

# THE ONLY WAY TO BE

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*Noûs* (forthcoming)

## I. The Topic

*Monism about being* (*monism* for short) says that everything enjoys the same way of being. So monism implies, for example, that if there are pure sets and if there are mountains, then pure sets exist in just the way that mountains do. Monism can be contrasted with *pluralism about being* (*pluralism* for short). Pluralism says that some entities enjoy one way of being but others enjoy another way, or other ways, of being. This paper argues that we should reject pluralism, and endorse monism.<sup>1</sup>

In what follows, I shall assume that monists take the existential quantifier,  $\exists$ , to capture (what they say is) the one and only way of being (cf., e.g., van Inwagen, 1998, 237-241). That is, I shall assume that monists take the existential quantifier to range over all and only those entities that enjoy (what they say is) the one and only way of being. And I shall assume that pluralists take various existential-like quantifiers— $\exists_1$ ,  $\exists_2$ , etc.—to capture (what they say are) the various ways of being (cf., e.g., McDaniel, 2009; Turner, 2010). I shall use these sorts of quantifiers in this paper's arguments because they deliver concision and precision.

But this paper's arguments never essentially depend on such quantifiers. We could restate those arguments—albeit more tediously and with added risk of ambiguity—without using  $\exists$  or  $\forall$  or any other symbols that resemble them. This is good. For the debate at the heart of this paper is not primarily about such symbols. Rather, that debate

is about whether everything enjoys the same way of being, or instead enjoys one or another of two ways of being, or one or another of three, etc. Thus, for example, Duns Scotus (*Ordinatio* I, d. 3, part 1, qq. 1-2) and Aquinas (ST I, Q. 13, Art. 5) can take opposing sides in this debate despite their both failing to be versed in first-order logic and its quantificational apparatus.

## II. A Problem for Pluralism

There are many versions of pluralism. Bertrand Russell (1912, 89-100) and G. E. Moore (1903, 29 and 111) claim that concrete objects enjoy one way of being and abstract objects another. Aquinas (ST I.3.5; ST I.13.5) says that God exists in one way and creatures in another. Some take Aristotle to say that entities that differ with regard to their Category differ in their way of being.<sup>2</sup> And of course there are other versions of pluralism besides these, such as, for example, the version defended by Heidegger (1927).<sup>3</sup>

Let us focus on the following version of pluralism, which is obviously inspired by Russell and Moore: everything exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>, all concrete objects exist<sub>1</sub>, and all abstract objects exist<sub>2</sub>. To make it clear that this view is not just monism misleadingly described, let us add explicitly that existing<sub>1</sub> is not the same thing as existing<sub>2</sub>, ‘exists<sub>1</sub>’ is not shorthand for *exists and is concrete*, and ‘exists<sub>2</sub>’ is not shorthand for *exists and is abstract*.

Let  $\exists_1$  range over all and only those entities that exist<sub>1</sub> and  $\exists_2$  range over all and only those that exist<sub>2</sub>. Thus defenders of the two-ways-of-being pluralism just described have two existential-like quantifiers. Again, their view is not just monism misleadingly

described. So let us add explicitly that  $\exists_1$  is not defined as  $\exists$  (the existential quantifier) restricted to concrete objects, and  $\exists_2$  is not defined as  $\exists$  restricted to abstract objects.

The following bi-conditional involving  $\exists$  is familiar:  $\forall xFx$  iff  $\sim(\exists x\sim Fx)$ . Our two ways of being pluralists should endorse parallel bi-conditionals:  $\forall_1 xFx$  iff  $\sim(\exists_1 x\sim Fx)$  and  $\forall_2 xFx$  iff  $\sim(\exists_2 x\sim Fx)$ . These parallel bi-conditionals allow our two-ways-of-being pluralists to introduce two universal-like quantifiers,  $\forall_1$  and  $\forall_2$ , which can be interdefined with  $\exists_1$  and  $\exists_2$ , respectively.

Consider this claim:  $\forall_1 x(x \text{ is concrete})$ . This claim is consistent with there being entities that exist<sub>2</sub> and are not concrete. So this claim does not imply that everything is concrete. This illustrates that  $\forall_1$  is not fully general. Nor is  $\forall_2$ . This suggests that our pluralists do not have a fully general universal-like quantifier. That is, it suggests that our pluralists do not have a universal quantifier. So let us assume—for the sake of argument in this section—that our pluralists do not have a universal quantifier. (I shall revisit this assumption in §III.)

Our two-ways-of-being pluralists do not have a universal quantifier. So they cannot avail themselves of a universal quantifier in order to make a claim to the effect that everything is thus and so. But our pluralists had better be able—in some way or other—to make claims to that effect. This is because their version of pluralism is itself such a claim. For two-ways-of-being pluralism says that *everything* either exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>.<sup>4</sup>

As we shall see, a central conclusion of this paper is that pluralists cannot, by their own lights, make claims to the effect that everything is thus and so. So pluralists cannot, by their own lights, state specific versions of pluralism—at least not without

incurring serious problems (§III). But we are getting ahead of ourselves. So let us back up. And let us consider a recent pluralist attempt to state the claim that everything either exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>.

That is, let us consider:

$$(1) \forall_1 x(\exists_1 y(y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y(y=x)) \text{ and } \forall_2 x(\exists_1 y(y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y(y=x))$$

Jason Turner (2010, 33), a friend of pluralism, has offered (1) as a way to state two-ways-of-being pluralism. And Michael Loux (2012) and Peter van Inwagen (2014), who are foes of pluralism, seem to agree that (something relevantly exactly like) (1) is our pluralists' best shot at stating their view.

It is not hard to see why (1) can seem to be a natural way to state two-ways-of-being pluralism, and, in particular, why (1) can seem to be a claim about everything. After all, our pluralists think that everything either exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>. So if we make a claim about all the entities in the domain of  $\forall_1$  and also about all the entities in the domain of  $\forall_2$ , then we have, by the lights of our pluralists, left nothing out. And so we have, by their lights, made a claim about everything.

As noted above,  $\forall_1$  and  $\exists_1$  can be interdefined, as can  $\forall_2$  and  $\exists_2$ . Because of how they can be interdefined, (1) is a logical truth.<sup>5</sup> Everyone should endorse logical truths. So everyone should endorse (1). So monists should endorse (1). But monists should not endorse two-ways-of-being pluralism. So (1) fails to state two-ways-of-being pluralism.

There is one caveat. Some monists might claim that the pluralist's understanding of  $\exists_1$  and  $\exists_2$  is incoherent. (Recall that neither  $\exists_1$  nor  $\exists_2$  is defined as a restriction on  $\exists$ .) As a result, these monists will object that (1) is unintelligible (and so not true, and so not a logical truth). Since these monists take (1) to be unintelligible, they should not endorse

(1). But they should also conclude that (1), being unintelligible, fails to state anything. So they should agree that (1) fails to state two-ways-of-being pluralism.

We can make my above point that monists should accept (1) without relying on the fact that (1) is a logical truth. We can instead consider what (1) says about the world. (1) says both that everything that exists<sub>1</sub> either exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub> and also that everything that exists<sub>2</sub> either exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>. What (1) says is true even if nothing exists<sub>1</sub> and nothing exists<sub>2</sub>. This is because what (1) says is trivial.<sup>6</sup> Everyone should endorse this triviality. So monists should endorse this triviality. But monists should not endorse two-ways-of-being pluralism. So this triviality fails to state two-ways-of-being pluralism.

There is the same caveat. Some monists might claim that the pluralist's notions of *existing*<sub>1</sub> and *existing*<sub>2</sub> are incoherent. So these monists should not endorse the (alleged) claim that both everything that exists<sub>1</sub> either exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub> and also everything that exists<sub>2</sub> either exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>. But they should also think that that (alleged) claim is itself unintelligible. So they should conclude that that (alleged) claim fails to state anything. So they should agree that that claim fails to state two-ways-of-being pluralism.

I myself assume that pluralism is coherent. But suppose—just for the sake of argument—that this assumption is wrong. Then some of this paper's arguments for the conclusion that we should reject pluralism will fail, and will fail because pluralism is incoherent. But this does not help the pluralist at all. For if pluralism is incoherent, then there is obviously another (very short) road to this paper's ultimate conclusion that we should reject pluralism.

Assume that pluralism is coherent. Then, as we saw above, monists should endorse (1). So (1) does not state two-ways-of-being pluralism. So set (1) aside. Turn to:

$$(2) \forall_1 x (\exists_1 y (y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y (y=x)) \text{ and } \forall_2 x (\exists_1 y (y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y (y=x)) \text{ and } \exists_1 x (x=x) \text{ and } \exists_2 x (x=x)^7$$

(2) is the conjunction of (1) and the claims that something exists<sub>1</sub> and that something exists<sub>2</sub>. Monists cannot accept (2). For monists deny that something exists<sub>1</sub> and deny that something exists<sub>2</sub>. (Recall that ‘exists<sub>1</sub>’ is not shorthand for *exists and is concrete*, and ‘exists<sub>2</sub>’ is not shorthand for *exists and is abstract*.)

Monists cannot accept (2). But (2) still fails to state two-ways-of-being pluralism. For consider three-ways-of-being pluralists. These pluralists think that the first two conjuncts of (2) amount to a logical triviality. And these pluralists think that something exists<sub>1</sub> and something exists<sub>2</sub>. So these pluralists should endorse (2). But these pluralists reject two-ways-of-being pluralism. For these pluralists—these *three-ways-of-being* pluralists—do not think that everything exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>. These pluralists think that some entities (do not exist<sub>1</sub> or exist<sub>2</sub> but) enjoy a third way of being. So some who reject two-ways-of-being pluralism should endorse (2). So (2) does not state two-ways-of-being pluralism.

Three-ways-of-being pluralists should endorse (2). This is definitive evidence that (2) fails to state two-ways-of-being pluralism. But it does not explain why (2) fails. To begin to see why (2) fails, imagine some eccentrics who hold that the only things that exist are x, y, and z. They also endorse:

$$(3) x \text{ is blue, } y \text{ is blue, and } z \text{ is blue.}$$

Since our eccentrics think that there is nothing other than x, y, and z, they will take (3) to make a claim about everything. After all, by their lights, (3) leaves nothing out.

Nevertheless, (3) does not—not even by their lights—state or imply that everything is blue. For the claim that everything is blue implies that it is false that there is

a non-blue object, and so it implies that it is false that there is a non-blue object that is distinct from  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$ . And even though our eccentrics think that there is nothing other than  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$ , they still recognize that (3) does not imply that it is false that there is a non-blue object distinct from  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$ .

Recall:

$$(1) \forall_1 x (\exists_1 y (y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y (y=x)) \text{ and } \forall_2 x (\exists_1 y (y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y (y=x))$$

As noted above, (1), by the lights of our two-ways-of-being pluralists, leaves nothing out. (2) just is (1) plus:  $\exists_1 x (x=x)$  and  $\exists_2 x (x=x)$ . So (2), by the lights of our two-ways-of-being pluralists, leaves nothing out. Even so, reflecting on (3) makes it clear that neither (1) nor (2) states or implies that everything exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>. So (2) does not state the claim that everything exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub> and something exists<sub>1</sub> and something exists<sub>2</sub>. This is why (2) fails to state two-ways-of-being pluralism.

Suppose—if only for the sake of argument—that to be abstract just is to be not concrete. Suppose also that all concreta exist<sub>1</sub> and all abstracta exist<sub>2</sub>. Then something could (fail to exist<sub>1</sub> and fail to exist<sub>2</sub> but) enjoy a third way of being only if it was—impossibly—neither concrete nor not concrete. This suggests that one way to state two-ways-of-being pluralism begins by combining (2) with the claim that all concreta exist<sub>1</sub> (and so are in the domain of  $\forall_1$ ) and all abstracta exist<sub>2</sub> (and so are in the domain of  $\forall_2$ ).

This strategy for stating two-ways-of-being pluralism will succeed only if our two-ways-of-being pluralists can state the claim that all concreta exist<sub>1</sub>. So consider this attempt:

$$(4) \forall_1 x (\text{if } x \text{ is concrete, then } x \text{ exists}_1)$$

(4) says only that, for every  $x$  that exists<sub>1</sub>, if  $x$  is concrete, then  $x$  exists<sub>1</sub>; so (4) is trivial; this triviality does not rule out the claim that some concrete objects enjoy a third way of being. Suppose we added the following conjunct to (4):  $\forall_2 x$  (if  $x$  is concrete, then  $x$  exists<sub>1</sub>); this conjunct only gets us the result that, for every  $x$  that exists<sub>2</sub>, if  $x$  is concrete, then  $x$  exists<sub>1</sub>; (4), even with this conjunct added, does not rule out the claim that some concrete objects enjoy a third way of being.

As noted at the start of this section, our two-ways-of-being pluralists think that all concreta exist<sub>1</sub> and all abstracta exist<sub>2</sub>. As we have just seen, our two-ways-of-being pluralists face the same hurdles in stating the claim that everything that is concrete exists<sub>1</sub> as they face in stating the claim that everything either exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>. And, of course, the same goes for stating the claim that everything that is abstract exists<sub>2</sub>.<sup>8</sup>

As we shall see in Section III, if our pluralists can clear those hurdles and state the claim that everything exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>, then they can also clear those hurdles and state the claims that all concreta exist<sub>1</sub> and that all abstracta exist<sub>2</sub>. So stating those latter claims poses no difficulties not already posed by stating the former claim. With this point in mind—and motivated by the desire to be succinct—I shall assume in what follows that stating the claim that everything either exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub> (and something exists<sub>1</sub> and something exists<sub>2</sub>) is sufficient for stating the relevant sort of two-ways-of-being pluralism. (That is, I shall not require that a statement of the view explicitly include the further claims that all concreta exist<sub>1</sub> and that all abstracta exist<sub>2</sub>.)

Consider once again:

(2)  $\forall_1 x(\exists_1 y(y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y(y=x))$  and  $\forall_2 x(\exists_1 y(y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y(y=x))$  and  $\exists_1 x(x=x)$  and  $\exists_2 x(x=x)$



Two-ways-of-being pluralists might try to state their view by combining (2) with this claim:  $\sim(\exists_3x(x=x))$ . But a statement of two-ways-of-being pluralism must do more than introduce a third (or fourth...) existential-like quantifier and then add to (2) the claim that there is no  $x$  that enjoys the way of being allegedly captured by *that* quantifier. So (2) combined with  $\sim(\exists_3x(x=x))$  does not state two-ways-of-being pluralism.<sup>9</sup>

Our two-ways-of-being pluralists might attempt to state their view by combining (2) with the claim that nothing else exists. They will presumably take the phrase ‘nothing else exists’ to be shorthand for the claim that nothing else exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub> (but see §III).<sup>10</sup> The trivial truth that nothing exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub> other than what exists<sub>1</sub> and what exists<sub>2</sub> does not rule out three-ways-of-being pluralism. Nor does (2) combined with that trivial truth. So (2) combined with the claim that nothing else exists does not state two-ways-of-being pluralism, at least not given how two-ways-of-being pluralists will understand that claim (but see §III).

One might suggest that two-ways-of-being pluralists can state their view by combining (2) with the denial of the claim that there are at least three ways of being. This suggestion involves counting the ways of being themselves. I will respond to this suggestion, but not until Section IV, which deals with attempts to state specific versions of pluralism by way of counting the ways of being. So set aside such attempts for now.

This section has focused on two-ways-of-being pluralism in particular, in part because that version of pluralism is a more manageable topic than, say, thirty-seven-ways-of-being pluralism. But the arguments of this section generalize to all specific versions of pluralism. That is, a statement of  $n$ -ways-of-being pluralism modeled on (2)

will be acceptable to defenders of  $n+1$ -ways-of-being pluralism and, more importantly, will fail to state that everything enjoys one or another of those  $n$  ways of being.<sup>11</sup>

Relatedly, I think that it is false that (2) takes us most of the way to stating two-ways-of-being pluralism, needing only to be supplemented with some obvious addition (such as, for example,  $\sim(\exists_3x(x=x))$ ) in order to deliver a full statement. And the same goes for attempted statements of other specific versions of pluralism that are modeled on (2). So I think that defenders of specific versions of pluralism need a new approach to stating their respective views, an approach that does not begin with (2) or statements modeled on (2).

I shall consider two such approaches, focused, as above, on stating the version of two-ways-of-being pluralism that says that everything either exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub> (and something exists<sub>1</sub> and something exists<sub>2</sub>). The first approach begins with two-ways-of-being pluralists invoking the universal quantifier,  $\forall$ , and leads to their embracing what I shall call “generic existence” (§III). The second approach begins with two-ways-of-being pluralists attempting to state that there are exactly two ways of being (§IV).

### III. Generic Existence

Suppose that our two-ways-of-being pluralists stipulate that statements made using ‘ $\forall$ ’ are shorthand for statements made in terms of  $\forall_1$  and  $\forall_2$ . For example, they stipulate that ‘ $\forall x(Fx)$ ’ is shorthand for:  $\forall_1x (Fx)$  and  $\forall_2x (Fx)$ . Then they offer:

$$(5) \forall x(\exists_1y(y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2y(y=x)) \text{ and } \exists_1x(x=x) \text{ and } \exists_2x(x=x)$$

These pluralists—because of their stipulative definition of ‘ $\forall$ ’—will take (5) to be shorthand for:

$$(2) \forall_1 x(\exists_1 y(y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y(y=x)) \text{ and } \forall_2 x(\exists_1 y(y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y(y=x)) \text{ and } \exists_1 x(x=x) \text{ and } \exists_2 x(x=x)$$

As we have seen, (2) does not state two-ways-of-being pluralism (§II). So our stipulating two-ways-of-being pluralists should conclude that (5) does not state two-ways-of-being pluralism.

If we interpret (5) by way of the above stipulative definition of ‘ $\forall$ ’, (5) fails to state two-ways-of-being pluralism. So let us now consider two-ways-of-being pluralists who abandon the above stipulative definition of ‘ $\forall$ ’, and so do not take (5) to be shorthand for (2). In particular, let us consider two-ways-of-being pluralists who intend to embrace the universal quantifier,  $\forall$ , as ordinarily understood.

These two-ways-of-being pluralists embrace the universal quantifier,  $\forall$ . So they thereby embrace the existential quantifier,  $\exists$ , since  $\exists$  can be interdefined with  $\forall$  by way of familiar bi-conditionals. With this in mind, consider the following claim:

$$(6) \exists x(x=x)$$

Some pluralists might take (6) to be shorthand for the claim that either something (self-identical) exists<sub>1</sub> or something (self-identical) exists<sub>2</sub>. Then they would have to take  $\forall x(Fx)$  to be shorthand for:  $\forall_1 x(Fx)$  and  $\forall_2 x(Fx)$ . (This is because of how  $\forall$  and  $\exists$  can be interdefined.<sup>12</sup>) And then they would be right back to the interpretation of (5) already considered, according to which (5) is shorthand for (2).

So let us assume that our pluralists do not take (6) to be shorthand for the claim that either something (self-identical) exists<sub>1</sub> or something (self-identical) exists<sub>2</sub>. Nevertheless, they should still insist that (6) says that something (self-identical) exists or

has being or is something. After all, our two-ways-of-being pluralists take  $\exists$  to be interdefined with the universal quantifier as ordinarily understood, and so should take  $\exists$  to be the existential quantifier as ordinarily understood.

With all this in mind, let us stipulate that ‘generically exists’ is not shorthand for any disjunction along the lines of: exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub> (or exists<sub>3</sub>...). And let us add that to generically exist is, nevertheless, to exist, or to have being, or to be something. Then we can succinctly state how our two-ways-of-being pluralists understand (6). They take (6) to be the claim that something (self-identical) generically exists. For, to repeat, they take (6) to say that something exists (or has being...), but deny that (6) is shorthand for the claim that either something exists<sub>1</sub> or something exists<sub>2</sub>. Our pluralists should also insist that everything generically exists.<sup>13</sup> For then they can say that  $\forall$ —which can be interdefined with  $\exists$ —really is the universal quantifier as ordinarily understood.<sup>14</sup>

We now have a new version of two-ways-of-being pluralism, a version that differs from the two-ways-of-being pluralism discussed in Section II. For this new version is committed not only to the claim that everything either exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>. It is also committed to the further claim that everything also generically exists.<sup>15</sup> The version of two-ways-of-being pluralism from Section II was not committed to this. Indeed, let me now explicitly add what I had assumed all along, namely, that Section II’s version of two-ways-of-being pluralism takes it to be false that anything generically exists. (Remember: ‘generically exists’ is not shorthand for: exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>.)

Again, our new two-ways-of-being pluralists think that everything generically exists. They could take generically existing to be as fundamental as existing<sub>1</sub> and existing<sub>2</sub>. Or they could take generically existing to be less fundamental than (to be

grounded in) existing<sub>1</sub> and existing<sub>2</sub>.<sup>16</sup> This second option should not be conflated with the view of the pluralists of the earlier section of this paper, according to whom some entities exist<sub>1</sub> and others exist<sub>2</sub>, but none generically exist. For if no entities generically exist, then it is false that both everything generically exists and also that an entity's generically existing is less fundamental than (is grounded in) either its existing<sub>1</sub> or its existing<sub>2</sub>.

Consider how our new two-ways-of-being pluralists will interpret:

$$(5) \forall x(\exists_1 y(y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y(y=x)) \text{ and } \exists_1 x(x=x) \text{ and } \exists_2 x(x=x)$$

Our new pluralists should say that (5)'s first conjunct amounts to the claim that everything that generically exists either exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>. This is not what the first two conjuncts of the following amount to:

$$(2) \forall_1 x(\exists_1 y(y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y(y=x)) \text{ and } \forall_2 x(\exists_1 y(y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y(y=x)) \text{ and } \exists_1 x(x=x) \text{ and } \exists_2 x(x=x)$$

So defenders of this new version of two-ways-of-being pluralism should deny that (5) is shorthand for (2).

More importantly, defenders of this new version of two-ways-of-being pluralism can insist that (5) rules out, among other things, three-ways-of-being pluralism. More importantly still, defenders of this new version of two-ways-of-being pluralism can take (5) to state their view.<sup>17</sup> This is because they can take the first conjunct of (5)—unlike the first two conjuncts of (2)—to state that everything exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>.<sup>18</sup>

This section has focused on competing interpretations of (5), interpretations that themselves turn on how we understand the logical symbol '∀'. But the debate at the heart of this paper is not about logical symbols. Rather, that debate is about ways of being (§I). So I should be able to defend this section's main points without relying on claims about

logical symbols. With all this in mind, let us set (5) aside for the moment. And let us turn to the question of whether our pluralists can simply state their view as: everything exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub> (and something exists<sub>1</sub> and something exists<sub>2</sub>).

Suppose that our pluralists take the sentence ‘Something is not F’ to be shorthand for the claim that either some non-F exists<sub>1</sub> or some non-F exists<sub>2</sub>. They would then take the sentence ‘It is not the case that something is not F’ to be shorthand for the claim that it is not the case that some non-F exists<sub>1</sub> and it is not the case that some non-F exists<sub>2</sub>. Add that they (along with everyone else) endorse the following: everything is F if and only if it is not the case that something is not F. Then—given how they are taking ‘Something is not F’—they will take the sentence ‘Everything is F’ to be shorthand for the claim that everything that exists<sub>1</sub> is F and everything that exists<sub>2</sub> is F. So they will take the sentence ‘Everything exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>’ to be shorthand for the trivial claim that both everything that exists<sub>1</sub> either exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub> and also everything that exists<sub>2</sub> either exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>. That trivial claim does not state two-ways-of-being pluralism (cf. §II).

So let us charitably assume that our two-ways-of-being pluralists do not take the sentence ‘Something is not F’ to be shorthand for the claim that either a non-F exists<sub>1</sub> or a non-F exists<sub>2</sub>. Of course, our pluralists must take the sentence ‘Something is not F’ to mean something. And they must take that sentence, because of what it means, to rule out the claim that everything is F. So our pluralists should take ‘Something is not F’ to mean that a non-F exists, or has being, or is something, where none of this is shorthand for the claim that either a non-F exists<sub>1</sub> or a non-F exists<sub>2</sub>. In other words, they should take ‘Something is not F’ to mean that a non-F generically exists. And once they have generic existence, our two ways of being pluralists can state their view as: everything that

generically exists either exists<sub>1</sub> or instead exists<sub>2</sub> (and something exists<sub>1</sub> and something exists<sub>2</sub>).

Thus we get the same result that we got when we started with (5). That is, we get the result that only those two-ways-of-being pluralists who are willing to embrace generic existence—and so are willing to move away from the original version of two-ways-of-being pluralism in Section II—can state claims to the effect that everything is thus and so, and can, in particular, state two-ways-of-being pluralism. In this respect, this section's new version of two-ways-of-being pluralism is an improvement over Section II's version. Nevertheless, I claim that no pluralist should endorse this new version of pluralism. I claim this for three reasons.

The first reason begins by noting that two-ways-of-being pluralism can be motivated by the conviction or insight or intuition that it is false that abstracta and concreta exist in the same way. Hence Moore:

It is quite certain that two natural objects may exist; but it is equally certain that *two* itself does not exist and never can. Two and two *are* four. But that does not mean that either two or four exists. Yet it certainly means *something*. Two *is* somehow, although it does not exist. (Moore, 1903, 111)

And here is Bertrand Russell:

Suppose, for instance, that I am in my room. I exist, and my room exists; but does 'in' exist? Yet obviously the word 'in' has a meaning; it denotes a relation which holds between me and my room. This relation is something, although we cannot say that it exists *in the same sense* in which I and my room exist. (Russell, 1912, 90)

Moore asserts that it is “quite certain” that natural objects enjoy a way of being and “equally certain” that that way of being is not enjoyed by two and four. Russell asserts that we “cannot say” that a relation exists in the same sense in which Russell

himself exists.<sup>19</sup> These remarks give voice to the conviction or insight or intuition that it is false that there is a way of being that concreta and abstracta alike enjoy.<sup>20</sup>

Obviously enough, this conviction (or insight or intuition) contradicts the claim that there is a way of being that concreta and abstracta alike enjoy. So this conviction contradicts the claim that concreta and abstracta alike generically exist. So this conviction does not motivate this section's new version of two-ways-of-being pluralism. On the contrary, those who share this conviction must reject this new version of pluralism, since this new version implies that concreta and abstracta alike generically exist. But I think this conviction is the best motivation for pluralism. So this new version of pluralism contradicts the best motivation for pluralism. This is the first reason that pluralists should not endorse this new version of pluralism.

There is a second reason. To understand this second reason, we must first understand a natural objection to pluralism. This objection is expressed by van Inwagen's self-described "rant" against Russell's (1912) version of two-ways-of-being pluralism:

No, Russell, no! Relations are vastly different from tables, yes, but that's just to say that the members of one of those two classes of objects have vastly different natures from the members of the other—that the *properties* of relations are vastly different from the *properties* of tables. For example relations are, as you say, not in space and time and tables are in space and time. There. When you've said that, that's what you've said. Relations lack the property spatio-temporality and tables have it. That's an enormous difference between relations and tables, all right... But when you've described the radically different properties that relations and tables have, you have not only done everything that *is needed* to describe the vast difference between relations and tables, you have done everything that *can be done* to describe it. That's what describing a vast difference *is*. Stop trying to do something more when there's nothing more to be done: stop trying to express the vastness of the difference between relations and tables by saying that they *have different kinds of being*. (2014, 23)<sup>21</sup>

This section's new version of pluralism is especially vulnerable to this natural objection. For suppose that there are tables and that there are relations. Then this new



version of two-ways-of-being pluralism implies that a table and a relation exist in the same way—that is, each generically exists—while differing with regard to, for example, whether they are concrete or, instead, abstract. This implication supports the idea that endorsing the further claim that a table exists<sub>1</sub> and a relation exists<sub>2</sub> is, in van Inwagen’s words, “trying to do something more when there’s nothing more to be done.”

Look at it this way. Our new version of two-ways-of-being pluralism affirms the claim that the entities that exist<sub>1</sub> are all and only those entities that generically exist and are concrete. This new version also affirms the claim that the entities that exist<sub>2</sub> are all and only those that generically exist and are abstract. Once we have affirmed these two claims, we have agreed with the monist that there are entities existing in the same way that differ with regard to whether they are concrete or, instead, abstract. And once we have agreed with this, it really does seem like a mistake to add that there is another way of being that is correlated with being concrete, and another still that is correlated with being abstract. (And why pick ways of being that are correlated with those particular differences among generically existing entities, as opposed to others?)

This section’s new version of two-ways-of-being pluralism differs from Section II’s version by saying that everything generically exists. As we have just seen, this difference renders this new version particularly vulnerable to the objection that pluralists posit a difference in being where there is instead but a difference in kind among entities that exist in the same way. This is the second reason that pluralists should reject this section’s new version of pluralism.

There is a third reason. To begin to understand this third reason, suppose that you endorse Aristotle’s slogan that being is not a genus (*Metaphysics* B 998 b21). And

suppose, further, that you interpret that slogan as motivating pluralism about being. (Perhaps you take that slogan to imply that ‘being’ is not predicated univocally of each and every entity.) Then I think that you should also claim that it is false that generic existence is a genus. And I think, further, that you should interpret that claim as motivating the view that it is false that each and every entity generically exists.

Another historically influential motivation for pluralism about being is given by Maimonides and Aquinas, among others. Suppose that because God exists in a certain way, we can predicate existing in that way of God. And suppose that because creatures exist in a certain way, we can predicate existing in that way of creatures. Then add that “Univocal predication is impossible between God and creatures” (Aquinas, ST I, Q. 13, Art. 5). All this implies that the way that God exists is not identical with the way that creatures exist. So all this implies pluralism about being.

Those who prohibit univocal predication between God and creatures typically restrict that prohibition in some way. For example, in the *Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides seems to restrict it to positive properties. A related approach is to restrict that prohibition to intrinsic properties. But these restrictions do not undermine the motivation just presented for pluralism about being. This is because existing in a certain way is both positive and intrinsic.

The same goes for generically existing. That is, generically existing is positive and intrinsic. So the prohibition of univocal predication between God and creatures—even if restricted in one of the above ways—implies that we cannot univocally predicate generically existing of God and of creatures. So it implies that it is false that God and

creatures alike generically exist. So it implies that it is false that everything generically exists.<sup>22</sup>

The doctrine of divine simplicity yields another theological motivation for pluralism about being, a motivation explicitly given by Aquinas (ST I, Q. 3, Art. 5). Divine simplicity implies that God is identical with God's intrinsic features (cf., Stump, 2012, 135). Add that an entity's way (or ways) of being is (are) intrinsic. Then divine simplicity implies that God is identical with God's way of being. No way of being enjoyed by a creature is identical with God. So no way of being enjoyed by a creature is identical with a way of being enjoyed by God. This implies pluralism about being.<sup>23</sup> And it also implies that it is false that God and creatures alike generically exist. So it implies that it is false that everything generically exists.

Here is my third and final reason for saying that pluralists should reject this section's new version of pluralism. This new version implies that all entities—properties, numbers, mountains, God, creatures, everything—generically exist. This implication is clearly in tension with the sorts of views that virtually all pluralists have tried to articulate and defend. This tension is illustrated by the fact that—as we have just seen—historically influential motivations for pluralism are inconsistent with the claim that all entities generically exist. And this tension is not surprising. That is, it is not surprising that pluralism about being is in tension with the idea that there is a single way of being that everything enjoys.

#### IV. Counting the Ways of Being

Let us assume that stating that there are exactly two ways of being would allow one to state two-ways-of-being pluralism. If there are exactly two ways of being, then there are ways of being. That is, if there are exactly two ways of being, then ways of being exist.<sup>24</sup> I presume that our two-ways-of-being pluralists will say that ways of being exist<sub>2</sub>. After all, they have already said that abstracta exist<sub>2</sub>, and I presume that ways of being are supposed to be abstract.

So suppose that ways of being exist<sub>2</sub>. Then a natural way for our two-ways-of-being pluralists to attempt to state the view that there are exactly two ways of being might be:

$$(7) \exists_2 x \exists_2 y \forall_2 z (x \text{ is a way of being and } y \text{ is a way of being and } x \neq y \text{ and if } z \text{ is a way of being, then } z=x \text{ or } z=y)$$

But (7) does not state that view. For (7) is consistent with denying that there are exactly two ways of being. To see this, consider a three-ways-of-being pluralist who thinks that there is a third way of being and, moreover, holds that this third way of being does not exist<sub>2</sub> (but instead enjoys some other way of being). Such a pluralist could accept (7).

This point generalizes. That is, attempted statements of the claim that there are exactly  $n$  ways of being that are modeled on (7) can be accepted by some who believe that there are  $n+1$  ways of being. This point is a symptom. The disease is that (7) does not state that there are exactly two ways of being. Nor, for any  $n$ , do claims modeled on (7) state that there are exactly  $n$  ways of being. Such claims state, instead, that there are exactly  $n$  ways of being that exist<sub>2</sub>.

Two-ways-of-being pluralists might respond by saying that (7) alone does not state the view that there are exactly two ways of being. Rather, they might respond, that view is stated by (7) combined with:  $\sim(\exists_3 x(x \text{ is a way of being}))$ . But this combination

fails to state that view. For a statement of that view must do more than introduce a third existential-like quantifier and then add to (7) the claim that no way of being enjoys the way of being allegedly captured by *that* quantifier. Instead, a statement of the view that there are exactly two ways of being must add to (7) the claim that no way of being enjoys any way of being other than existence<sub>2</sub>. In other words, it must add the claim that every way of being exists<sub>2</sub>.

With this in mind, consider:

(8)  $\forall_2 x$ (if  $x$  is a way of being, then  $x$  exists<sub>2</sub>)

(8) says only that, for every  $x$  that exists<sub>2</sub>, if  $x$  is a way of being, then  $x$  exists<sub>2</sub>. So (8) is a triviality that everyone should accept. And this triviality does not rule out the claim that there is a third way of being, which does not exist<sub>2</sub>. Suppose we added the following conjunct to (8):  $\forall_1 x$  (if  $x$  is a way of being, then  $x$  exists<sub>2</sub>). Even with this conjunct added, (8) would not rule out the claim that there is a third way of being, which enjoys a third way of being. Nor would the conjunction of (7) and (8). So that conjunction does not state the view that there are exactly two ways of being.

Another attempt to state two-ways-of-being pluralism might begin by denying that there are at least three ways of being. So consider:

(9)  $\sim(\exists_2 x \exists_2 y \exists_2 z (x \text{ is a way of being and } y \text{ is a way of being and } z \text{ is a way of being and } x \neq y \text{ and } y \neq z \text{ and } z \neq x))$

(9) denies that there are at least three ways of being that exist<sub>2</sub>. But (9) does not deny that there are at least three ways of being.

Look at it this way. (9) is consistent with the following conjunction:  $\exists_2 x \exists_2 y (x \text{ is a way of being and } y \text{ is a way of being and } x \neq y)$  and  $\exists_3 x (x \text{ is a way of being and } \sim(x \text{ exists}_1 \text{ or } x \text{ exists}_2))$ . And no one who endorses this conjunction is aptly described as denying

that there are at least three ways of being. Again, (9) does not deny that there are at least three ways of being.

These remarks about (9) illustrate a more general point. It seems that pluralists cannot state the denial of the claim that there are at least  $n$  ways of being. Instead, pluralists can deny only that there are at least  $n$  ways of being that enjoy certain specified ways of being, such as, for example,  $\text{existence}_1$  or  $\text{existence}_2$ .<sup>25</sup>

This section has pointed out some obstacles faced by two-ways-of-being pluralists when it comes to stating that there are exactly two ways of being. Those obstacles should feel quite familiar. This is because those obstacles are similar to the obstacles, pointed out in Section II, that two-ways-of-being pluralists face when it comes to stating two-ways-of-being pluralism itself. As we saw in Section III, the obstacles of Section II can be surmounted by those who can make statements to the effect that everything is thus and so. The same goes for the obstacles pointed out in this section.

One way to make statements to the effect that everything is thus and so is to invoke the universal quantifier,  $\forall$ , as ordinarily understood. For example, we can state that there are exactly two ways of being by combining (7) with:  $\forall x(\text{if } x \text{ is a way of being, then } x \text{ exists}_2)$ . And there are other ways to state that there are exactly two ways of being, once we have  $\forall$ , and therefore  $\exists$  (which can be defined in terms of  $\forall$ ). For example, we can combine (7) with the denial of the claim that there are at least three ways of being; that denial can be stated as:  $\sim(\exists x\exists y\exists z(x \text{ is a way of being and } y \text{ is a way of being and } z \text{ is a way of being and } x \neq y \text{ and } y \neq z \text{ and } z \neq x))$ . Yet another example replaces (7) with:  $\exists x\exists y\forall z(x \text{ is a way of being and } y \text{ is a way of being and } x \neq y \text{ and if } z \text{ is a way of being, then } z=x \text{ or } z=y)$ .

We can state specific versions of pluralism if and only if we can make claims to the effect that everything is thus and so. If we can make those claims, then we can state those versions, as in this section, by way of counting the ways of being. Or we can state those versions, as in the previous section, without counting the ways of being. One can endorse a specific version of pluralism only if one can state that version. So I conclude that those who endorse a specific version of pluralism must take themselves to be able to make claims to the effect that everything is thus and so.

As we saw in Section III, pluralists can, by their own lights, make such claims only if they deny that such claims are shorthand for claims about everything that exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub> (or exists<sub>3</sub>...). Rather, pluralists can, by their own lights, make claims to the effect that everything is thus and so if and only if they take such claims to invoke (what I have called) generic existence.

If supporters of a specific version of pluralism do not endorse generic existence, then they cannot—by their own lights—state their version of pluralism. But then they should conclude that they cannot endorse their version. (One can endorse only what one can state.) I conclude that those who do not endorse generic existence should not endorse any specific version of pluralism.

On the other hand, a version of pluralism that endorses generic existence is false if the claim that best motivates pluralism is true, is particularly vulnerable to a natural objection to pluralism, and is in tension with how virtually all pluralists have understood pluralism (§III). I conclude that those who do endorse generic existence should not endorse pluralism.

## V. Stating and Motivating Monism

Monists believe that everything enjoys exactly one way of being, and that that way of being is captured by  $\exists$ . Thus the following might seem to state monism:

$$(10) \forall x(\exists y(y=x))$$

But because of how  $\forall$  and  $\exists$  can be interdefined, (10) is a logical triviality. So everyone should accept (10). So pluralists should accept (10). But no pluralist should accept monism. So (10) does not state monism.

Neither does:

$$(11) \forall x(\exists y(y=x)) \text{ and } \exists x(x=x)^{26}$$

For consider those pluralists who (contradict the best motivation for pluralism, etc., and) say that everything generically exists. They will add that generic existence is captured by  $\exists$ . These pluralists should accept (11). So some pluralists should accept (11). No pluralist should accept monism. So (11) does not state monism.

But we can state monism. For example, we can state it as:  $\exists x\forall y(x \text{ is a way of being and if } y \text{ is a way of being, then } y=x)$ . Or: everything enjoys the same way of being. Or: every entity generically exists and enjoys no other way of being. These statements of monism invoke generic existence, either explicitly or implicitly. For example, the first statement succeeds only because ‘ $\forall$ ’ and ‘ $\exists$ ’ are not taken to be shorthand for, respectively,  $\forall_1$  and  $\forall_2$  (and  $\forall_3\dots$ ) and  $\exists_1$  or  $\exists_2$  (or  $\exists_3\dots$ ); thus that statement implicitly invokes generic existence (see §III).

None of the aforementioned ways of stating monism states a triviality. For if they were trivial then they would—like (10) above—thereby fail to state monism. Thus



monism, no less than (e.g.) two-ways-of-being pluralism, is a substantive thesis. Since monism is a substantive thesis, it should be motivated. And it can be motivated.

The first motivation for monism is just the conviction or insight or intuition that it is false that there are some entities that differ in the ways of being that they enjoy, even if those entities differ greatly in what they are like. Or perhaps the relevant conviction or insight or intuition here is that there is exactly one way of being.

Peter van Inwagen offers a second motivation:

...numbers may count anything: if you have written thirteen epics and I own thirteen cats, then the number of your epics is the number of my cats. But existence is closely tied to number. To say that unicorns do not exist is to say... that the number of unicorns is 0; to say that horses exist is to say that the number of horses is 1 or more. And to say that angels or ideas or prime numbers exist is to say that the number of angels, or of ideas, or of prime numbers, is greater than 0. The univocacy of number and the intimate connection between number and existence should convince us that there is at least very good reason to think that existence is univocal. (1998, 236)

Here is a third motivation. Start with the claim that  $\exists$  “carves nature at the joints.”

Then add, further, that since  $\exists$  carves at the joints, claims made in terms of  $\exists$  cannot be shorthand for disjunctive claims. So claims made in terms of  $\exists$  cannot be shorthand for disjunctive claims made in terms of  $\exists_1$  and  $\exists_2$  (or  $\exists_1$  and  $\exists_2$  and  $\exists_3$  or...). Conclude that claims made using  $\exists$  amount to claims about entities generically existing. Add that if pluralism is true, then it is false that entities generically exist (see §III). Then conclude that monism is true.<sup>27</sup>

It should be obvious that these three motivations for monism are neither contradicted by nor in any tension with the claim that everything generically exists. On the contrary, these motivations for monism—like every motivation for monism—are themselves motivations for the claim that everything generically exists. For any

motivation for monism motivates the claim that it is false that some things exist<sub>1</sub> or some things exist<sub>2</sub> (or some things exist<sub>3</sub>). So motivations for monism thereby motivate the claim that ‘Everything exists’ is not shorthand for: everything exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub> (or exists<sub>3</sub>...). In other words, motivations for monism thereby motivate the claim that everything generically exists.

I have just presented three motivations for monism. And there are other motivations (see, e.g., Williamson, 1987/1988; McGee, 2006). And there are objections to these motivations (see, e.g., Turner, 2010). All of this is fine. For I did not present those three motivations in order to catalogue every motivation for monism, or to give the last word in favor of monism. Rather, I presented them in order to illustrate a contrast between monism and pluralism.

Here is that contrast. Both the best motivation for pluralism and also historically influential motivations for pluralism contradict the claim that everything generically exists (§III). But the motivations for monism support, rather than contradict, the claim that everything generically exists.

Here is a similar contrast. The claim that everything generically exists renders pluralism more vulnerable to a natural objection and is in tension with the sorts of views that virtually all pluralists have tried to articulate and defend (§III). But the claim that everything generically exists creates no analogous problems for monism. On the contrary, that claim is part and parcel of monism.<sup>28</sup>

The claim that everything generically exists creates trouble for the motivations for pluralism, and for pluralism itself. But that claim creates no trouble at all for the motivations for monism, or for monism itself. This is a point in favor of monism over

specific versions of pluralism. This is because, as we have seen in this paper, both those who defend monism and also those who defend a specific version of pluralism must claim that everything generically exists in order to state their respective views.

## VI. Another Motivation for Monism

Recall:

$$(2) \forall_1 x (\exists_1 y (y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y (y=x)) \text{ and } \forall_2 x (\exists_1 y (y=x) \text{ or } \exists_2 y (y=x)) \text{ and } \exists_1 x (x=x) \text{ and } \exists_2 x (x=x)$$

As noted in Section II, (2) is not sufficient for two-ways-of-being pluralism. But it is sufficient for *nonspecific pluralism*, which—unlike specific versions of pluralism—does not specify exactly how many ways of being are enjoyed. Similarly, nonspecific pluralists include those who have no opinion on the total number of ways of being, but do have the conviction or insight or intuition that pure sets exist in one way and mountains exist in a different way.

Both (2) and the aforementioned conviction (or insight...) are sufficient for nonspecific pluralism. And both (2) and that conviction can be stated without stating a claim to the effect that everything is thus and so. So both (2) and that conviction can be stated without invoking generic existence. So neither (2) nor that conviction implies that everything generically exists. So it is possible to state and endorse claims that are sufficient for nonspecific pluralism without contradicting the best motivation for pluralism, without rendering pluralism more vulnerable to a natural objection, and without saying something that is in tension with the sort of view that most pluralists have

defended (see §III). This is a point in favor of nonspecific pluralism over specific versions of pluralism.

But nonspecific pluralism is not home free. To begin to see why, recall that I have argued throughout this paper that pluralists cannot, by their own lights, state that everything exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>. And they cannot, by their own lights, state that everything that is a way of being exists<sub>2</sub>. They cannot, by their own lights, state these and similar claims because they cannot, by their own lights, state claims to the effect that everything is thus and so. That is, they cannot state claims to the effect that everything is thus and so unless they contradict the best motivation for pluralism, etc. (§§II-IV). This goes for all pluralists, including nonspecific pluralists. And I say that this is a problem for all pluralists, including nonspecific pluralists.

You might want to reply that this is not a problem, at least not for pluralists in particular. For you might want to reply that none of us can state claims to the effect that everything is thus and so. But you cannot, by your own lights, reply in this way. For if none of us can state claims to the effect that everything is thus and so, then you cannot state a claim to the effect that everything is such that we cannot say of it that it is thus and so. That is, you cannot state the claim that we cannot state claims to the effect that everything is thus and so. (This is a familiar point, made by, for example, Lewis (1991, 68), Williamson (2003, 427-8), and Rayo and Uzquiano (2006, 3).)

Besides, I say that we can—and do—state claims to the effect that everything is thus and so. And I have stated multiple such claims throughout this paper, such as the claim that everything generically exists. Or consider a very different sort of example. There are no unicorns. And I just stated that there are no unicorns. So we can state that

there are no unicorns. The claim that there are no unicorns just is the claim that everything is a non-unicorn. So we can state the claim that everything is a non-unicorn. So we can state claims to the effect that everything is thus and so.

We can state claims to the effect that everything is thus and so. So no one should be a pluralist of any sort, specific or nonspecific. Rather, we should be monists. For monists can—without contradicting any of the motivations for their view, etc.—accommodate the claim that things are as they seem. That is, monists can, by their own lights, acknowledge that we can and do state that there are no unicorns; that everything is self-identical; that everything exists; that for every x, if x is a dog, then x is a mammal; that everything is not identical with a round square; and so on.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Turner (2010) calls pluralism about being ‘ontological pluralism’. I do not use Turner’s label only because ‘ontological monism’ would be a bad label for monism about being, suggesting instead the view that only The One exists.

<sup>2</sup> Frede (1981) and Witt (1989, 42-3) take Aristotle to hold that there is a way of being for each Aristotelian category. (Witt (2003, 2-3) adds that potentiality and actuality mark further ways of being for Aristotle.) On the other hand, Loux (2012) argues that Aristotle is not a pluralist about being.

<sup>3</sup> Each of the aforementioned versions of pluralism is consistent with (what I shall call) *nonspecific pluralism*, which is prominently defended in the contemporary literature by McDaniel (2009; 2010; 2017). I shall object to nonspecific pluralism in §VI. But nonspecific pluralism is not a target of the arguments in §§II-IV, which are aimed at specific versions of pluralism.

<sup>4</sup> See McDaniel (2009, 301-305) and Merricks (2001, 169) for further reasons that pluralists in particular need to make claims to the effect that everything is thus and so.

<sup>5</sup> Both Turner (2010) and van Inwagen (2014) make this point. Turner adds that (1)’s being a logical truth thereby explains the necessity of everything’s being either concrete or abstract (Turner, 2010, 32-33; ‘(29)’ is his name for (1)). As we shall see, I deny that (1) implies that everything is either concrete or abstract; so I also deny that (1) explains why everything is either concrete or abstract of necessity.

<sup>6</sup> Compare this to Loux’s (2012) claim that the pluralist interpretation of Aristotle’s remark that “being is said in many ways” renders trivial the idea that everything exists in one way or another of a specified list of ways.

<sup>7</sup> Suppose that pluralism is necessarily true if true at all. And suppose that it is contingent whether there are any concreta. Then we should revise (2) by replacing ‘ $\exists_1 x(x=x)$ ’ with ‘ $\diamond(\exists_1 x(x=x))$ ’. (And if it is contingent whether there are any abstracta, we should replace ‘ $\exists_2 x(x=x)$ ’ with ‘ $\diamond(\exists_2 x(x=x))$ ’.) A thus revised (2) is as vulnerable to my objections as is the version of (2) in the text.

<sup>8</sup> Our pluralists should not try to skirt these hurdles by identifying *existing*<sub>1</sub> with *being concrete* and identifying *existing*<sub>2</sub> with *being abstract*. For then the view that some things exist<sub>1</sub> and others exist<sub>2</sub> would amount to nothing more than the view that some things are concrete and others abstract. That view is consistent with monism, and so does not deliver pluralism.

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<sup>9</sup> For exactly the same reason, neither does the combination of (2) and the denial of:  $\forall_1 x(\exists_1 y(y=x))$  or  $\exists_2 y(y=x)$  or  $\exists_3 y(y=x)$  and  $\forall_2 x(\exists_1 y(y=x))$  or  $\exists_2 y(y=x)$  or  $\exists_3 y(y=x)$  and  $\forall_3 x(\exists_1 y(y=x))$  or  $\exists_2 y(y=x)$  or  $\exists_3 y(y=x)$  and  $\exists_1 x(x=x)$  and  $\exists_2 x(x=x)$  and  $\exists_3 x(x=x)$ .

<sup>10</sup> Another option for two-ways-of-being pluralists is to take ‘nothing else exists’ to be ambiguous, meaning—on one disambiguation—that nothing else exists<sub>1</sub> or—on the other—that nothing else exists<sub>2</sub>. This option has the same problems as does the option considered in the text.

<sup>11</sup> One could defend a version of pluralism that says that entities enjoy one or another of infinitely many ways of being (cf. Yagisawa, 2010). It would be a mistake to take seriously the idea that entities enjoy one or another of “infinitely many+1” ways of being. Nevertheless, an infinitely long claim modeled on (2) could be accepted by those who take entities to enjoy one or another of all the ways of being invoked in that claim, plus one not thus invoked. This is because an infinitely long claim modeled on (2) fails to state that everything enjoys one or another of that particular infinitely long list of ways of being.

<sup>12</sup> Suppose that ‘ $\exists x(x=x)$ ’ is shorthand for: something exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>. Then ‘ $\sim(\exists x\sim Fx)$ ’ will be shorthand for: it is not the case some non-F exists<sub>1</sub> and it is not the case that some non-F exists<sub>2</sub>. Add that  $\forall xFx$  and  $\sim(\exists x\sim Fx)$  are equivalent. Then conclude that ‘ $\forall xFx$ ’ is shorthand for: everything that exists<sub>1</sub> is an F and everything that exists<sub>2</sub> is an F. Put otherwise:  $\forall_1 x(Fx)$  and  $\forall_2 x(Fx)$ .

<sup>13</sup> So our pluralists will insist that ‘generically exists’ does not mean *exists*<sub>1</sub>, and it does not mean *exists*<sub>2</sub> (and it does not mean *exists*<sub>3</sub>...).

<sup>14</sup> McDaniel (2009, 296-302) argues that Heidegger endorses just this sort of generic existence, which McDaniel (2009, 302) calls a “generic sense of ‘being’.”

<sup>15</sup> Thus this new version of (what I am calling, and shall keep calling) *two-ways-of-being* pluralism implies that *three* ways of being are enjoyed. But it is clearly not the (what I shall keep calling) *three-ways-of-being* pluralism introduced earlier (§II).

<sup>16</sup> I do not think that our new two-ways-of-being pluralists would claim that generically existing is more fundamental than existing<sub>1</sub> and existing<sub>2</sub>. (Some contemporary pluralists would even insist that pluralism is inconsistent with the claim that generically existing is more fundamental than existing<sub>1</sub> and existing<sub>2</sub>; see especially McDaniel (2009, 312-4), but also Turner (2010, 1-9).) But, for the record, my remarks about generic existence in what follows are consistent with each of the following: generic existence’s being as fundamental as either existing<sub>1</sub> and existing<sub>2</sub>, generic existence’s being less fundamental than existing<sub>1</sub> and existing<sub>2</sub>, and generic existence’s being more fundamental than existing<sub>1</sub> and existing<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>17</sup> There is a wrinkle. An unlikely sort of three-ways-of-being pluralist could endorse (5) but add that some but not all of the entities that exist<sub>1</sub> or exist<sub>2</sub> also enjoy a third way of being (other than generic existence). I think this wrinkle is most easily ironed out by those who quantify over ways of being (§IV) and thus can say, for example, that if an entity exists<sub>1</sub> then every way of being enjoyed by that entity is identical with existence<sub>1</sub> or with generic existence. But I shall ignore this wrinkle in what follows, assuming for the sake of argument that it is not a serious problem for pluralism. (If this wrinkle turned out to be a serious problem for pluralism, then of course that would only buttress this paper’s ultimate conclusion that we should reject pluralism.)

<sup>18</sup> Equipped with generic existence and the ability to, by their own lights, quantify over everything, defenders of this new version of pluralism could also state their view as (2) combined with the claim that nothing else exists. For—unlike the two-ways-of-being pluralists of §II—our new two-ways-of-being



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pluralists will take ‘nothing else exists’ to mean *nothing else generically exists*, as opposed to *nothing else exists<sub>1</sub> or exists<sub>2</sub>*. Our new two-ways-of-being pluralists can also state the claim that all concreta exist<sub>1</sub> as:  $\forall x(\text{if } x \text{ is concrete, then } x \text{ exists}_1)$ ; a similar point holds for their stating that all abstracta exist<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>19</sup> This paper discusses the version of pluralism found in Russell (1912), as opposed to an earlier version of pluralism endorsed by Russell (1903, 449-51), which does seem to endorse generic existence. Russell motivates that earlier version. In my opinion—and, I strongly suspect, in the opinion of the author of “On Denoting”—this motivation is not worth pursuing. But here is a taste: “...the Homeric gods...have being, for if they were not entities of a kind, we could not make propositions about them” (Russell, 1903, 449). (See Caplan (2011, esp. 105n30) for discussion of Russell’s pluralism in and around 1903.)

<sup>20</sup> This motivation for pluralism can also be found, for example, in Witt (1989, 42) and, apparently, in the mouths of many undergraduates who take metaphysics from Kris McDaniel (2017, Introduction). According to a species of this motivation—endorsed in one form or another by Husserl, Heidegger, and Meinong—the relevant conviction is justified (or caused) by the phenomenology of certain experiences (see McDaniel, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Is it unchecked italicization that renders this a rant?

<sup>22</sup> McDaniel would object. McDaniel (2010, 693) thinks that that prohibition should be restricted to “perfectly natural” properties, and he would deny that generically existing is perfectly natural.

<sup>23</sup> As just noted, divine simplicity directly motivates pluralism. It also indirectly motivates pluralism by motivating the prohibition of univocal predication between God and creatures (see Stump, 1997, 254-5).

<sup>24</sup> So not every pluralist will be willing to count the ways of being. For example, Heidegger (1927) famously holds that Being is not a being.

<sup>25</sup> Thus we have a reply to the suggestion—noted in Section II—that two-ways-of-being pluralists can state their view by combining (2) with the denial of the claim that there are at least three ways of being.

<sup>26</sup> Suppose monism is necessarily true if true at all. And suppose that, possibly, nothing exists. Then change the second conjunct of (11) to:  $\diamond(\exists x(x=x))$ .

<sup>27</sup> Much of this third motivation resonates with the approach to metaontology endorsed by, e.g., Sider (2009).

<sup>28</sup> This is because the following is part and parcel of monism: ‘x exists’ is not shorthand for the claim that x exists<sub>1</sub> or x exists<sub>2</sub> or...

<sup>29</sup> Thanks to: Jonathan Barker, Elizabeth Barnes, Michael Bergmann, Ross Cameron, Troy Cross, Jim Darcy, Matt Duncan, Derek Lam, Joe Lenow, John Mahlan, Andrei Marasoiu, Kris McDaniel, Paul Nedelisky, Michael Rea, Bradley Rettler, Nick Rimell, Raul Saucedo, Alex Skiles, Donald Smith, Peter Tan, Adam Tiller, Christopher Tomaszewski, Peter van Inwagen, and Thomas Williams. Thanks also to those at talks given at the SCP Meeting of the 2016 Eastern APA, the Eliminativism Conference (Ovronnaz, Switzerland), and Georgetown University.