

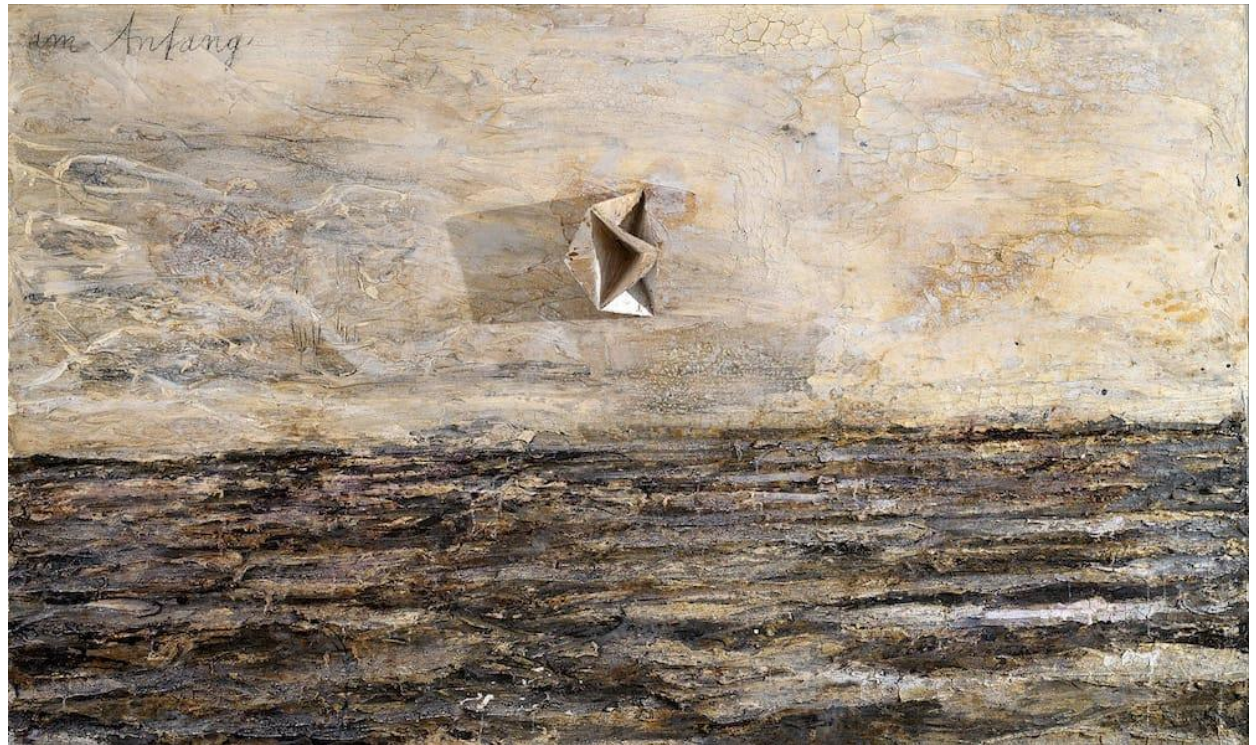
Thinking and being are not the same

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Anselm Kiefer, *Am Anfang*, 2003

Larger project

- Tentative title: *Neither one nor many: logics of ineffectivity as forms of life*
- **Aim:** To inquire critically into the structure and possible determinations of the *thinking-being relationship* both inside and outside the constituted tradition of Western metaphysics and its determining inscription of the One as cause
- **Privileged sites:** i) 20th-21st century logical grammar (esp. Wittgenstein), incl. “metalogic” and “limitative” results; ii) Platonism (incl. Aristotle); iii) Indo-Tibetan Madhyamaka (esp. Nāgārjuna).
- **Definitions:**
 - -A **logic of effectivity** is any comprehensive picture of the relationship of the *logos* to a life that presupposes, or attempts to guarantee, the *efficacy of the power of thought* to determine *beings as such and as a whole*.
 - -A **logic of ineffectivity** is any logic that witnesses, by means of rational reflection, the ultimate *incapacity* of thought *consistently to determine beings as such and as a whole*, and draws out the implications of this incapacity.

Critical target: the *dunamis meta logou*

The main ***critical target*** of this paper: an *idea of rational capacity* as underlying (what is seen as) a distinctively human *power* or *faculty* of self-conscious *judgment*.

- ***Locus classicus***: Aristotle at *Metaphysics* 1046a36ff (as the *dunamis meta logou*: a “two-way” rational capacity which allows its bearer to judge, with respect to any given propositional content p , either p or *not* p)
- ***More recent developments*** (especially in connection with a new ‘idealist tone’ in analytic philosophy): McDowell, Rödl, Kimhi
- ***Recognizably anticipated***, along with the general idea of a logical-grammatical articulation of thinkable contents, by Plato’s Eleatic Visitor in the *Sophist*

Argument of the paper

- If there were a capacity for rational judgment *in general*, it would be a capacity that has *no limits* as to subject matter or domain.
- As such, it would not be constrained by any specific content or nature of its own and would mark off its bearer as essentially distinct from any part or aspect of the material or natural world (compare Aristotle, *De Anima*, III.4, 429a18-28)
- **But there cannot be such a rational capacity. For its idea requires a form of *self-consistent unity* (of thinking, of being, and between the two) that *cannot survive* once we see the relevant activities of judgment as i) embodied in the structure of a natural language and ii) performed by its *finite* speakers.**

1. Judgment, self-consciousness, and negation: 'absolute' power of the thinking subject

Negation, non-being and judgment

- Judgment appears to be characteristically **general**: it appears possible to judge p true, or false, for any propositionally structured content p
- ***Since Parmenides, it has appeared mysterious that we can make negative judgments*** (as there is apparently nothing in being for a negative judgments to correspond to) ***and judgments of falsity*** (since a false sentence corresponds to no actual state of affairs, fact, or situation) at all.
- ***Since Plato, forms of response to this problem have invoked a systematic idea of the logical correspondence of forms of possible judgment to the forms of what is – or CAN be– the case***
- Then a **systematic logic** of the relationship of thinking to possible being, is thought to underlie the general capacity of judgment in the subjects that possess it.
- The idea of such a capacity, along with the logic that underlies it, appeals to the truth of Parmenides' statement of the sameness of thinking and being.

Wittgenstein: a 'paradox' and a 'truism'

PI 95. "Thinking must be something unique." When we say, *mean*, that such-and-such is the case, then, with what we mean, we do not stop anywhere short of the fact, but mean *such-and such – is – thus-and-so*. -- But this paradox (which indeed has the form of a truism) can also be expressed in this way: one can *think* what is not the case.

- **McDowell's gloss:** "...there is no ontological gap between the sort of thing one can mean, or more generally the sort of thing one can think, and the sort of thing that can be the case. When one thinks truly, what one thinks *is* what is the case. So since the world is everything that is the case (as he [Wittgenstein] himself once wrote), there is no gap between thought, as such, and the world. Of course thought can be distanced from the world by being false, but there is no distance from the world implied in the very idea of thought." (*Mind and World*, p. 27)
- **Kimhi's gloss:** "...Wittgenstein identifies the difficulties concerning negation as part of a single puzzle, one that is in no way distinct from the challenge of recognizing that the success or failure of a judgment/statement that something is the case does not depend on anything external to it. We can recognize that these paradoxes – paradoxes that have the form of truisms – are nothing other than the syllogisms of thinking and being. What is at issue throughout the passage is already present at the outset: that thinking must be something unique." (*Thinking and Being*, pp. 151-52)

Kimhi: Syllogisms of Thinking and Being

- According to Kimhi, a defense of the identity of thinking and being will succeed only if it can succeed in rendering self-evident the ‘syllogisms of thinking and being’:

Positive syllogism:

- 1) A thinks p
- 2) not- p (p is not the case)
-
- 3) A falsely thinks p

Negative syllogism:

- 1) A thinks not- p
- 2) not- p (p is not the case)
-
- 3) A truly thinks not- p

- The availability of the syllogisms is obscured by usual assumptions of analytic philosophers, which require a distinction between extensional and non-extensional contexts.

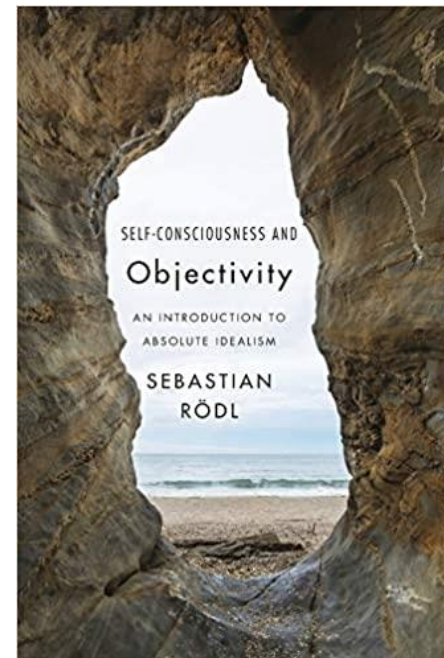
Thus:

- 1) A thinks “ p ” (supposedly, intensional context)
- 2) not- p (i.e. $\sim p$) (extensional context)
-
- A falsely thinks p [**does not follow**]



Rödl: Self-conscious validity of thought

- In thinking (in the sense of assertoric judgment) that p , I also, simultaneously and in the same act, think that *it is right to think that p* (or: *it is true that “ p ”*)
- Judgment is thus “**self-consciously**” **valid**: any judgment is, as such, conscious of its own validity
- It follows that the validity of a judgment **depends on nothing but what is judged in it**. In this sense, it depends on nothing external to “thinking itself.”
- As such, judgment is, just as such, objective.



Kimhi and Rödl on **the** absolute capacity for self-conscious judgment

- “In the end, we shall see that the various capacities which philosophical logic finds itself called upon to elucidate – capacities for judgment, for language, for the deployment of logical words (such as “not” and “and”), and for self-consciousness (and hence for the use of the word “I”) – are all one and the same capacity. To appreciate this is to appreciate the uniqueness of thinking.” (Kimhi, *Thinking and Being*, p. 16)
- “The possibility of justification depends on our comprehension of a general source of judgment: in judging, I understand my judgment to spring from a power, which, in its ultimate description, is the power of knowledge... Since judgment is objective, the power of knowledge is not a power to this or that; it is *the* power, the power *überhaupt*.” (Rödl, *Self-Consciousness and Objectivity*, p. 17).

Thinking and Being:

Principle of Noncontradiction

- In *Metaphysics* IV (Γ), Aristotle presents the “most certain principle of things” in what are apparently (at least) two different versions:

Ontological Principle of Noncontradiction (OPNC): “...the **same attribute cannot belong and not belong** to the same subject in the same respect...” (1005b19-23)

Psychological Principle of Noncontradiction (NPNC): “...it is impossible **for any one to believe** the same thing to be and not to be” (1005b24-25)

As Kimhi points out, in order for the identity of thinking and being to be shown and for the PNC to be seen as the “most certain” principle of logic, the two forms will have to emerge as the same.

Psycho/logical monism

- According to Kimhi, the only view that truly vindicates the thinking-being identity is “**psycho/logical monism**” – the two principles are recognizable **as the same** in the medium of self-conscious thought:
- “Psycho/logical monism takes a belief or judgment to be a unity that is immanent and thus only identifiable within a larger unity – that of consciousness and language. Since a unity *in* consciousness is the same as a consciousness *of* unity, the monist holds that a belief or a judgment is as such self-conscious, and we shall come to see that such self-consciousness is essentially contained in the use of language ... As such, from this point of view we come to see that no conscious act is displayed or specified by the proposition of the form (p and $\sim p$) and therefore no judgment or assertion is displayed by $\sim(p$ and $\sim p)$. This means that $\sim(p$ and $\sim p)$ and $(p$ and $\sim p)$ are not genuine propositions. Understanding OPNC consists in seeing that the repetition of p in these logical contexts is self-cancelling.” (Kimhi, p. 31).
- Thus, for the psycho/logical monist, **the unity of the proposition** – the unity that is expressed by the use of the unitary sign p – **is essentially a unity in one’s consciousness of the world. The same unity that allows for p to appear across contexts (truth-functional and non-truth-functional) is that which allows me to recognize that “(p and $\sim p$)” does not express something I can judge.**
- But (question for the rest of the paper): is there a *general capacity to recognize that $(p \& \sim p)$ is not a possible judgment?*

2. The *Tractatus* on intentionality and subjectivity: ‘the thinking subject ... does not exist’

Negation and judgment: from the *Notes* and the *Notebooks*

- “When we say that A judges that, etc., then we have to mention a whole proposition which A judges. It will not do to mention only its constituents, or its constituents and form but not in the proper order. This shows that a proposition *itself* must occur in the statement to the effect that it is judged. For instance, however ‘not- p ’ may be explained, the question ‘what is negated?’ must have a meaning” (*Notes on Logic*, 1913-14, p. 96)
- “In not- p , p is exactly the same as if it stands alone; this point is absolutely fundamental.” (*Notebooks* 1914-16, p. 95)
- Wittgenstein (in the background to the *Tractatus*) thus holds that what is expressed by a propositional symbol p is **exactly the same** in all of the following contexts:

p (alone)

$\sim p$

A says (or judges or thinks) p

The unity of negation: language and sense rather than self-consciousness

- For Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, the “contradictory unity” of p and $\sim p$ is indeed shown by a **notation** that shows the impossibility of judging (or the lack of sense of): (p and $\sim p$).
- But this unity becomes evident only from the position of a total correspondence of logical form between language and states of affairs (possible or actual)
- *Thus the unity is not one that is established or maintained by means of any subjective act or capacity*
- The unity of p with “I think p ” is not a self-conscious one, but rather just the “disquotational” unity of “ p ” with p .

The logical form of intentionality: *TLP*

5.54-5.5421

5.54 In the general propositional form propositions occur in other propositions only as bases of truth-operations.

5.541 At first sight it looks as if it were also possible for one proposition to occur in another in a different way.

Particularly with certain forms of proposition in psychology, such as 'A believes that p is the case' and 'A thinks p ' ["A denkt p "], etc.

For if these are considered superficially, it looks as if the proposition p stood in some kind of relation to an object A.

(And in modern theory of knowledge (Russell, Moore, etc.) these propositions have actually been construed in this way.)

5.542 It is clear, however, that 'A believes that p ', 'A thinks p ', and 'A says p ' are of the form " p " says p ': and this does not involve a correlation of a fact with an object, but rather the correlation of facts by means of the correlation of their objects.

5.5421 This shows too that there is no such thing as the soul – the subject, etc. – as it is conceived in the superficial psychology of the present day. [...dass die Seele – das Subjekt etc. ... ein Unding ist.] Indeed a composite soul would no longer be a soul.

The form of intentionality: “p” says p

- Wittgenstein’s key idea (5.542): The correct theory of judgment must show that it is impossible to judge a nonsense.
- Russell’s ‘multiple relations’ theory – *and all other theories that present judgment as a relation between a subject and one or several “contents”* – fail to do that
- For this reason (*Notes on Logic*, 1913), the “proposition *itself* must occur in the statement to the effect that it is judged.” Thus the statement attributing judgment must have the (concealed) form: “p” says p
- *With this, the (apparent) logical significance of the subject-name ‘A’ disappears. “The subject’s” role is, at best, **psychological** and has no **logical** meaning.*

The thinking subject does not exist

- *TLP* 5.631: “There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas” [*Das denkende, vorstellende, Subjekt gibt es nicht.*]
- The “metaphysical subject” [5.633] or “philosophical self” [5.641] is not a thinking subject or a subject of capacities, but rather a [or the] “limit of the world” [5.632; 5.641]
- Such a subject is ‘simple’ – it does not have the multiplicity that would be requisite to a subject that thinks now, this content, now that
- For Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, therefore, **there is no such thing as a subject whose capacities of judgment could help explain, or follow from, a relationship of thinking to the world** (understood as “all that is the case” [1] or as the “totality of facts” in “logical space” [1.1; 1.12; 1.13])

Tractatus: the objects of negation and the possibility of analysis

- If the thought that p and the thought that $\sim p$ correspond to the same reality, but with opposite sense (4.062), then where p represents the *existence* of a particular state of affairs, $\sim p$ represents the *nonexistence* of the same state of affairs (4.1)
- That a state of affairs does *not* exist means that the objects involved in it fail to be combined in a certain way (in which they would be combined, were p true).
- Still, these objects must exist and their combination in the way indicated by p must be *possible* (their possibilities must be inscribed in the forms of possible combination of the simple objects)
- Negation and the meaning of negative judgment therefore are only possible given (i) the *total field of what is sayable*; (ii) the total field of possible states of affairs (iii) the unitary coordination of the two that is established by the correlation of simple names with simple objects

“The correlation of facts by means of the correlation of their objects”

- The correlation of names and objects in “‘ $\sim p$ ’ says that *p* is *not the case*” is then possible only from a position that has, in principle, the *whole* of “logical space” in view
- For this to be possible, sense must be determinate in advance, and names with their logical-grammatical possibilities of combination must already be correlated with objects and their (metaphysical) possibilities of combination
- If this is the position of the “metaphysical subject” or “philosophical self”, this position (and the possibility of the correlation) *cannot be articulated by means of any thought with sense*

Incommensurability of thinking and being (First look)

- It follows from this that *any (seeming) proposition that asserts (or appears to assert) the unity of thinking and being must be nonsensical*
- This leads us both to **limit-contradictions** (e.g. that “the world is all that is the case” both is the case, and is not) and to the position from which we are able to “kick away the ladder” of the illusion of substantive metaphysics in the TLP’s (apparent) assertions of the identity of thinking and being as the identity of logical form
- From the position of a **“metaphysical subject” that is a limit of the world**, either i) some contradictions *are* thinkable (and significantly sayable) or ii) some truths (such as that of the boundedness of the world in logical space) *are not* thinkable (or sayable) at all

3. Partitioning the infinite: Plato's *Sophist* and the project of 'logical grammar'

Plato: partitioning the (infinite) Other

- Plato's *Sophist* poses (among others) a problem about the apparent **unlimitedness** of the negative judgment:
Visitor: And so, in relation to each of the classes (*ton eidon*), being is many, and not-being is infinite (*apeiron*) in number (256e5-6)
- The position of the Visitor moves toward solving this problem – along with the Parmenidean problems of the possibility of *thinking what is not the case* and of *false judgment* – by proposing an overall “logical grammar” of maximal types and their *possible* combinations and mutual exclusions
- The solution (or dissolution) of the problem is to be found by means of a recognition that a judgment that something is not-y, for a specified predicate y, is a judgment that does not hold that it is **simply not**, but rather that it is **other than**, or **different from**, what is y.
- At 257c5, this suggestion takes the form of the thought that the Other is “parcelled out” or divided, analogously or identically to the way that knowledge is divided according to what it is knowledge of.

The original idea of the logical *dunamis*

Sophist: “Battle of Gods and Giants” (materialism vs. static and unchanging forms):

- Visitor: I’m saying that a thing really is if it has any capacity (*dunamis*) at all, either by nature to do something to something else or to have even the smallest thing done to it by even the most trivial thing, even if it only happens once. I’ll take it as a definition that *those which are* amount to nothing other than *capacity (dunamis)*. (247e)
- Solution of problems of negation and falsehood: potentiality for *mixing* or *logically regulated combination* of forms, including combination of Being with Difference or the Other.
- This potentiality for mixing is mirrored in i) the activity of the soul in thinking and ii) the unity of the *logos* in the predicative proposition (that admits of negation by way of Otherness).
- On the standard analysis: “Theaetetus is not flying” (e.g.) says *of Theaetetus* that *flying* is *different from* all the attributes that hold of him; or that *flying* is incompatible, within a range, of everything that *does* hold of him. **Either way of understanding this solution appeals to the existence, both of Theaetetus, and of *flying* (as a form or general attribute that can be “of” him, or not).**

The *Sophist* and the *TLP*: logical analysis and the unity of thinking and being

- The solution of the *Sophist* to the problem of the “contradictory unity of p and $\sim p$ ” – like the solution of the *TLP* – appears to function only **within the context of a metaphysics** (of standing forms, or of sempiternal objects) and their *determinate logical relations* **that essentially precedes the existence of actual speakers**
- Within the context of this metaphysics, in both cases, it makes sense to suppose that i) the logical-syntactic possibilities of language and ii) the metaphysical possibilities of the world are each *consistent* overall, and iii) uniformly and exhaustively correlative with *each other*
- **But does it still make sense to suppose that thinking and being are identical, outside the context of such a metaphysics and the form of analysis it suggests?**

Recognizing contradiction: unity and truth

- As we have seen, *the identity of thinking and being* – if it holds – is marked in the possibility of **discerning the emptiness of a contradictory thought**, i.e., of recognizing that such a thought *cannot correspond, as a whole, to any possible state of affairs*. Similarly, if there is a logical capacity for judgment in general, it is marked by the ability to recognize something of this form as *empty of content* (or senseless) when it arises.
- The idea of a subject of such a capacity is the idea of a subject who is capable in general of using negation and the other logical operators to partition the field of ***all that can be the case*** in a unitary and exhaustive way: of making a *decision*, for each (coherent) p , either that p or $\sim p$ holds.
- Question: Is such a capacity one that can reasonably be attributed to a **finitely constituted speaker of language**?
- Arguments to follow: It cannot.

Argument 1: non-triviality of semantic knowledge

- The capacity to recognize the (purported) identity of thinking and being is the capacity to recognize something of the form ($p \ \& \ \sim p$), when it occurs, as a contradiction and hence as “self-cancelling” or “empty”
- What, though, if the contradiction is a bit more “concealed” (as, e.g., in “Theaetetus sits and Theaetetus flies”; or “The morning star rises and the evening star does not rise?”)
- In each of these cases, coming to recognize that I cannot judge *that* will require a good deal of **non-trivial semantic knowledge** about i) the reference of names and ii) the ranges of application, and mutual exclusion, of predicates

Argument 1 continued

- Whatever the prospects for eventually coming to recognize these “concealed” contradictions as such, **it is doubtful that it is possible to arrive at this recognition by means of an *a priori* method or structure of logical analysis alone**
- Rather, it seems that a correct recognition of the logical form of these cases – and hence a discernment of the “hidden” contradictions or exclusions – will depend on both i) the provision of referents for names; and ii) a **partially a *posteriori* investigation** of the phenomena themselves
- But if the recognition of contradictions or exclusions requires an a posteriori analysis in this sense, its possibility *in general* cannot be attributed to any specific rational subject, or to rational subjects in general.

The necessity of *a posteriori* analysis

- Indeed, recognizing the impossibility of establishing the unity of propositions without a partially *a posteriori* analysis of the structure of phenomena appears to be one of the major initial motivations of Wittgenstein's abandonment of the *Tractatus* thesis of the independence of atomic propositions, and (with it) of the method of analysis it proposes:
 - “Now we may only substitute a clear symbolism for the unprecise one [of ordinary language – P.L.] by inspecting the phenomena which we want to describe, thus trying to understand their logical multiplicity. That is to say, we can only arrive at a correct analysis by, what might be called, the logical investigation of the phenomena themselves, *i.e.* in a certain sense *a posteriori*, and not by conjecturing about *a priori* possibilities.” (Wittgenstein, “Some Remarks on Logical Form,” 1929, p. 30)

With this, we are apparently at least on the way to the *Philosophical Investigations*' skepticism about the possibility of a “unique” analysis and its different methodology of reflection on the multiplicity of language games

Argument 2: Undecidability of consequence in First Order Logic

- As we have seen, the attribution of a ***general capacity of judgment*** to a subject, S, in such a way as to verify the identity of thinking and being, requires the attribution to such a subject of the ability to recognize contradictions ***in general***.
- Such a capacity – to recognize contradictions in general, given sufficient information – would also be a capacity to recognize tautologies in general.
- But by the near-simultaneous results of Church and Turing in 1936, there can be ***no decision procedure*** – and hence, plausibly, ***no definable or articulable capacity of a finite subject*** – capable of recognizing (first-order logical) tautologies in general.
- This result will hold even if the subject is given *any finite amount* of information about the relevant topic: even given this much information, it will not be possible ***in general*** to determine whether a new proposition contradicts those already known.

Argument 3: Truth theories and the undecidability of sense

- 1) A capacity for judgment, such as it figures in the conception, must be (at least) **capable of being articulated in the judger's language**
- 2) If such a capacity is attributed to a finitely constituted speaker, it must be one that could be **acquired in finite time** and on the basis of a **finite amount of semantic information**
- 3) As a requirement on a theory of meaning for a language, this plausibly requires that the language's truth-theory – the basis for a speaker's mastery of the totality of T-sentences for her language – be ***recursively enumerable*** or ***axiomatizable***. This means that each of the true T-sentences can be effectively discerned from a finite – or at most countably infinite – body of information available to the speaker.

- 4) But (Priest 2006, pp. 133-36) a recursively enumerable truth-theory for a language containing arithmetic **cannot be consistent**. For (by an application of the “extended Liar”) given such a theory it is possible to generate a sentence essentially saying: **“I am either not true, or meaningless”**. This sentence is, if meaningful, either false or meaningless; and if not meaningful, then true, and thus meaningful.
- 5) Recall that a power of judgment – in our sense – must be able **in general** to discern contentful (genuinely meaningful) judgments from, e.g., concealed contradictions. By Priest’s result, though, **no r.e. theory of truth can do that**.
- 6) But since – as we have seen – the capacity for judgment can be modeled as the competence underlying a theory of truth for the speaker’s language, no power of judgment that a finite speaker can possess can discern genuinely meaningful judgments from (e.g.) contradictory ones.
- 7) **It follows that no capacity of judgment that can be attributed to finite speakers can succeed in discerning, or producing, the noncontradictory unity of propositions in general.**

4. Conclusions: sense, metaphysics, and the outcomes of analysis

Power of judgment: finite and infinitary “knowers”

- If the power of judgment underlying the unity of the proposition cannot be attributed to finite users of language, could our abilities nevertheless be seen as *limited* varieties of an **unlimited capacity** attributable to **infinite knowers**?
- But if the “power” is attributed to (e.g.) *nous* or the Absolute Spirit, it is apparently capable of intuiting the unity language and the world ***without needing to perform any kind of synthetic activity.***
- Such a “power” can only be (as Kant emphasizes) the power of an *intellectus originarius*, co-original with or prior to the world.
- **It is unclear in what sense this is a “power of knowledge” at all.** And it bears no intelligible relation to any power that we, ourselves, could possess.

Conclusions of the argument

- The idea of a **general rational capacity** of thinking that endows its possessor with the ability to judge p , or not p , *for any p* , historically emerges alongside, and is correlative to, the project of an *overall logical-grammatical analysis of possible structures of language and of beings as such* in their total correlation with one another.
- This is also the historical source of the idea of the **uniformity** and **exhaustivity** of the principle of noncontradiction across the psychological and ontological domains.
- Both ideas depend upon an assumption of the **identity of thinking and being** which **does not survive**, if the relevant capacities are seen as those held by finitely constituted speakers. But if they are seen as held by infinitary beings, it is unclear in what sense they are capacities at all.

Critical outcomes: on the uses of logico-linguistic reflection

- The sameness of thinking and being is thus shown to be more a **presupposition** of a certain kind of (historically prominent) logical-metaphysical project than an actual **result** of it.
- But at the same time, the analysis of the actual possibility of logical systems as they are plausibly available to real speakers whose competence can be captured in finite terms (or at least is recursively enumerable) evinces what is plausibly a deeper, and more characteristic, formal **undecidability** of the thinking-being “relationship.”
- Given this **undecidability**, it is no longer possible to suppose that humans – or rational subjects – are defined or definable by their possession of a capacity for rational judgment (i.e., their possession of the *logos* in general)
- Nevertheless, and more positively, the phenomenon of **sense** is **liberated** from the demand for its fixation within the boundaries of metaphysical possibilities of **effective combination and action**, as well as from the presumptive humanism which takes the *logos* to be the **exclusive possession of the human animal as such**.