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Sense, Realism, and Ontological Difference

Abstract: The paper brings Dummett's formulation of "realism" into dialogue with Heidegger's understanding of truth as "unconcealment." Livingston argues, with references to Frege and Wittgenstein, that the phenomenon of truth can be understood theoretically and analytically as requiring the pre-theoretical appearing and constitution of objects, in experiential, practical, or explicitly linguistic modalities. This approach provides a basis for new logically- and phenomenologically-based accounts of the structure of objectivity within linguistic truth in relation to the appearance and being of objects. Within the context of a development of Heidegger's idea of ontological difference, this further implies that truth and objectivity must have a logically paradoxical structure. Even if Heidegger does not often say so explicitly, this paradoxical structure of objectivity and truth is centrally involved, as Livingston argues, in his understanding of the "clearing" and the interpretation it allows of beings "as such and as a whole."

An aim of this paper is to bring into view one aspect of the way thinking and being may be seen as related, if a certain kind of global realism about intentional sense is maintained.[1] This realism is motivated, in part, by Frege's realist conception of linguistic senses as objective modes of the presentation of entities, and thus as ways that things can appear, or show up as being. But it also extends the idea of intentional presentation beyond the linguistic theory of reference, aiming to characterize, with maximal generality, the structural conditions for the intelligible presentation of entities, whatever their specific modalities of presentation (and thus, not only in language, but equally in perception, imagination, memory, engaged practice, etc.).[2] Within this conception, the objectivity of senses means that they present entities as they are, or can be: that the intentional presentation, in whatever modality, of an entity is, indeed, the presentation of just *that* entity as being some way or other, which is a way it is, or can be. For this to be maintained in general, it must be the case that the ways that entities can appear as being just are the ways that they are, or can be. But as I shall argue, this implies a correlative realism about the structural basis of this appearing itself: about the basis of their appearing, that is, as the

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[1] This realism about sense is formulated and defended more fully in Livingston (2017), especially chapters 1 and 5.

[2] For a closely related extension of Tarski's disquotational Convention T to phenomenologically presentational acts or vehicles in general, see Smith (2016).

entities that they are, or can be. Global realism about sense will be, then, overall realism about appearing: the thesis of realism is, here, the thesis that the ways things can appear intelligibly to thought are grounded in the ways they are or can be, or in what we may collectively refer to as their "being," in general and as such.

In the restricted context of discussion of the intentional structure of a natural language, this requirement of realism about sense naturally takes the form of the maintenance, with respect to *semantic* discourse, of the formal requirement that Michael Dummett has proposed as a maximally general formulation of realism in any specified domain. This is the requirement that statements about entities in that domain be supplied with truth-values in such a way that their *logical bivalence* is maintained: these statements must be determined as either true or false, independently of our knowledge about them or our epistemic procedures concerning them.[3] If the theory of presentational sense is broadened to take into account the modes of appearance of entities in general, rather than being restricted to the discussion of language only, however, this requirement is naturally extended to that of bivalence with respect to the broader ground of that appearance, without prejudice to its determination by specifically linguistic concepts and categories. This ground must be such that it allows the manifestation of entities to thought, in a broad sense including perception and other varieties of intentional presentation, such that thought in this broad sense presents them as being the ways they, in fact, are, or can be. As such, it must be a basis, not only for their secondary appearance in representation, or to a thinking subjectivity, but also, more basically, for their ontological determination as being the entities they are, or can be, at all.[4]

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3 Dummett (1963); see also Dummett (1978) and (1982).

4 Here, the relevant kind of bivalence, as applied to sentences characterizing sense, thus extends beyond sentences characterizing specifically *linguistic* sense. Nevertheless, it is still, as on Dummett's original formulation, to be understood as a requirement on the truth-values of a specific range of sentences: namely those that characterize the *intentional presentation* of some entity or state of affairs as being some way. Thus, for example, the requirement bears on sentences such as "P *presents* the tree over there as flowering" where P is a (token) *perceptual* state, act, or vehicle, or "C *presents* the hammer as heavy" where C is an engaged act of grasping the hammer. For the kind of realism contemplated here, the crucial requirement is just that such "presentational" sentences in general (and without respect to linguistic or nonlinguistic presentational modality) be determinately either true or false; there is therefore no need to construe the contemplated realism as a matter of "semantic descent" to considering the existence (or non-existence) of truth*makers* for the relevant truths and falsities, despite the often non-linguistic character of these truthmakers. As an anonymous reviewer (to whom this footnote responds) has also helpfully pointed out, for the realist position contemplated here it is necessary that, in ad-

On this kind of picture, senses are, then, ways in which *whatever is* can be presented to thought. For this reason, as I shall argue, the relevant global realism about sense is also naturally formulated in the terms of Heidegger's idea of ontological difference, insofar as it construes the global sense of *whatever is* [*das Seiendes*], or of "entities," as determined with reference to their univocal difference from being [*das Sein*]. On Heidegger's conception, the global sense of entities can be seen as determined through their thinkable being, so that the appearance of an entity as being some way or other (Heidegger will term this its "unconcealment" [*Unverborgenheit*]) is dependent upon what can be characterized as its "ontological sense" [*Seinsinn*]. This is the sense of its determination by whatever, of its being, is thinkable. In the context of this idea of presentational sense as unconcealing entities *in* their being, global realism about sense thus requires realism about ontological difference itself: realism, that is, about the difference on the basis of which it is first possible for entities, as such and as a whole, to appear in, or for, thought. To apply this realism to the senses of entities, as such and as a whole, is, then, just to formulate such a conception of the relationship between being and thinking: to maintain that, on the basis of their difference from being, entities can appear as meaningful or intelligible for thinking, and indeed by appearing in just the ways they are, or can be. Speaking formally, and extending Dummett's formal requirement of bivalence, this indicates, however, that the thinking-being relationship cannot be specified as a whole without contradiction; and thereby, as a consequence, that the global determination of the thinkable sense of entities itself cannot be specified in non-contradictory fashion.

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When Frege, in "On Sense and Reference," introduced the idea of an objective sense as a mode of presentation [*Art des Gegebensein*] of its referent, he already thereby invited a conception of the sense of a singular term as accomplishing the *direct* presentation of its referential object. On such a conception, a singular sense is a presentation of that particular entity *as* being some way, and its functioning is just that: to make the entity available in some particular way, i.e. *as* being some way or other. This functioning is, then, just what is explicated by the idea of a linguistic term's sense; and this idea is quite independent of any

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dition to overall bivalence, the sentences characterizing presentational sense in general also be understood as i) truth-apt and ii) not uniformly non-substantive or false.

specification of the sense in terms of an individuating description, or as having any other representational content of its own. Inasmuch as it figures in Frege's account, this conception of sense as direct presentation is there formulated, of course, primarily with application to linguistic meaning. But as students of Husserlian phenomenology have long known, there is no evident reason why it cannot be expanded beyond the confines of this requirement to take in modes of presentation, or the structure of availability of entities to intentional presentation, *in general:* that is, without respect to the specific modality (linguistic or non-linguistic) by which they are presented.[5] Thus, on the requisitely expanded conception, the idea of the intentional presentation of an entity includes, in addition to linguistic modalities, also the perceptual, abstractive, imaginary, or practical ones, among others, whereby it may appear to an intentional agent at a particular time, in any sense of "appearing." With this phenomenological expansion of "sense" beyond the linguistic constraints of Frege's picture, it is possible to conceive the modes of presentation of an entity, as it may appear, for instance, in perception, as including those which are irreducibly *indexical* or demonstrative: those which involve the presentation of an entity or event, for example, as (as we might formulate them) "the person here in front of me," or "the explosion happening right now."[6] It is also possible for an entity to appear only *inexplicitly* as being some way: as, for instance, when, in the course of ordinary practice, an object shows up as being some way without one's attending to it, thematizing it, or even being conscious of it. (Think, for example, of objects in a blurry background of other objects in the foreground.)

If the idea of presentational sense is expanded in this ways, it will motivate an overall conception of the conditions of the *availability of entities* for meaningful consideration, description, and practical involvement. Here it is possible, in particular, to consider the general or structural conditions under which entities can be intentionally presented at all, not only as they figure in particular acts or events of linguistic reference, but also as they are available for such reference to

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5 This generality is marked in Brentano's inaugural statement of the idea of intentionality: "Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation, something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired, and so on" (Brentano 1879, p. 88). The core idea of the intentional presentation of an entity, in a way that is neutral with respect to the presenting modality, is plausibly at least one aspect of Husserl's concept of its noema, or noematic sense; for the classic presentation of the parallel between Husserl's conception and a suitable generalization of Frege's notion of sense, see Føllesdal (1969).

6 This aspect of the present conception thus appears congenial to Evans' idea of demonstrative senses (as in Evans 1981 and 1982).

begin with.[7] This will, plausibly, include both "perceptual" (and other practical) and "conceptual" and other intellectual aspects of presentational availability: as, for example, my significant *linguistic* reference to *"the flowering tree over there"* (as thus described and indicated) requires that I have prior *perceptual* access to it, as *well as* prior access to the concepts or categories under which I thereby describe it ("flowering"; "tree").

Such a conception will preserve, even in the broadened context, the constitutive links among sense, presentation, and truth that are characteristic of Frege's own (more limited) linguistic theory. For example, the sense of a singular linguistic term will remain a mode of presentation of its referent: that is, a way of presenting *just this referent* as being. And since the truth-value of a declarative sentence will then, similarly, be determined by whether the entities it describes *are* as it presents them as being, such a sentence's sense will still be understood as Frege understands it: that is, as the mode of presentation of a truth-value. But these links will also be extended beyond the linguistic case. A presentational state or vehicle in general (for instance, a sentence or thought, but also, for example, a visual perception or memory) will be true (or veridical), just in case it presents its object as *being* the way it (in fact) is; and a presentation of some complex or relationship of entities as being thus-and-so will be true (or veridical) just if the complex or relationship *is* thus-and-so: that is, just if what it presents *as being* the case, in fact, *is* the case. An act of perception will be veridical, for example, just when the way it presents its object is the way that object is, as it is in itself. When a presentational vehicle, directed at an individual entity, is veridical in this sense, we can then naturally speak of it as *showing* the entity "in its being." Its senses are then understood as the possibilities for this showing, or – switching to Heidegger's jargon – of unconcealing, in its being, the entity itself.

As thus characterized, it is further plausible that an entity's unconcealment always takes place *within a broader, relational context*. That is, it does not make sense to suppose an entity to be presented as it is, or can be, just *by itself* and without any relation to anything else. Rather, the presentation of an entity as being such-and-such a way always relates it to other entities, as well as to *their* ways of being, in such a way as to locate it, along with those other entities, within a broader shared horizon of relational significance. The horizons of an entity's appearing can be simultaneously multiple, and each can be primarily theoretical, primarily practical, or equally both. For example: the table is revealed

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7 Although I do not pursue the point here, it is also possible, within this conception, to see the overall hermeneutic structures of intelligibility as plural and historically variable, and thus as capturing what the later Heidegger understands as the succession of historical "epochs" or regimes of the intelligibility of being that collectively define, for him, the history of metaphysics.

as crooked, in the context of our practical activity of dining on it; Fermat's theorem is revealed – in Wiles' proof – as holding, in the theoretical context of contemporary mathematics; the Higgs boson is revealed as existing and having the properties it does, in the theoretical and practical surrounding of contemporary particle physics, as well as – simultaneously – the much less specialized and less formalized context of our broadest and deepest collective understanding of nature as a whole.

Because it is holistically conditioned in this way, one can speak of the unconcealment of any individual entity as dependent, among its various structural conditions, on the "prior" unconcealment or "disclosure" of (a) world as such: the "prior" and often implicit availability of (at least) a *relatively* total structure of entities and ways for them to be, or an overall "hermeneutic" *interpretation* (in the sense of the German *Auslegung*) of them in their possible ways of being. Thus, Heidegger will speak of world-disclosure as the prior "openness" of world for Dasein, the "projection" for Dasein of a domain of significance or sense. But this projection of sense, in the way it is to be thought of here, is not a matter of the external application of the terms or concepts independently produced by the activity of a subject, or by the imposition of the prior structure of a language or conceptual scheme onto an otherwise shapeless reality in itself. Rather, since it is plausibly a requirement for realism about disclosive sense that it *be able* to present entities just as they are, the prior projection of any domain must itself make available, in its holistic structure, ways that the entities in that domain are, or can be. And *if* this (relatively) total structure is indeed conceived as *maximally* total (though we will return to this question later), it will be such as to make available, as a precondition for the presentation of any individual entity, the prior structure of ways that entities, *as such and as a whole*, can be. Then the overall characterization of the sense of any entity as given – the explication of the entity in its being – is, in each case, ultimately a matter of the ontic-ontological difference: the difference between being, on the one hand, and whatever is, as such and as a whole, on the other.

On Heidegger's own account, the maximally general formal characterization of the structure of givenness, and hence of presentational sense, is that of a (so-called) "existential-hermeneutical" "as"-structure: the basic structure whereby something is presented *as* something.[8] In this structure, in general, something is revealed as something, or as being some way: the entity is revealed, or "unveiled," and, further, is unveiled *as* being some way or other. This structure of the "existential-hermeneutical" "as" is not, in general, linguistic: it precedes

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8 See *Being and Time*, pp. 148 – 150, 158 – 59.

and grounds, phenomenologically and ontologically, the explicit "as" of linguistic predication, or of the "copula." Thus, in the predicative sentence, proposition, or judgment, "S is (a) P," S is unveiled or unconcealed as (as being (a)) P. But this explicit, linguistic unconcealment has a prior basis in the "existential-hermeneutical" "as," which need not be explicit or linguistic at all, but rather is, in its structure, the most basic condition for the meaningful availability of entities overall.

The "existential-hermeneutical" as-structure is thus very widely applicable, across different modalities of presentation or availability of entities, and examples can be multiplied. The picture on the wall is unveiled as "askew" in my visual perception of it. The hammer appears as "too heavy" in the course of my unthematic, "circumspect" practice of building, without any explicit assertion or even any conscious thematization of it as such.[9] As I enter the café, Pierre is uncovered as "not here": this time, I do thematize, albeit in a privative mode, but still without any necessity of explicit judgment or assertion. Or again, I assert or affirm linguistically that "the cat is on the mat": then, the explicit and thematizing judgment is itself a mode of the disclosure or presentation of the relevant entities (the cat and the mat) and is thus grounded in the ways in which they, themselves, are thereby presented, as well as the relevant ways they can be.

In each case, the "prior" existential-hermeneutic structure captures, with maximal generality, the way in which the entities themselves are initially presented or given, such that they can intelligibly be thought at all. It is then, as Heidegger argues, reasonable to take the structure of this presentation as the structure underlying explicit predication in the sentence, as the underlying phenomenological/ontological basis for the (only apparently synthetic) structure that shows up, in the linguistic assertion, in the bridging of subject and predicate with the copula or the "is" of predication. And furthermore, since we can understand the structure of predication, relative to its possibilities of truth, as a matter of the way the truth-possibilities of a sentence are determined by the senses of its constitutive terms, so too can we understand the presentational possibilities of the entities themselves, their "ontological" senses, as presentations of what is thinkable in their being. As I shall argue in the next section, to do so is to maintain a global realism about presentational sense; and, correlatively, in a way that can be shown by its formal schematism, to maintain a certain positional figure of the thought-being relationship, or the place of the empty indexical positionality of thought insofar as it bears, in its structure, some relationship to whatever is.

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9 *Being and Time*, p. 157.

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The realism about sense contemplated in the last section is, essentially, an attitude of realism about the relationship of thought to the being of *whatever is*. As such, its appropriate overall formulation must be *neutral*, in the sense that that formulation cannot make it depend upon the existence, or the properties, of any specified class or type of entities. The formulation of overall realism cannot depend, that is, on any sub-region taking in just some (but not all) of *what there is*, or on any specified relation to some (but not all) of *those entities which there are*. For this reason, it is not adequately formulated as a realism about entities characterized according to any specific feature they are thereby supposed, universally, to have. Thus it is neither a naturalism nor an "empirical" realism: that is, it is not (for example) adequately formulated as a realism about entities that belong to nature, or those that are accessible to empirical investigation as opposed (say) to "empty" speculation.[10] But, for the same reason, it cannot be formulated in such a way as to identify any specific domain of entities, restricted as to their essential characteristics or properties, to which it eminently or primarily applies: the "really real" ones as opposed to those that are (by contrast) secondary, derived or constructed. It is thus not appropriately formulated as any kind of reductionist position, or any "metaphysical" realism that operates by identifying some class of entities – for example the referents of "primitive" terms – that are semantically or metaphysically atomic with respect to others built from them.[11] Nor, again, can it be appropriately formulated in terms of a theory of truth that requires the correlation or correspondence of some class of entities (for instance linguistic sentences) with another (for example "extra-linguistic" states of affairs): for any such theory does, after all, turn on some non-neutral distinctions within *what is*, even if it simply be the overall "distinction" between language and world. And finally, for the same reason, it is not appropriately formulated as a matter of the relationship of "mind" and "world," or indeed of any sort of "relationship" between subject and object at all. For any such relationship is, logically and grammatically, one between two entities or classes of entities, metaphysically distinguished as to type, and, as such, does not capture the requisite, global and neutral, realism about the being of what is, as such.

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10 This does not mean, however, that it is *incompatible* with these positions: since it is appropriately formulated, as we shall see, in terms of the semantic requirement of bivalence for ontological statements overall, it simply remains neutral on questions such as the question whether all entities are material, or governed by natural laws, or accessible to empirical investigation.
11 As, for instance, in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*.

It might seem that such a broadly neutral realism cannot be formulated at all: if it is not grounded on any characterization of how things are with entities, or on any specifiable relationships among them, how can the structural provision of sense be characterized, without any such formulation being completely empty? However, even if it cannot thus be specified in terms of the determinate properties or features of anything that is, it may be possible to specify the requisite realism, rather, in terms of the constitutive links among sense, being and truth which are displayed – as we have seen – both by Frege's own theory (albeit there in a way that restricts them to the consideration of *linguistic* sense) and, plausibly, any overall account of sense that is structurally realist at all. In particular, if presentational sense is (as argued in the last section) primarily a matter of the *disclosive* truth of entities across ontological difference, the appropriate formulation of realism about it will be able to capture, in neutral terms, the essential mutual dependence of the structure of truth on the structure of being. This dependence can then also be understood as the determination, across ontological difference, of the sense of entities, as such and in general.

Such an appropriate formulation can indeed be found in a generalization of Dummett's classical formulation of the logical structure of genuinely realist discourse about any domain. This formulation requires that statements within the relevant domain be seen, universally, as *bivalent:* that is, as determinately either true or false, quite independently of our knowledge of them as such or, more generally, our abilities to determine them as such. To adopt realism about a particular domain is thus, on Dummett's formulation, to apply the semantic analogue of the law of excluded middle universally across the domain, and accordingly to see the truth values of statements about its entities as determined, in principle, independently of any of our own epistemic capacities or procedures. Because realism is thus formulated as committing its adherent to such a view of the complete and bivalent determination of the truth values of sentences, it simultaneously commits the adherent to a similarly realist view of the determination of what we may term (along with Frege) their sense: that is, to a view on which the provision of sense for the relevant statements does not itself depend upon our own ways of providing sense for them, but rather on the ways the entities themselves are, or can be. As such, its formulation and maintenance, for a domain, will connect the sense of that domain's entities, in an appropriate way, to what Heidegger terms their "being."

If Dummett's schema is to be used to formulate a global realism about intentional sense of the sort contemplated in the last section, however, it must first be generalized in two ways. First, as we have seen, its appropriate formulation must be seen as schematizing the determination of sense, not only for some *particular* domain of entities or statements (such as, for instance, the domain of mathemat-

ical proofs, or statements about the past), but *globally*, that is, as bearing on the sense of *whatever is*, as such and in general, without restriction or limitation to any specific domain. And second, it must be extended, as we have seen, to take in not only the determination of the (linguistic) sense of terms and sentences of a natural language, but also, more basically, that of the presentational sense of entities as such, without regard to (linguistic or non-linguistic) modality. In the context of the discussion of the structure of a natural language – to which Dummett, like Frege, mainly restricts himself – the first extension naturally takes the form of the global bivalence of that language's *semantic* discourse: discourse, that is, *about* language, meaning, and (linguistic) truth. This includes, for example, sentences about the nature or structure of truth (in that language), as well as sentences quoting or referring to the meaning of other sentence; it also plausibly includes sentences involving intensional verbs applied to propositional constructions, such as those reporting or involving attributions of "propositional attitudes."

In each of these cases, the requisite extension, in the linguistic context, requires that the relevant semantic statements be seen as themselves determinately true or false, quite independently of our means of verifying or confirming them: what this reflects is that the sense of the language's terms and sentences is seen as determined in such a way as to track their relation to what there is or can be, rather than just the ways *we* represent things as being. But if, then, the second extension is made, so that bivalence is applied not only to semantic discourse about sentences, but rather globally to the broader structure of presentational sense as the disclosive truth of entities, we thereby gain an appropriate formulation of global realism about presentational sense, as grounded in realism about (what we may term) the being of those entities themselves.[12] Switching again to Heidegger's idiom, we can then understand the requisite realism also, and equally, as what we may term an "ontological" realism: realism, that is,

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12 In fact, as Dummett himself points out, (Dummett 1981, pp. 229–32), it is plausible that any conception of what is involved in knowing the sense of a singular term will require some account of the presentation of entities, couched on a more general and basic level than that of narrowly linguistic reference itself. Since, for example, to know or understand the (linguistic) sense of a proper name, for Frege, is to have an ability to recognize, as such, the object so named, we can pose the question of what is involved in this recognition; and this account will necessarily involve at least in part, in each case, the question of how the requisite entity is *itself* given or presented, such that this ability can be actualized. It is trivial, and thus empty, to say only that knowledge of the sense of "the morning star" requires the ability to recognize the morning star as the morning star; what is needed for a significant theory of sense is some account of how the recognition can be grounded in the presentation of a specific entity, or of the ways in which *precisely this* entity can show up or appear.

about (what Heidegger terms) "being," and about its difference from entities. This realism will then be naturally formulated as requiring, among other things, bivalence with respect to "ontological" discourse: discourse, that is (such as, but not limited to, Heidegger's own), about "being itself," about entities as such and as a whole, and about the relationship (of difference) between the two.

Of course, it is a main part of Dummett's own aim in introducing the connection of realism to bivalence to argue, in a variety of specific domains, rather for *anti-realism* about those domains. Thus, for example, in the case of mathematical number theory, statements about the past, and statements about sensations and putatively "private" contents of experience, among others, Dummett maintains or at least suggests jointly epistemologically- and semantically-motivated arguments leading to the conclusion that discourse about the relevant entities *cannot* be conceived as subject to the uniform requirement of bivalence, for meaningful discourse must be rather seen (on Dummett's individual arguments) as essentially constrained by the extent of our knowledge or epistemic procedures. Often, Dummett's reasoning for this involves an appeal to the consideration (which he supposes to be Wittgenstein's) that "meaning is determined by use": that is, that sense in the relevant domain can only be determined by means of our capacities and practices of linguistic usage, and therefore can go no further, in point of overall determinacy, than these capacities and practices do. The route from (what is supposed to be) a use-account of meaning to anti-realism about the provision of sense goes by way of a consideration of what is involved in our learning determinate practices of linguistic usage, or what can be manifest in intersubjective communication, within such practices, about the regularities governing this use. In either case, the decisive thought in motivating anti-realism is that the practices with respect to a domain, as themselves specified and determined in finite or otherwise restricted terms, cannot reasonably be seen as sustaining a globally realist (and hence globally bivalent) conception of the determination of truth-values in the domain.

However, this suggestion is in fact sufficiently overcome when we recall that our disclosive practices are *as* such (i.e., as genuinely *disclosive* practices) able to show entities in ways that are not simply determined by or contained within those practices, but are rather intelligibly grounded in their (i.e. the relevant entities') ways of being themselves. As such, they are grounded not only in our contingent practices but also, more basically and primarily, in the ontological difference between entities and their being. In particular, if our disclosive practices are not seen simply as various practical comportments, but rather, in the way suggested above, as further grounded in ontological difference itself, their results can readily be seen, in realist terms, as outstripping those practices themselves, in the sense that they are responsive to realities not simply constituted by, or

within, them. Contrary to Dummett's anti-realist suggestion, there is, in other words, something "there," external to our practices themselves, which is such as to determine the truth or falsity of the claims that we make in the course of those practices. This is not to deny that the possibility of our comprehension of the senses of things is, typically and essentially, provided to us only through and in our acquisition of, and participation in, our practices of engaging those things. But it is to uphold the suggestion that, however finitely they are specified or specifiable, our disclosive practices themselves are (*qua* disclosive) typically "on to" realities that essentially outstrip them. These realities characterize the ways they really are or can be, and thus the practical disclosure of entities is itself amenable to a realist reading, as involving essentially these practices' (veridical or non-veridical) presentation of those entities themselves in the ways they, in fact and as a matter of their own sense, can be.

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The realist picture that I have discussed so far has, at its core, a conception of what senses are: ways in which *whatever is* can be presented to thought. But for that reason, it also embodies a realist conception of this presentation itself: if (as their realist conception requires) senses themselves *are*, they, themselves, must belong, along with the thinking that presents beings by means of them, to *whatever is.* But then the thinking of *whatever is*, as such and in general, always takes place from some position, which is *itself* located within *it*, i.e., within *whatever is.* As this formulation suggests, though, realism about sense then implies a basic structure of formal-positional paradox, which must subsequently be seen as structurally characteristic, in general, of the thinking-being relationship itself. This paradoxical structure of the place of thinking, or of the reality of sense, formally determines the place at which or from which something like a presentation of the world can occur, the place at which the traditional concept of subjectivity is then, retrospectively, recognizable as inserting its figure.[13]

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13 To invoke such a formal position, along with its constitutive antinomy, is not to assume, however, the existence of a thinking subjectivity, or its necessity as a prior condition for anything whatsoever. This is because, as I argue in *The Logic of Being*, the relevant formal-positional antinomy is already sufficiently implied, quite independently of any assumptions about the existence of a subject or an actually thinking being, simply by a position of overall realism about the fact of temporal becoming; and this temporal realism, along with its formal structure, can be formulated quite independently of any requirement for an existent being, capable of thought.

This structural paradoxicality of the thinking-being relationship is, at bottom, the result of the unlimited generality of this relationship.[14] If being is, just as such, able to be thought, and conversely thought is, as such, the thought of what is, then there is no place left over, *outside* the being of whatever is, for an exterior position of something capable of thinking it. It follows from this that, if there is a position from which *whatever is* can be thought, this position must be located within *what is*; if there is sense, as the presentation of what is, this presentation must take place somewhere within, and not outside, what is. But then the being of thinking within what is, must be marked, both by an inherent formal indexicality which shows up in its having – and being able to present to itself – its "here," and a corresponding formal reflexivity which enjoins it to think it, itself, among the totality of whatever is. In this way, presentation must locate itself, simultaneously, both within the world it presents, and also, if it is able to present beings as such and in general, outside that world; the sense of things, or their being, will both have, and lack, being as something that is.

It follows that, if the senses of things *are* at all (but *that* they are is just the content of realism about them), then the position of thought with respect to whatever is, is from the start and irredeemably, contradictory.

This formal contradictoriness has a variety of more specific manifestations. For example, in the context of the characterization of (formal or natural) languages that include their own truth-predicate, it shows up as the semantic paradoxes, perhaps most characteristically, the Liar. As Tarski showed, for any language with sufficiently complete expressive resources and the ability to refer, in general, to its own sentences, the inclusion of a truth-predicate that functions in accordance with the disquotational T-schema will result in contradiction.[15] But since, as we saw above, one form of the requirement of realism about sense, for a natural language, is just the general maintenance of bivalence with respect to semantic discourse in that language (including, of course, discourse about truth) this recognition of the structural paradoxicality of such a language's own semantic discourse is evidently a direct consequence of just this realist attitude itself. The structural paradoxicality of sense is not, though, limited to language: in the phenomenological tradition, for instance, it shows up in the formal structure of the position of a reflexive intentionality which is

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14 This is the generality characteristic of Parmenides' inaugural declaration of the "sameness" of thinking and being, and it is also evidently involved in the motivating idea of Aristotle's conception, at *Metaphysics* 1003a21, of metaphysics as a possible science (and hence thinking) of whatever is, as such, in its being (compare the argument of Sebastian Rödl's "The Metaphysical Project," this volume). Of course, neither Parmenides nor Aristotle notes the paradox explicitly.
15 Tarski (1933) and (1944).

conceived, already in Husserl, as allowing the reflective bracketing of the entirety of the natural world, and which receives fittingly antinomical formulation in Sartre's problematic discussions of the "detotalized totality" of the (officially impossible) overall relationship of the for-itself with the in-itself. Here, the constituting position of consciousness from which it is possible to gain reflective access to the totality, in principle, of presentational sense is at the same time both included in, and excluded from, the field of its reference, pointing to the paradox of its positioning in a way that is quite independent of Husserl's setting of it in the context of transcendental idealism. Once again, the formal situation remains the same with respect to the set-theoretical paradoxes, most notably Russell's paradox, which confirm the inconsistency of a principle of universal comprehension, or of the universal determination of extension by intension, whenever impredicativity and predicates designating the totality of extensions are permitted. Here again, the formal issues are not limited to the specific domain in which they show up – here, set theory – for they plausibly bear on the underlying structure of the relationship, in general, between a concept and what is comprehended by it, or on what it means for anything to "have" some property, to be some way, at all.[16]

As we have seen, if a realist theory of sense, as mode of presentation, is phenomenologically broadened beyond the narrowly linguistic context, this realism can take the form of the maintenance of bivalence with respect to *ontological* discourse: discourse, that is, about being, about what is as such and as a whole, and about the relation – the difference – between these two. In this case, however, each of the manifestations of its structural paradoxicality noted above can also be seen as grounded in the structural features of ontological difference and, most decisively, in the fact of its *own* contradictoriness.

The most direct way of showing this is by way of the defining articulation of ontological difference. This is the claim that "being (itself) is not an entity:" there is a difference between being, on one hand, and *whatever is*, as such and as a whole, on the other.[17] This claim attempts to articulate ontological difference as such, by indicating the distinction of being from entities as such and in general. But to maintain a realist attitude toward *it* is to assume that this claim has a determinate truth value: it is either true or false. However, as Dummett's framework shows, to maintain this assumption just is to assume that its truth value

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16 This will be explicit, in particular, if we understand the set-theoretical '∈' as capturing the general structure of predicative comprehension (whether linguistic or non-), or indeed of "being-as" something-or-other.

17 For recent presentations of the structure of this paradox, see Priest (2002), chapter 15, and Casati (2017).

(whether true or false) is determined by *how things are* with the real referents of its (grammatically) referential terms; and one of these terms is "being" (itself). In other words, to treat a sentence which articulates the ontological difference as having bivalent sense is to treat "being" as a referential term, and thus as referring to *something that is*, i.e. something which is (in Heidegger's jargon) an entity. So to affirm the truth of the claim of difference is also to imply its falsity. Furthermore, if we take the claim of ontological difference simply to be false (while still construing it as meaningful), then we conclude that there is *no* difference between being and entities as a whole: that is, "being" just refers to the totality of entities, or the totality of whatever is.[18] Then, though, *this totality* both is and is not something within its own field, both (as we may put it) one among *those which are*, and not.

It follows that any realist discourse about the underlying basis or form of the sense of entities *as a whole* will be a contradictory one. Both being and ontological difference are locatable within that which is, and are not; they are entities, and are not; they exist, and they do not. As we have seen, moreover, the contradictoriness of such a discourse is just the result of the application of realism and bivalence, reflexively, to the statements which attempt to articulate, globally, that realism. In this way, the contradictoriness of the realist discourse follows, both semantically and ontologically, from the inherent positional contradiction involved in there being a real reflexive position, within what is, from which sense, as such, can be determined.

As a variety of realism, this might seem directly self-undermining. Does not the claim, about any domain, that an adequate conception of it requires inherent and unavoidable contradictions, indeed fly in the face of any possible attitude of realism about that domain? However, here it is essential to remember that realism, as Dummett formulates it, requires only that discourse about a particular domain be seen as (at least) bivalent: that is, that every statement about entities in the domain be seen as provided with a (i.e., *at least* one) determinate truth value (T or F), determined by the ways those entities are, or that the semantic analogue of the *law of excluded middle* be maintained for those statements. It is no part of this requirement, and neither is it in any evident way necessary for semantic realism as thus understood and formulated, further to require that none of these statements can be determined by their referents as *both* true *and* false, or that the semantic analogue of the *law of non-contradiction*

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18 In this case, the position is that of Parmenides' "One-All" and its essential paradoxes are those that Plato documents in rigorous detail in the deductions affirming the being of the One in the *Parmenides*.

be univocally maintained. Thus, it appears possible to suppose that referents in a particular domain are supplied in such a way as to fix truth-values independently of us, and *also* to suppose that this fixing allows for some statements about these referents to be *both* true *and* false. This kind of contradiction will then plausibly characterize, for example, any statements concerning the totality of facts, or truths: for instance, that "The world is all that is the case" will both *be* the case, and not. And given an underlying attitude of realism about the sense of the totality of whatever is, this supposition appears, with respect to ontological, phenomenological, and semantic discourse about senses in general, not only possible, but actually necessary.

4

What options remain open for the overall characterization of the constitution of sense, once the formal-positional paradox discussed in the last section is seen and appreciated? In each of its determinate forms as well as its underlying configuration, the formal-positional paradox evidently poses a dilemma on the level of overall theory between *completeness* and *consistency*. The contradiction is produced, with respect to the overall provision of sense, by way of the assumption that this provision must be *total* with respect to the domain of *all* referents, or of (in the Heideggerian jargon) "beings as such and as a whole." If, on the other hand, it is maintained that the provision of sense is *not* such as to bear on the totality of entities from a position wholly within it, there is no general reason to suppose that the position must be a contradictory one.

Formally speaking, there are, then, exactly two ways to maintain that it is, indeed, not such as to bear on the totality of entities. The first is to hold that the provision of sense does not bear on the totality of what there is, since it bears only on what is, within that totality, a limited or constrained range. The position from which sense is determined can then be seen as non-contradictory, but since it is, itself, exempted from the range for which sense is thereby determined, it cannot be realist about sense in an overall way: indeed, for the position of the provision of sense, the question of the sense of *its* (purported) being remains open, and indeed, cannot be formulated in any terms available to this conception itself. But the second option is to maintain that the provision of sense does not bear on the totality of what there is, not because it bears, rather, on some sub-totality within it, but rather because there is, or can be, no such totality at all: no such thing as the field, or whole, of whatever there is. This option, by precluding the overall positional paradox from arising, allows for the overall consistency of the provision of sense to be maintained even in its face.

When conjoined with a more specified account of the actual process of the provision of sense in each specific domain thereby constituted, it will require some variety of anti-realism about each such domain. But nevertheless, there is no evident reason why this consistency cannot be conjoined with *overall* bivalence – and hence, realism – about sense in general, as well as the formal position from which sense is itself supplied.

More broadly, the formally available options can be presented by means of a tabular schematism of "orientations of thought." These are figures of the relationship of finitely constituted thought to the infinity of whatever is, or of thinking-being relationship as such. Each of the orientations schematizes this relationship differently according to the ways it specifically understands and combines the overarching "meta-formal" ideas of reflexivity, completeness (or totality), and consistency.[19]

I here present the orientations, along with their formally defining features, and the indicative names of some representative figures of each; the implications of each with respect to possible realism about sense are summarized in italic text.

	Critical Orientations	*"Dogmatic" Orientations*
Post-Cantorian Orientations	**Paradoxico-Critical:**	**Generic:**
	Completeness, inconsistency *global immanent-ist realism* **[Derrida, Deleuze, Lacan, Late Wittgenstein]**	Consistency, incompleteness *global transcendental realism; local anti-realism* **[Badiou, Gödel]**
Pre-Cantorian Orientations	**Constructivist:**	**Onto-Theological:**
	global transcendental idealism; local (empirical) realism **[Kant, Carnap, Early Wittgenstein]**	*global transcendent-ist realism* **[Aristotle, Aquinas]**

In the schema, the bottom two orientations – the "pre-Cantorian" or "sovereign" ones – have in common that they fail to problematize the combination, which

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19 The terminology of "orientations of thought" is adapted from Badiou (2006), who effectively discerns three of the four discussed here, but does not recognize what I term the "paradoxico-critical" orientation. The possibility of understanding the space of possible orientations of thought – and especially those available today, after the Cantorian event – in terms of a centrally organizing "metalogical" duality of completeness and consistency was suggested to me by John Bova in discussions we had in 2008 and 2009. For related but different developments, see Bova (2016) and (2018).

they instead presuppose in different ways, of *completeness* and *consistency* with respect to the sense (or the thinkable being) of whatever is. Within the Onto-Theological orientation, this assumption of the conjunction of consistency and completeness takes the form of the combination of the assumption of a possible knowing of the being of whatever is with the enunciation of its "most firm" logical-metaphysical principle, that of the impossibility of contradiction. This means that the totality of the thinkable is here seen as both complete and consistent in itself, though necessarily beyond the grasp of finite cognition, which can only, at best, imperfectly approach it. Here, insofar as the question of sense is treated at all, it is seen as provided from the assumed position of a transcendency situated above or beyond this totality, but nevertheless capable of maintaining it as exhaustively determined and self-consistent, though necessarily obscure to situated and discursive thought. This is the orientation, then, of a "view from nowhere": a global realism that is maintained only at the (significant) cost of situating its source forever offstage, locating it instead as a theological one, beyond being, that necessarily exempts itself, for just that reason, from any possibility of description or discursive illumination.

By contrast with this, the constructivist (or criteriological) orientation, original with Kant, characteristically understands the provision of sense as taking place from a stable position *outside* the total field of (maximally determinate) sense thereby provided. Thus the field of maximally determined sense is seen as constituted, by thought, from an existent, stable, and thinkable (even if unknowable) position outside of it, whereas this position is still understood as one which *is* (and which is thereby governed by the principle of non-contradiction). Sense is thus seen as constituted *from* an essentially finite position – typically, that of a thinking subjectivity – while, owing to the exclusion of this position itself from the domain (or domains) of sense thus constituted, it is held immune from the effects of the reflexive-positional paradox. The result is that bivalence, and realism about sense, cannot be maintained globally with respect to the (larger) whole of *what is* in general and as such; it is, rather, only within the more restricted domain in which sense is maximally or completely determined that it is possible to maintain that truth values are (thereby) fully determinate. Thus, the position of the constructivist orientation combines a global or overall anti-realism (in Kant's terms, transcendental idealism) with a local (in Kant's terms, "empirical") realism.

Again, by marked contrast with both of these, both of the top two orientations – the paradoxico-critical and the generic – crucially acknowledge, and figure in a basic way in their motivation, the structure of reflexive paradox which (as Cantor was perhaps the first to see, despite his desperate attempts to deny it under the heading of a mysticism of the "unincreasable" or unthinkable abso-

lute-infinite) henceforth disrupts any attempt to conjoin completeness and consistency with respect to the thought of whatever is.

The paradoxico-critical orientation does so by maintaining completeness on the level of its consideration of the *total* structure of sense while, at the same time, witnessing the irreducible contradictoriness of this structure, and the consequently paradoxical relationship that must then characterize, at a formal level, the thought-being relationship and the provision of overall sense. Here are to be located, then, the significant critical resources of a conception of the sense of words and things, in close relationship to the constitutive problems of temporality, as a "paradoxical entity" (Deleuze), as structured *essentially* by the paradoxical-temporal trace of an irreducibly deferring-differing *differance* (Derrida), or as always already inscribed in the essential undecidability of the relationship of a finitely comprehensible rule to the infinitude of the instances of its application (late Wittgenstein). What is crucial here, in each case, is that sense is always structured, just as such and at its "deepest" level, by the positional paradox of its provision and availability, one ultimately demanded by the paradoxical structure of temporality itself. The relationship between thinking and being involved in the provision of sense is, then, inconsistent overall, and the law of non-contradiction must be accordingly be denied. But it is then also entirely coherent, as we have seen, to maintain a global and thoroughgoing realism, affirming (that is) the law of the excluded middle, globally and throughout the whole of whatever is.

The generic orientation, on the other hand, maintains the formal consistency of the thought-being relationship overall while rejecting the idea of completeness or totality: there just is no such thing as the totality of thinkable beings, or the whole of all that can be thought, at all. In this way, consistency can be saved on the level of the determination of sense, even in the face of paradox: specifically, the reflexive paradox that results from the assumption of a position, within the field of what is, from which sense is provided for the whole of this field, is avoided simply by denying that there is any such total field. There is thus no such thing as providing sense, once and for all, across the whole of the totality of beings or of entities, and there is, for that reason, in general no reflexive problem with its (always-partial) provision for locally delimited domains, fields, or worlds. *Within* these local or delimited domains – or for the *entities* seen as appearing within them – bivalence and hence realism will be denied: the truth value, for instance, of a statement about an entity, involving a predicate whose sense is determined only in a particular field, will not be determined outside that field. But it is nevertheless possible to maintain an *overall* realism about sense: this is marked in the formal maintenance of bivalence, and hence full determinacy, on the *overall* level of the position from which

sense is related to being, or the level on which the various more local fields are themselves structured and determined.

The commitments of the generic orientation appear, in contemporary thought, in a clearly defined way in the ontological projects of Alain Badiou – especially in the analyses of the (now) three volumes of *Being and Event* – as well as (with different inflections) Markus Gabriel, in his recent *Fields of Sense*. Both projects have in common that they begin with an inaugural declaration of the impossibility or incoherence of the world, universe, or totality of what is as such. In both cases, as well, the key arguments for this denial of the totality are premised directly on the paradoxes of reflexive totality. Thus (Badiou) the assumption of the existence of a universal set, or a set of all sets, leads directly to the contradiction of Russell's paradox and thus demands that there can be no such set; or (Gabriel) the idea of a list capable of referring to all entities undermines itself, owing to the existence of that very list: again, this shows that there can be no such list.[20] Furthermore, in both cases, the demonstrated contradictoriness of the assumption of such a totality – or of the unitary provision, at one stroke, of a sense for the whole of entities that are – is seen as decisively supporting, instead, the intuition of an irreducible *plurality* of fields or domains of sense, each understood as a relatively *local* field or domain of the presentation of entities, constraining the ways these entities can, within them, be or appear. At the same time, though, for both, this does not preclude an overall realist position about sense, itself: even as they are irreducibly structured by, and fully determinate only relative to, their specific fields, senses remain ways of presenting entities as they are, or can be; and the fields or worlds of appearance – of their determination – are themselves objective domains, thereby capable of defining (in Badiou's terms) an "objective phenomenology" that owes nothing to the constitutive being of a thinking or presentational subject.

Given, then, the apparent meta-formal availability of both the paradoxico-critical and the generic orientations, what, in general, can be said to decide between them? For the generic orientation, as we have seen, sense is related to being in an overall realist way, so that the sense of entities can always, and globally, reflect ways they actually are, or can be. As a consequence of this orientation's way of handling reflexive paradox, this global reflection is never able to be fully captured from any local position. But it is nevertheless essential for the orientation to be able to formulate it, at least in broad or overall terms, and thereby to clarify how it is that the senses of things are determined ultimately by the

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20 See, in particular, Badiou (1988), Meditations 1 and 3; Badiou (2006), pp. 109–111, and Gabriel (2015), pp. 17–18.

ways they are, or can be, even as these senses can show up always only partially, relative to specific domains. It is for this reason that, despite its inaugural and essential denial of the being of the "one-all," the generic orientation nevertheless necessarily invokes, on the level the being-thinking relationship, something like a background structure which itself functions, in relation to the determination of sense, as a kind of metaphysical absolute, by contrast with (always-local) appearing itself. This is the significance, in Badiou's project, of the guiding and always-essential theorization of being, insofar as it *can* be presented by means of ZFC set theory, itself situated within a classical-logical framework. Similarly, in Gabriel's project, despite the relativization of determinate appearance to fields, it is nevertheless affirmed that an object can be ontologically identified with the totality of truths about it, across the different fields in which it can occur; and hence, with its being, in radical traversal of any of the various domains in which it may appear. This means that the idea of such a totality of truths or descriptions, characteristic of each entity on the level of what Gabriel calls its "governing" sense, must be able to be invoked, at least abstractly and generically, in order for the identity of a thing itself to be understood: this totality, even if it is not specifiable or knowable as such, must in some way be "there," borne by the entity itself, wherever, and in whatever fields or relations, it may appear.

For the generic orientation, then, being and appearance are never wholly on the same level: ontological difference is here maintained as neither global nor local inconsistency, but rather as the mobile or "functional" difference between fields and the entities appearing within them. Even when – as in Badiou – the level of localized appearance is seen as capable of producing, through the dynamism of its own paradoxical structure, a kind of transformative "retroaction" on the structure of being itself, still the formalism itself requires that the levels of being and appearance – ontology and phenomenology – remain essentially separate, both formally and logically. Thus, the generic orientation remains committed, after all, to some variety of that dualism of the existent and its appearances which Sartre declared, on the first page of *Being and Nothingness*, no longer to be "entitled to any legal status" within philosophy, ever since the "considerable progress" attained by phenomenological thought in reducing the one to the other.[21]

By contrast with this, as we have seen, for the paradoxico-critical orientation there is, in general, no distinction to be drawn, either globally or locally, between the ways an entity can intelligibly appear and the ways it is, or can be. This is the

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21 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 3–4.

source of the neutrality of the kind of realism about sense which it is thereby able to propound: the sense of a thing is, here, not to be understood as relative to specified fields or domains, but is rather just characteristic of the entity itself, as it is or can be. There is thus no need for the orientation to differentiate between levels, as the generic orientation does, or to modulate being and appearance according to any overall differentiation at all.

To this it will be objected, from the generic side, that on the level of the structure of sense, the paradoxico-critical orientation, avoiding such an overall dualism, nevertheless invokes what is an even more problematic "metaphysical" absolute – namely, that of the presumed unitary totality of entities, universe, or world – which the generic orientation, by contrast, denies at a basic level. This unity is at least reminiscent of the Onto-Theological one, that is, of the assumed unity of a jointly total and consistent domain of "beings as such and as a whole" that characterizes theological thought of the absolute since Parmenides, and is more broadly, according to Heidegger, characteristic of the history of metaphysics and the obscurity of the ontological difference as such.

But as we have in fact already seen, the neutrality of the paradoxico-critical orientation's realism about sense already suffices to establish its radical formal distinction from metaphysics, either in its Onto-Theological or constructivist forms. By maintaining such a neutral but paradoxical realism, not only about sense as such but also about the position of its constitution or availability, it is radically distinguished from the Eleatic assumption of the unity of being and thinking in the figure of the presumption of the *consistent* whole; as well as, equally, from the neo-Platonic attempt to solve the constitutive paradoxes of this unity (to the documentation of which, without attempted resolution, Plato rather devoted the strenuous exercises of the *Parmenides*) by means of the essentially theological invocation of a mystical, transcendent One. Because of this radical and formally required distinction, the interest of the paradoxico-critic can never lie in anything like the positive projects of metaphysics: never, that is, in verifying, maintaining, or articulating the *consistency* of the (assumed) unity of thinking and being, but rather, in adumbrating the consequences of their formal mutual incompatibility, or of the real incommensurability with themselves that must then radically characterize the overall structures of sense, truth, and the being of whatever is. It is thus that paradoxico-criticism can venture terms of critique which go all the way to the very sense of what is involved in the thinking of being at all, and thus bear radically not only on metaphysics but, more basically, on the sense of truth, meaning, and being as these enter into the ordinary pursuit of our lives and practices. And it is only by posing such terms that it can then offer a formally radical basis for the critique of any picture of the world – including, decisively, that which forms the ideological,

material, and real basis for contemporary capitalist life and practice – which fundamentally operates by propounding the self-consistent decidability of such a whole, and holding it concretely in force.

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