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THE MEANING OF *TO GENOS TOU EIDOUS MEROS* AND *TO EIDOS TOU GENOUS MEROS* IN ARISTOTLE'S *METAPHYSICS* Δ 25

Brief Summary

In his *Metaphysics* Δ 25, 1023b24–5 Aristotle juxtaposes *to genos tou eidous meros* and *to eidos tou genous meros* by saying that the genus is a part of the form in a different way (*allōs*) than the form is a part of the genus. The author of the article considers how to interpret the word *allōs* and argues for the idea that the contrast marked by *allōs* reveals two different meanings of *meros*, in each case expressing a different relation of parthood.

Keywords: Aristotle, part, form, genus, meaning.

PREAMBLE

The exploration of the idea that the genus is a part of the form (*to genos tou eidous meros*) in a different way (*allōs*) than the form is a part of the genus (*to eidos tou genous meros*) in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Δ 25, 1023b24–5 will proceed as follows: (i) the ambiguity marked by *allōs* will be examined; (ii) the ambiguity of *meros* will be posited; (iii) the ambiguity of *genos* and *eidos* will be dispelled, and (iv) the relations of parthood at work behind the ambiguity of *meros* will be elucidated.

In this article *ambiguity* is understood as *term's bearing multiple meanings*, and *meaning* is understood as *sense* or *intension*, or *concept associated with a term*, and it is what determines the referent of the term or the extension, or the object the term is true of. Thus, a term is ambiguous if it has multiple meanings, whether or not it has the same referent. If a term has different referents, then it has different meanings, although a term can have different meanings without having different referents.¹

1. THE AMBIGUITY MARKED BY *ALLŌS*

In the *Metaphysics* Δ 25 Aristotle distinguishes four ways² in which something is called a part:

- (1) a part is the result of a division of a quantity, the division being either arbitrary or giving measure, as two is an arbitrary part of three, but not a part which gives measure of three;
- (2) parts are the results of a non-quantitative division of a form (i.e. of a genus, namely, a form having forms below itself), as the form, along with other forms, is a part of the genus (*to eidous tou genous meros*);
- (3) parts are the results into which a whole is divided or the constituents out of which it is composed, as both matter and form are parts of something that has the form;
- (4) parts are the constituents of a formula (and thus of the form), as the genus (along with the differentia) is a part of the form (*to genos tou eidous meros*).

Aristotle stresses the difference between the fourth and the second way in which something is called a part by saying that *a genus is also called a part of its form, although in a different way the form is a part of its genus* (τὸ γένος τοῦ εἶδους καὶ μέρος λέγεται, ἄλλως δὲ τὸ εἶδος τοῦ γένους μέρος, 1023b24–5, trans. Kirwan).

The phrase *in a different way* (ἄλλως) is crucial here, for otherwise we slip into absurdity. This slip can be easily demonstrated if we assume this principle:

Antisymmetry of Parthood: Two entities which are part of each other are identical.

Let us omit the phrase *in a different way* and suppose that, unqualifiedly, the genus is a part of the form and the form is a part of the genus. By the Antisymmetry of Parthood, it follows that, if the genus is a part of the form and the form is a part of the genus, then the genus and the form are identical. This result is alarming, since Aristotle would not admit that the genus and the form are identical. It would amount to saying that *animal* (genus) is identical to *man* (form). Hence it is not the case that, unqualifiedly, the genus is a part of the form and the form is a part of the genus. If the genus and the form must be distinct and simultaneously it is true that both the genus is a part of the form and the form is a part of the genus, then it must be the case that the genus and the form are parts of each other *in a different way*.

At first glance, the most evident variant how to interpret the phrase *in a different way*, viz. the difference between (2) and (4), is to assume that the meaning of *genos* and *eidous* shifts. Namely, *genos* in (2) expresses a

distinct concept than *genos* in (4), and likewise *eidōs* in (2) expresses a distinct concept than *eidōs* in (4). In other words, *genos containing the form as a part* is distinct from *genos being a part of the form*, and, similarly, *form being a part of the genus* is distinct from *form containing the genus as a part*.

It can still be the case that the referents of *genos* and *eidōs* in (2) and in (4) do not change, although the meaning does, i.e. the extension remains the same, despite varying intensions. The extensionalistic reading can be adopted with the proviso that the referents of *genos* and *eidōs* are universals, e.g. *animal* and *man*, since Aristotle remarks that the forms as parts of the genus result from a non-quantitative division (1023b17), which suggests that he is not talking about a set of particulars. The constancy of extension, viz. the idea that the genus in (2) is the same universal as the genus in (4), is compatible with the variability of intensions, viz. the idea that the concept of genus in (2) differs from the concept of genus in (4). The same consideration applies to the form.

But what happens to the concept of part? Does *meros* both in (2) and in (4) preserve the same meaning? It is argued in this article that it does not. Moreover, it is shown that the distinct concepts of genus and form hinge on the distinct ways something is called a part, and there are distinct meanings of part, because *meros* expresses different relations of parthood.

It has to be emphasized that *part* is a predicate expressing a relational attribute (*πρὸς τι*), viz. a part does not stand on its own; a part is a part of a whole, just as a slave is a slave of a master and a master is a master of a slave (*Cat.* 7, 6b29–30). It means that an object which is called a part stands in a relation of parthood to something of which it is a part. Thus, *meros* does not primarily refer to an object which is called a part; more importantly, *meros* expresses the relation of parthood in which that object stands. The author of the article claims that for Aristotle there are several such relations of parthood.

In contrast to *genos* (and to *eidōs*) which has different meanings despite having the same referent, *meros* has different meanings due to expressing distinct relations of parthood.

2. THE AMBIGUITY OF *MEROS*

The general purpose of Book Δ of the *Metaphysics* is to list the meanings of various philosophically significant terms. The collection

of these meanings constituting Book Δ is referred to by Aristotle as $\tau\acute{\alpha}$ $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota$ $\tau\omicron\upsilon$ $\pi\omicron\sigma\alpha\chi\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ (*Met.* Z 1, 1028a11), translated by the phrase *on the number of ways in which things are said* (Furth 1985).³ Chapter 25 of Book Δ presents a list of the many ways something is called a part. If Aristotle is taken at his word, distinct entries on the list should indeed be distinct. The reason for setting apart one meaning of *meros* from another must be grounded in the realization that the nature of parthood is multiplex. By distinguishing the meanings of *meros* Aristotle proposes the idea that objects called *parts* are not tied together by a single relation of parthood. Instead, there are various relations of parthood, where each operates according to its own principles and has its own properties. It is assumed here that two relations of parthood are identical if and only if they have the same properties.

By contrast, there is a view that one should avoid postulating a variety of relations of parthood, as it leads to an undue proliferation of them (Koslicki 2008, 158; cf. 2007, 138–9). The ambiguity of *meros* overthrows the conceptions of parthood, where the two-place predicate *part of* operates according to a fixed set of principles and thereby is essentially univocal. The ambiguity of *meros*, then, seems to be less elegant due to the lack of parsimony.

However, if it turns out that the *relata* do not change, while the relation itself does, the proliferation of the relations is compensated by the reduction of the number of objects to which these relations apply. It is conceivable that the genus and the form remain the same objects, i.e. universals, while the relation of parthood in which they stand varies. In other words, the *relata* of the parthood relation preserve their identity; what differs is the relation *is a part of*: *A* is a part₁ of *B*, and *B* is a part₂ of *A*. This does not exclude the idea that different concepts could correspond to the same object in different relations. For instance, *genus as containing the form as a part* and *genus as being a part of the form* are different concepts, while genus as such remains the same object.

3. THE MEANINGS OF GENOS AND EIDOS

Both *genos* and *eidos* are *said in many ways*.⁴ We are interested in those meanings, as Porphyry puts it when explaining Aristotle's term *genos*, which are *of account to philosophers* (*Isag.* 2.14–15, trans. Barnes). First of all, this account requires acknowledging that *eidos* and *genos* are

correlates – the one does not make sense without the other.⁵ If there is a genus, it is a genus of a form, and if there is a form, it is a form of a genus, unless this form itself is the highest genus. Every genus has a form above or below itself, and every form has a genus above or below itself.⁶

The correlative nature of *genos* and *eidōs* presupposes that the meaning of the one determines the meaning of the other and vice versa. If *genos* and *eidōs* have several meanings, these also have to be mutually determined. We do not have to look far for the right specification of the meanings of *genos* and *eidōs*, since the meanings of *meros* already give us a hint.

According to the list (1)–(4) in *Met.* Δ 25, the meaning of *genos* in (2) to *eidōs tou genous meros* corresponds to Aristotle's account in the *Topics* A 5, 102a31–2, which is quoted *verbatim* in Porphyry's *Isagoge* 2.16–17: *a genus is what is predicated, in answer to 'What is it?', of several items which differ in species [i.e. form – εἶδος];⁷ for example, animal* (trans. Barnes). Porphyry also remarks (*ibid.* 2.10–13) that *we call a genus that under which a species [i.e. form] is ordered* (trans. Barnes).

By keeping in mind that *genos* and *eidōs* are correlates, the appropriate meaning of *eidōs* in (2) is immediately determined. Aristotle talks about the form as being under a genus (*Top.* E 4, 133b10); he says that the form is a subject for the genus and the genus is predicated of it (*Cat.* 5, 2b19–20). This is manifested in one of the accounts of *eidōs* given by Porphyry as *what is ordered under a genus; and: that of which a genus is predicated in answer to 'What is it?'* (*Isag.* 4.10–11, trans. Barnes).

The meaning of *genos* in (4) to *genos tou eidous meros* in *Met.* Δ 25 corresponds to the meaning of *genos* in Δ 28, 1024b4–5 *as the first constituent in formulae which is stated in [answer to the question] what a thing is* (trans. Kirwan), e.g. the genus *animal* is stated in answer to what is, for example, *man* or *horse*. In this sense, genus is *as matter* (ὡς ὕλη, *Met.* Δ 28, 1024b8–9) of its differentia, which, together with the genus, makes up the form. Genus is not exactly *hulē* but only *hōs hulē*, for matter strictly speaking belongs to form–matter composites, which is (3) on the list in *Met.* Δ 25.

Accordingly, the meaning of *eidōs* in (4) is apparent when the form is treated as the object of definition. Since the formula of the form is out of genus and differentia (*Top.* Z 6, 143b19–21), and *as the formula is to the thing, so the part of the formula is to the part of the thing* (*Met.* Z 10, 1034b21–2, trans. Furth), hence also the form itself is out of genus and

differentia (*Met.* I 7, 1057b7). Thus, the meaning of *eidos* in *to genos tou eidous meros* is what comprises the genus, together with the differentia, as a constituent.⁸

The meanings of *genos* and *eidos* in (4) are linked to those in (2), since the referents of *genos* and *eidos* in (4) are the same as those in (2). It can be seen via the relations of predication that obtain in both cases. As in (2), so in (4), the genus is predicated of the form,⁹ whereas the form is not predicated of the genus (*Cat.* 5, 2b20–1). It is correct to predicate *animal* of *man* and to say that every man is an animal, but it is incorrect to predicate *man* of *animal* and to say that every animal is a man (*Porph. Isag.* 7.6–8).

4. THE RELATIONS OF PARTHOOD

To say that the genus is a part of the form in a different way than the form is a part of the genus is to stress that *A* is a part of *B* in a different way than *B* is a part of *A*. What needs to be explained is the difference between these ways of being a part.

The most straightforward explanation is the following: when the genus is a part of the form (*to genos tou eidous meros*), the genus composes (*σύνκειται*) the form along with the differentia, but when the form is a part of the genus (*to eidos tou genous meros*), the genus is merely divided (*διαιρείται*) into forms by means of the differentiae.¹⁰

The underlying feature behind a part's capacity of composing a whole, as opposed to being solely the result of a division of a whole, is its independence from the whole, i.e. ability to exist without the whole. The parts of the form compose the form, because they are independent of the form. The genus *animal* can exist without the form *man*, that is, no animal has to be a man. However, the parts of the genus do not compose the genus, because the parts are dependent on it. The form *man* cannot exist without the genus *animal*, that is, no man can fail to be an animal.¹¹

This reflects a crucial difference in properties of the relation of part-hood expressed by *meros* in (2) and in (4) on the list in *Met.* Δ 25. That is to say, *meros* in (4) *to genos tou eidous meros* expresses a relation of part-hood where the parts compose the whole, i.e. the parts are independent of the whole and the whole is dependent on them, whereas *meros* in (2) *to eidos tou genous meros* expresses a relation of part-hood where the parts

only divide the whole and do not compose it, i.e. the parts are dependent on the whole and the whole is independent of them.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It has been shown that the statement in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Δ 25, 1023b24–5 that the genus is a part of the form in a different way than the form is a part of the genus has to be interpreted in light of the phrase *in a different way*, which, instead of merely relating it to a change in the meaning of *genos* and of *eidos*, has to be tied with a shift in the meaning of *meros*, which, in turn, relies on the distinction between relations of parthood.

The idea that it is *meros* that is ambiguous has at least two far-reaching implications. Firstly, it has implications for the interpretation of Aristotle's theory of parts and wholes. If *meros* in *to genos tou eidous meros* differs in meaning from *meros* in *to eidos tou genous meros*, then one should rightly ponder whether similar considerations apply to the other ways in which something is called a part in Δ 25, and moreover, one should be cautious of ambiguity with occurrences of *meros* in other contexts. Secondly, the ambiguity of *meros* suggests that the understanding of other ambiguous terms listed in Book Δ of the *Metaphysics* requires more intricate appreciation of their complex nature, which in turn demands aspirations towards an unbiased reading of the text.

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- ¹ The meaning of *meaning* stated here is formulated by Putnam (1994, 222–5) as the *traditional doctrine*, which he deems unsatisfactory. In spite of his criticism, this doctrine will do as a crude tool for the purposes of this article.
- ² The classification of the Aristotelian meanings of part given in *Met.* Δ 25 under four headings is taken from Aquinas (*In Met.* lib. 5 l. 21 n. 9). Ross (1958, vol. 1, 339) also gives a fourfold classification. However, for instance, Kirwan (1971, 60) and Koslicki (2007, 134–5; 2008, 139; cf. 2006, 718 n. 10) distinguish five meanings of part, since they sort the two ways of dividing a quantity into separate entries.
- ³ Besides *τὰ περι τοῦ ποσαχῶς*, Ross (1958, vol. 1, xxv) mentions *ἐν ἄλλοις* (see, e.g. 1017b9; Θ 1, 1046a5–6) as Aristotle's way of referring to the contents of Book Δ. Furth (1985) renders *ἐν ἄλλοις* in 1046a5–6 simply as *elsewhere*.
- ⁴ There is no list of the meanings of *eidos*, whereas in *Met.* Δ 28 we can find a list of the meanings of *genos*, which, however, does not include all the meanings of *genos* used by Aristotle.
- ⁵ Aristotle does not explicitly say that *genos* and *eidos* are correlates, but this idea can be derived from his talk about relatives (*τὰ πρός τι*) in Book 7 of the *Categories*.

- ⁶ The highest genus is not a form of a genus above itself, and the last form is not a genus of a form below itself; the intermediate genera are forms of the highest genus and genera of forms below them (see Porph. *In Cat.* 83.20–3).
- ⁷ It is traditionally accepted that *εἶδος* in Aristotle is translated by two names, i.e. *form* or *species*, depending on the context of use. In the context where the relations of *εἶδος* and *γένος* are operative, the rendering of *εἶδος* is *species*, whereas *form* as a translation of *εἶδος* is used to contrast it with matter (*ὑλη*) when talking about form-matter composites. This brings out the affinity of *εἶδος* to *μορφή* – *shape* or *appearance*. From time to time Aristotle employs *μορφή* to designate the formal aspect of form-matter composites, although *μορφή* is a rarer occurrence than *εἶδος*. The author of the article translates *εἶδος* consistently as *form* (following Kirwan 1971), since Aristotle himself uses *εἶδος* in both contexts.
- ⁸ It is not uncontroversial whether genus literally is a constituent of the form. Koslicki (2006, 728 n. 32; cf. 2008, 158) rightly points out that form should not be identified with definition (of which genus is a constituent), since a definition is a linguistic entity, whereas a form is what is described by it. At the same time, it cannot be denied that Aristotle endorses correspondence between the parts of the *definiens*, i.e. the terms of the definition, and the parts of the *definiendum* (*Met.* Z 10, 1034b21–2). In that case, there is no way to circumvent the fact that something in the form, i.e. a constituent of the form, is picked out by each term of the *definiens*. Since a form is delimited within a genus by a *differentia*, there is no reason why one should not concede that *in a way* the form consists of genus and *differentia*.
- ⁹ In fact, both constituents of the form can be predicated of the form. The *differentia* can be predicated of the form, e.g. *rational* can be predicated of *man*, when the *differentia* is form-producing (*εἰδοποιός*), i.e. when it composes the form together with the genus (*Top.* Z 6, 143b8–9). However, the *differentia* cannot be predicated of the form, when it serves to divide the form (*qua* genus) into subordinate forms, e.g. *rational* cannot be predicated of *animal*, for *animal* is not composed as a form by the *differentiae* that divide it (see Porph. *In Cat.* 85.21–8).
- ¹⁰ The same idea is voiced also in Boethius' *De Divisione* 39.1–2 when it is stated that *in division the genus is a whole, in definition a part* (trans. Magee). What is emphasized is that *definition resembles the composition of a whole* (ibid. 39.5, trans. Magee), *it is as if parts of some kind are constituting a whole* (ibid. 39.2–3, trans. Magee), namely the form (i.e. *species* in Boethius' terminology, 39.20), but in division the whole, namely the genus, is merely resolved into parts. In Medieval terminology (see, e.g. Aquinas *In Met.* lib. 5 l. 21 n. 13), a genus having the form as a part is a universal whole (*totum universale*) predicated of its form as of a subjective part (*pars subiectiva*), whereas a genus being a part of the form is, along with the *differentia*, an integral part (*pars integralis*) of the form, which in this case is an integral whole (*totum integrale*).
- ¹¹ The dependence of the parts on the genus and the independence of the genus from its parts are affirmed also in *De Div.* 13.36–14.1: [I]f the genus is destroyed the species immediately perish, but ... if a species is destroyed the genus consists inviolate in its nature (trans. Magee).

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TO GENOS TOU EIDOUS MEROS UN TO EIDOS TOU GENOUS
MEROS NOZĪME ARISTOTEĻA METAFIZIKĀ Δ 25

Aristotelis *Metafizikā* Δ 25, 1023b24–5 pretstata *to genos tou eidous meros* un *to eidos tou genous meros*, sakot, ka ģints ir veidola daļa citādi (*allōs*) nekā veidols ir ģints daļa. Raksta autore aizstāv domu, ka pretstatījums, ko iezīmē *citādi*, atklāj divas atšķirīgas daļas nozīmes, kas katrā no gadījumiem nosaka ģints un *veidola* nozīmes un izsaka atšķirīgu daļas attiecību (*relation of parthood*). Daļas nozīme izteikumā *ģints ir veidola daļa* paredz, ka ģints jāsaprot kā *veidola* noteiksmes un arī paša *veidola* pirmā *sastāvdaļa* līdzās *atšķirībai* (*differentia*) un kā viela, bet *veidols* – kā veselums, kas ir salikts no ģints un atšķirības. Arī daļas nozīme izteikumā *veidols ir ģints daļa* nosaka nozīmi *ģintij* un *veidolam*: ģints ir tā, kas tiek apgalvota par veidolu kā par pamatu, bet veidols ir tas, kas tiek pakārtots ģintij. *Daļa* izteikumā *ģints ir veidola daļa* izsaka tādu daļas attiecību, kur daļas nevis sadala, bet gan saliek veselumu, t. i., daļas ir neatkarīgas no veseluma, un veselums ir atkarīgs no tām, turpretī *daļa* izteikumā *veidols ir ģints daļa* izsaka tādu daļas attiecību, kur daļas tikai sadala veselumu un to nesaliek, t. i., daļas ir atkarīgas no veseluma, un veselums ir neatkarīgs no tām.