing all things must belong to him who has in the highest degree universal knowledge; for he knows in a sense all subordinate objects.”⁵³ Perhaps the most relatable principles of this type are the principles we would today assign to formal logic. For, the principles of formal logic are meant to apply to our thinking about anything, irrespective of its *genos*. (Later in *Metaphysics*, Aristotle does, in fact, attempt to justify the principle of non-contradiction as a part of this so broadly conceived a project.⁵⁴) However, according to Aristotle, the principles of formal logic are not the only problem for the “first science.” Another is just what sort of status would the phenomena studied by the “first science” have?

In the seventh of the Book Beta’s *aporiai*,⁵⁵ Aristotle considers two answers to this question. The first answer says that the “principles most of all” are the “the primary [*genē*]:” i.e. simply the most general *genē* (on my proposal, in the G2 sense). The second one says that they, rather, the already familiar *infimae species*, which allow for no further divisions that would result in genuine species (“*eidoi*”). Each answer, Aristotle worries, “involves a dispute.”⁵⁶ In the first instance, it is hard to see how the “primary [*genē*]” could be “principles in the highest degree” if, as UBANG (to which Aristotle now proceeds) shows, neither unity

⁵² *Ibid.*, I, 2, 982b9-10.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, I, 2, 982a21-22. That’s Ross’s translation.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 3-6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 3, 998b14-16.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 3, 998b16-17.

nor being – nor, *mutatis mutandis*, any set of features that characterises referents of any word that can be applied to anything – is a *genos*. Aristotle finds UBANG’s conclusion arresting in this second context, because the other answer to the seventh *aporia* he considers – that they should be *infimae species* – is certainly no more attractive:

But once again, it is not easy to say how one ought to suppose these to be principles. For a principle, a cause, must exist alongside the things whose principle it is, and be able to exist as separated from them. But why would one suppose that any such thing exists alongside the particular, except that it is predicated universally, of all things?⁵⁷

“But,” the aporetic passage continues, “if this is the reason, one must posit that the more universal [*genē*] are principles to a higher degree, so that the primary [*genē*] would be principles.⁵⁸ In my view, the second answer to the seventh *aporia* – *infimae species*, and that is to say, the least common essential characteristics of objects - is unacceptable to Aristotle, because the first science is most deserving of the name ‘wisdom’ because, as we noted, it pertains to everything; it deals with what is, indeed, *most* common to objects. So, we have strong inclination to think that first principles and causes are, rather, the primary *genē* – precisely the possibility UBANG challenges. So, we are none the wiser as to what sort of status the first causes and principles have.

But, surely, even setting aside the thorny considerations of the supposed indifference of essence to existence, this is enough for Aristotle to find UBANG noteworthy. It is understandable that someone who has interest in developing the “first science” might wonder what sort of phenomena such a science is to investigate as well as take interest in UBANG, which purports to eliminate one possible answer to this question.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 3, 999a15-21.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 3, 999a21-23.

Hence, although, on its No Entailment Reading, UBANG does not adjudicate neither between ontological pluralism and monism nor between the theses of the non-univocity and the univocity of ‘being’, it still performs important work for Aristotle, both in supporting the thesis of the indifference of essence to existence and in allowing Aristotle to sharpen the question of what sort of phenomena are the subject-matter of the “first science.” Hence, there are no exegetical obstacles that I know of that might stand in the way of our accepting the No Entailment Reading of UBANG. Hence, in the light of our earlier considerations, we ought to reject the Entailment Reading and accept the No Entailment Reading.

5. The Genus-Kind Confusion and the Genus-Kind Ambiguity

In this paper, I distinguished between two possible senses of the word ‘*genos*’:

G1: *F* is a *genos* iff there is a set of features that characterises all objects called ‘*F*’ insofar as they are *F*.

And:

G2: *F* is a *genos* iff (i) there is a set of features that characterises all objects called ‘*F*’ insofar as they are *F*, and (ii) *F* can be substituted for *g* in an SDG definition.

I argued that Aristotle’s argument that neither unity nor being is a *genos* succeeds only if we understand ‘*genos*’ in the G2 way. But then, I argued, the argument does not entail ontological pluralism, as some readers of *Metaphysics* had thought, for which we would need to understand ‘*genos*’ in the G1 way. Hence, I contend, whoever thinks that UBANG succeeds and that it entails ontological pluralism, is probably confused between these two senses of this word. Unfortunately, it is not easy to distinguish between these two senses in a less technical fashion, as English lacks words obviously predestined to suggest one but not the other. My own suggestion – bearing in mind it comes from a non-native speaker - would be to follow Gareth Matthews (who diagnosed what he called the ‘Sense-Kind Confusion’) in employing the more

commonly used ‘kind’ for G1 - a concept, I trust, that is indispensable in philosophy - and to reserve the not so commonly used ‘genus’ for G2, whose application, I suspect, is limited to helping us unravel the intricacies of its history.⁵⁹ If the reader is disposed to heed this suggestion, she could then call the possible confusion I have identified the ‘Genus-Kind Confusion’.

I cautiously say ‘possible’, because I do not believe that there is enough evidence to show that any philosopher cited earlier actually yields to the Genus-Kind Confusion. Although McDaniel, Ackrill, Shields, and Loux clearly support the Entailment Reading of UBANG, they do not, strictly speaking, claim that UBANG succeeds (at least not in the same place in which they lend their support to the Entailment Reading⁶⁰): McDaniel, Ackrill, and Loux merely assert that Aristotle offers an argument of this type, and Shields even argues at length that the argument fails. So, my complaint is only that these philosophers promote a mistaken reading of UBANG, not that they are confused in this fashion. Nor do I wish to submit such a complaint to Aristotle, who appears to have no similar reservations about UBANG (although he introduces it in an aporetic passage). For I have argued that he, by contrast, did not think that UBANG entails ontological pluralism.

⁵⁹ Madigan, who expressly reserves ‘kind’ for G2, begs to differ. Cf. Madigan, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics. Book Beta and Book Kappa 1-2*, 75.

⁶⁰ Thus, although Loux does claim that UBANG succeeds in “Aristotle on the Transcendentals,” nothing in this excellent paper commits him to the Entailment Reading. Conversely, in his later “Being, Categories, and Universal Reference in Aristotle” he does clearly embrace the Entailment Reading but does not explicitly claim that UBANG succeeds.

Still, even though Aristotle is not guilty of Genus-Kind Confusion, his writing is fraught with what we might call the ‘Genus-Kind Ambiguity’, which very much invites this confusion as well as the Entailment Reading.⁶¹

For the evidence of this, we do not need to look far. Consider Aristotle’s full formulation of the seventh *aporia*, which I have so far kept a secret:

[E]ven if the [*genē*] are principles most of all, must we recognize the primary [*genē*] as the principles, or the last that are predicated of individuals?⁶²

There are two iterations of ‘*genē*’ in this short passage. The *second* iteration - in “the primary *genē*” - could only be explicated as G2. For, I have argued, UBANG - challenging the first aporetic alternative - does not actually show that unity and being are not single *genē* in the G1 sense. It only shows that they are not single *genē* in the G2 sense. However, G2 does not work for the *first* iteration, which must be applicable both to *genē* in the G2 sense and to *infimae species* (the “last [*genē*] that are predicated of individuals”). But, with *infimae species*, we reach the limit of genuine species. There are, as we have noted in Section 2, no more genuine species to be defined in terms of them, and so, just like Aristotle’s “primary *genē*” - unity and being - they cannot be substituted for *g* in any SDG definition. So, they are not G2s. Hence, in

⁶¹ This ambiguity has already been spotted by Ross: “[Aristotle] himself can call all the species except the *infimae species* (and sometimes even these) genera.” William D. Ross, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, Volume I (London: Oxford University Press 1924), 236. Ross’s distinction between “all the species except the *infimae species*” and “all the species... and sometimes even these” seems to correspond to my distinction between G2 and G1. (It should become clear why in a moment.)

⁶² Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, III, 3, 998b14-16. Here, I deviate in a minor way from Madigan, who adds a third occurrence of ‘kind’ after ‘the last’, presumably to make the text more perspicuous.

order to make sense of the first occurrence of “*genē*” in Aristotle’s formulation of the seventh *aporia*, we need a disambiguation that covers both G2s and *infimae species*; and G1 is uniquely well-suited to play this role. Hence, in a single sentence, Aristotle employs “*genos*” in exactly the two senses that define the Genus-Kind Confusion.

We may conclude - on a somewhat counter-Heideggerian note - that, in this instance, the ancient Greek seems to be no better equipped for managing philosophy’s affairs than contemporary English, and that it is thus easy to see how the reader of Aristotle might arrive at the notion that if “‘being’ cannot be a genus,” then “there must be irreducibly different kinds of beings,”⁶³ and that this is what Aristotle himself had thought. Still, I hope that it is now clear that neither claim withstands scrutiny.⁶⁴

⁶³ Ackrill, *Aristotle's Categories and De Interpretatione*, 81.

⁶⁴ This paper benefited tremendously from having Michail Peramatzis as its first reader as well as from stimulating discussions about this material I enjoyed with Dominik Kobos and, further down the line, with participants of the tenth European Congress of Analytic Philosophy organised by philosophers at Utrecht University. Finally, the anonymous reviewers really helped me to chisel out the details with their critically sharp feedback. I would like to thank you all for your hard work – I really appreciate it.