

***ESSENCE THE METAPHYSICAL
GROUND OF LOGIC AND
LANGUAGE:***

**A REASON FOR THE BANKRUPTCY OF LOGIC
THE STULTIFICATION OF REASON AND
THE MEANINGLESSNESS OF ALL VIEWS**

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PREAMBLE –THE GROUNDING OF TRUTH

How do you know what you know? What makes, or grounds, your truth claim true? In other words what is your epistemology that validates your knowledge claim as true. Socrates used the dialectic to point out faults with a person truth claims. But what made the dialectic a method to elicit truth, or knowledge. In other words what made the answers to the question true. In this regard for Plato the question was “what makes an answer an answer?” Consequently the aim of the dialectic for Plato was to provide the criteria of answerhood. According to Plato this criteria was some property of the logos. Now for Plato the criteria of answerhood is subjective thus problematical. Thus a problem for Plato becomes the laying out the foundation of truth .For Plato logos which prevails is based upon the objective validity of the answer. Now Plato thought that truth and reality are fused together through recollection via the dialectic. The psychological roots of knowledge has its roots in recollection whereas the logical roots of knowledge are found in the hypothetical method. Now synthesis and analysis are problematical because both assume some known assumption. Thus to avoid this Plato moves to ontology to ground truth. To judge is to provide grounds for the truth of an assertion thus the need for a first cause and this first cause for Plato was the “forms”. The “forms” are what grounds the answer as an objective truth. From this point on in Western philosophy the “in-itself” will be used to ground truth. In the “Metaphysics” Aristotle follows Plato’s lead in ontologically grounding truth via the “beings” “essence”. To judge now means to provide the grounds of truth. For Plato this ground was the “forms” for Aristotle it was the “beings” “essence” for modern philosophy it is the rules of inference.

THE ONTOLOGY OF LOGIC

Western knowledge is based upon certain metaphysical assumptions such that its epistemology is related to its metaphysics. Aristotle sought to investigate 'Being' by investigating the species of 'being' via the tool of logic. But embedded in this tool is the very thing this tool seeks to investigate (i.e. 'being' itself). In this regard there is circularity and it needs justification. Namely the logic Aristotle uses to investigate 'being' must assume an ontological object a 'being' in order to investigate 'being'; but this ontological object 'being' is itself in need of investigation or justification itself. The most certain of all principles is the law of non-contradiction with its corollary the law of identity. As he states "... the principle which the student of any form of Being must grasp is ... it is impossible for the same attribute at once to belong and not belong to the same thing ..."¹ Thus we see at the very heart of Aristotelian logic is the notion of an ontological object with an essence which itself is in need of investigation or justification. In this regard Aristotelian logic does not so much as reveal reality as constitute it by its reliance upon an ontological object with an essence. Thus logic affirms what it needs for its existence, what it affirms is in fact in need of justification. Philosophy consists in rediscovering the very thing upon which logic was made to depend. Logic in affirming an essence, which in fact needs to be justified, continually rediscovers what it initially affirmed without justification and this rediscovery is then used to justify the initial unjustified assumption-a circularity of logic. The consequence of this circularity and ontological assumption is that logic in its resolution of problems and discoveries transforms the answers into a pre-ordained form due to its underlying ontological commitment and circularity. As we saw with Perelman's claims (that 'if P, then P' far from being an error in reasoning, is a logical law that no formal system can fail to recognize"²) at the heart of any formal system of logic is a metaphysical or ontological entity. This P is an ontological entity and as such pre-ordains the form of any answer at the beginning of any question. This is because Aristotelian logic creates ontology, an ontology that the logic uses but which is itself in need of justification.

¹ Aristotle, 1947, IV.111. 8-9.

² C. Perelman, 1989, p.11.

There are three laws that are essential to Aristotelian logic: the law of identity 'A = A'; the law of self-contradiction 'not p and not-p'; the law of the excluded middle 'p or not-p'. Putnam notes that amongst philosophers there is disagreement and controversy about the "correct interpretation of these principles i.e. what does '=' mean, what does 'p' stand for."³ Putnam says that what all logicians agree upon is that if there is a thing as the "Eiffel Tower, then the Eiffel Tower is identical with the Eiffel Tower and if there is such a thing as the earth then the earth is round or the earth is not round."⁴ Putnam notes that the 'S' and 'M' and 'P' in the inference 'All S are M All M are P therefore All S are P' refer to classes. According to Putnam although "classes" are non-physical they nevertheless exist and are indispensable to the science of logic.⁵ The nominalist logician on the other hand believes classes are make believe and don't exist.⁶ Now even if classes don't exist they still need to have an identity to distinguish them from other classes

Gibson claims that of the three laws the law of identity is the more fundamental as it is implied in any proposition and presupposed by the law of non-contradiction. As Gibson notes "... the principle of identity is logically the more fundamental. It is implied in the stating of a proposition and is therefore presupposed in the very enunciation of the principle of non-contradiction."⁷ In this regard the law of identity is the ultimate foundation upon which logic rests, without an 'identity' (for the symbols of logic) logic is overthrown and collapses-as Dean argues.⁸ The law of identity makes no ontological claim about the existence of 'A' only that 'A = A' - 'A' could be an existent or just a definition. The law of identity is 'A is A' or 'A is not non-A'. What this means is that A has some defining characteristic (i.e. essence (identity)) which distinguishes it from other non-A's a characteristic (essence identity) without which it would not be A. The law of non-contradiction to quote Aristotle states " the same attribute (characteristic essence)

³ H, Putnam, 1972, pp.4-6.

⁴ Ibid., p.6.

⁵ Ibid., p.23.

⁶ ibid., p.9, 23.

⁷ W. R. B, Gibson, 1908, p.95.

⁸ C, Dean, op. cit. p. XXV-XXXV.

cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject and in the same respect.”⁹ In terms of propositional calculus ‘it is not the case both p and not p’. In this regard we see that if there is no essence to characterise a subject in distinction from other subjects there can be no law of non-contradiction and thus no logic at all. In other words if there is nothing to distinguish a ‘horse’ from a ‘non-horse’, either ontological or nominal, in the proposition P ‘there is a horse’ then we can not apply the law of non-contradiction because we have no distinguishable subject for the subject of the proposition.

The laws of logic enable us to make inferences from one statement to another, (i.e. to be able to see that some statements are incompatible with other statements). They allow us to conclude that some statements imply other statements and to see that other statements are ruled out. In the logical equation ‘P . Q’ the Ps and Qs obviously refer to something. In modern philosophy they are said to refer to propositions (i.e. ‘the horse is running’). But also these propositions refer to things as well (i.e. the ‘horse’). O’Hear notes that the terms in a proposition or sentence must have a unique reference or else the meaning of the proposition or sentence is lost. As he notes “[b]oth generality of the predicate and the uniqueness of reference are essential for the meaning of the sentence.”¹⁰ Without fixed determinate properties the properties of an object or reference (i.e. ‘horse’) thus float and as such the meaning of a sentence or proposition is uncertain. Thus there is always a measure of uncertainty in regard to any inference about the object (i.e. ‘horse’). Take any concept such as that of a horse. If a horse has no fixed determinate properties which fix it and identify it across time then there will be a measure of uncertainty about just what I am talking about whenever the word ‘horse’ appears in a statement. Thus the sentence or proposition loses meaning without a unique reference. This uniqueness of the reference is in fact an ontological object (i.e. it has some sort of property that makes it what it is and nothing else (i.e. a ‘horse’) not a ‘cow’). In this regard without determinate fixed properties we can never be certain of just what an object’s property may be. Consequently we cannot fix and identify an object as the same across time because its

⁹ A. Flew, 1979, p.75.

¹⁰ A. O’Hear, 1991, p.155.

identity itself is not fixed. Hookway notes that in regard to identity “... it is often claimed that we understand the nature of objects of a particular kind, and we can talk about them intelligibly, only when we can understand identity statements involving terms referring to the object.”¹¹ Thus without a reference—be this ontological or nominal—for our Ps and Qs we are left with the problem that we are uncertain as to the meaning of our sentences and propositions. This thus generates an incoherence in our concept of the object of reference and our sentences and propositions. Consequently, any inference drawn from our system of sentences and propositions will lack any precise meaning without fixed determinate essences for our objects of reference (i.e. our Ps and Qs). Meyer captures the essence of these arguments when he states:

“... whatever the circumstances of writing and speaking, being understood is what counts. Intelligibility depends on the unequivocalness of the terms used. Syllogism would be impossible if the sense of the predicate e.g. “being a human being”, should change during deduction ... the unequivocalness the preservation of one meaning, authorizes formalization; thus, one can symbolize the concept “human being” by one letter, for instance a. A symbol represents a thing, a type of entity, a category of individuals and it is on condition of referring to the same thing, the same type of entity, the same category of individuals that the symbol is operational in logical description.”¹²

Thus as O’ Hear notes, logic is not ontologically neutral it implies an ontology. Again as he notes “[l]ogic, indeed is not metaphysically neutral but may well reveal the types of things various forms of thought and argument commit us to.”¹³ Putnam similarly claims that logic derives from metaphysics the belief in substances. As he notes, “[w]e get at the very beginning of logic, a metaphysics accompanying it and conditioning it.”¹⁴

¹¹ C. Hookway, 1988, p.14.

¹² M. Meyer, 1986, p.4.

¹³ *ibid.*, p.154.

¹⁴ C. Hookway, *op. cit.*, p.272

Heidegger argued that “logic [is to] be investigated on the ontological level. Symbolic logic also requires such a “founding” or ontological interpretation.”¹⁵ Now this idea of an ontological substance had the consequence that the substance had to have properties. As Putnam points out “... the picture of substances and their predicates became the standard metaphysical picture of a world with fully determinate particulars characterised by their fully determinate properties. Dummett argues “... that an object either determinately has or determinately lacks any property P which may be significantly predicated of that object.”¹⁶ It could be argued that the notion of an object with an essence or determinate property is central for human thinking; it is an epistemological foundation for all ‘thought’ itself. Without the notion of an object with an essence thinking would have nothing to think with. As Adorno notes “identity is inherent in thought itself ... to think is to identify.”¹⁷ This can be seen with the laws of classical logic such as the law of identity and non-contradiction, which requires an object with an essence to work with. Thus the metaphysical presupposition upon which logic is built is the notion that the object has an essence or identity. Aristotle claims that the law of self-contradiction requires an object with an essence (identity) for it to work. This object with an essence can be either an ontological existent or a word (i.e. its nominal definition being its meaning or essence). As Aristotle states “... for if he does not [signify something], a person of his sort has no argument, either with himself or with any one else ... when words do not signify, our dialogue with each other is destroyed, and, really, so with oneself: for it is not possible to think without thinking one thing ...”¹⁸ The distinction between ontological existent and words each with an essence is made by Locke also. As Locke states:

“... it may not be amiss to consider the several significations of the word essence. First, Essence may be taken for the very being of anything, whereby it is what it is And thus the real internal, but generally (in substance) unknown constitution of things, where on their discoverable qualities depend, may be called their essence ... Secondly,... it being

¹⁵ T. Flay op. cit., p.8.

¹⁶ H. Putnam, 1985, p272.

¹⁷ T. Adorno, 1973, p5.

¹⁸ R, M, Dancy, 1975.

evident that things are ranked under names into sorts of species, only as they agree with certain abstract ideas, to which we have those names, the essence of each genus, or sort, comes to be nothing but that abstract idea which the general, or sortal ... name stands for ... These two sorts of essences, I suppose, may not unfitly be termed the real, the other nominal essence”¹⁹

Putnam claims that if “the metaphysical picture that grew up with and conditioned classical logic is wrong, then some of the tautologies of classical logic may have to be given up.”²⁰ The consequence for logic, in terms of this thesis, is that if there are fixed determinate essences (i.e. ‘thought’, ‘thinking’, ‘mind’) then logic and language will reduce to absurdity our entire system of sentences and proposition.

In philosophy there are two opposing perspectives in regard to the notion of an object and its essence. They are essentialists and anti-essentialists arguments. The essentialists argue that an object possess an essence (i.e. characteristic properties). Conversely the anti-essentialists deny this. The essentialist Kripke argues that proper names are ‘rigid designators’ (i.e. apply in all possible worlds).²¹ These ‘rigid designators’ or proper names refer to essential properties of the object. These properties are based upon the composition and causal continuity of the objects.²² In the case of a person the rigid designator refers to the person born of a particular sperm and egg.²³ In the case of a material object Kripke refers to gold as being defined by its scientific properties.²⁴ Putnam notes that Kripke suggested that “... the old idea that science discovers necessary truths, that science discovers the essence of things was, in an important sense, right not

¹⁹ Ibid., p.135.

²⁰ Ibid., p.273.

²¹ S .Kripke, 1980, p.48.

²² Ibid., pp.112-115.

²³ Ibid., p.113.

²⁴ Ibid., p.p. 117-118.

wrong ...”²⁵ Against this essentialist view are the anti-essentialist arguments of Ayer. Ayer argues that assigning necessary properties to objects is an arbitrary exercise.²⁶ Ayer argues that the “... ways of identifying individuals by descriptions of their appearances, or their functions, or their behavior, or their spatio-temporal positions ...[don’t] pick out necessary propertie[s]”²⁷. This anti-essentialist argument is a fallacy when it comes to the nature of language and the object themselves. For if there are no essential properties that fix objects and words our logic and language become useless as a tool for uncovering regularities. On this point O’Hear, in *What Philosophy Is*, states “...without our terms and our logic being firm and clear at the outset, it will be unclear just what is meant by any statement at all [consequently without fixed terms our system of language will] collapse into an incoherent and featureless pile of statements, the sense of any one of which is indeterminate and perpetually shifting because of changes he may decide to make in other beliefs.”²⁸

As Aristotle noted without an essence, or ‘identity’ ontological, or nominal i.e. definitional, the law of self-contradiction is useless.²⁹ If the law of self-contradiction is useless then our logic breaks down and becomes useless as an epistemic condition of truth. Thus if the anti-essentialists are right then logic become useless since there is no essence for the law of self-contradiction to work. The only way that logic could be an epistemic condition of truth is that it does not break down, and for this to be, there must be an ontological or a nominal definitional one. The problem with this consequence is that the notion of essence reduces to absurdity.

Aristotle in *The Metaphysics*, makes a distinction between ‘Being’ and ‘being’. ‘Being’ is existence and according to Aristotle, metaphysics studies all the species of ‘Being’.³⁰ On the other hand ‘being’ is a specific species of ‘Being’.³¹ According to Aristotle ‘being’

²⁵ H. Putnam, 1985, p.55.

²⁶ A. J. Ayer, 1991, p.197.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.197.

²⁸ A, O’Hear, *op.cit.*, pp.109-110.

²⁹ Aristotle, 1947, IV, 13-32.

³⁰ Aristotle, 1947, IV 1, 2.

³¹ *ibid.*, IV, 11, 6.

are substances (essences) and are what are studied by the particular sciences.³² Philosophy and science have as many divisions as there are ‘being’ i.e. substances (essences).³³ The principle of the law of non-contradiction is, according to Aristotle the principle of ‘being’ and is the most certain of principles.³⁴ The principle of identity is a principle of ‘being’ by which the law of contradiction is proved.³⁵

Dean, in The Nature of philosophy, sought to undermine the validity of any inference by arguing that logic by its own standards is not and cannot be an epistemic condition for truth. Dean argued that when logic becomes self-reflexive i.e. when it analyses itself in terms of its own standards ends up in self contradiction. Logic ends in paradox as it negates the very thing it requires to make the negation and that it requires for its existence, namely an essence belonging to an object. Dean maintained that logic requires an object which must have fixed immutable properties, namely an essence. It is argued that if an essence cannot be found then the object cannot be identified and thus does not exist. Dean argues logic in fact denies this essence and thus denies the object that logic needs for its existence. Consequently Dean argues that “Logic’s negation of the object of logic in fact undermines logic’s own value as an epistemic condition... This undermining is due to logic violating its own law of non-contradiction. By the law of non-contradiction something cannot be A and not A simultaneously if it is then by the law of contradiction it cannot be a truth claim. Logic... requires an essence, say A, for its applications but logic negates this essence i.e. not A, the very thing it requires to make the negation; thus a paradox... Thus logic makes itself untenable as an epistemic condition of truth.”³⁶

The Prasangika Madhyamika Buddhists demonstrate that if we maintain things have an essence then this notion of an essence reduces all our concepts, all our categories, all our ideas, all theses, all antitheses, all philosophies, all epistemologies, all ethics, all ontologies, and all metaphysics, in other words all our views to absurdity. They all

³² *ibid.*, IV, 1, 3.

³³ *ibid.*, IV, 1, 10.

³⁴ *ibid.*, IV, 1v. 21.

³⁵ *ibid.*, IV, 1v. 26.

collapse into absurdity, or meaninglessness via a dialectical *reductio ad absurdum* form of argumentation .

PRASANGIKA MADHYAMIKA BUDDHISM

Nagarjuna the founder of Madhyamika examined the categories through which we understand the world via a *reductio ad absurdum* argumentation. His *reductios* showed that the all beliefs, or views about essences, individual identities, or essential natures reduce to absurdity. These *reductios* where to point to the sunyata [emptiness] of both the world and the absolute. The rejection of all views by the Prasangika Madhyamika Buddhists includes both the thesis and its antithesis. The crux of a Prasangika Madhyamika Buddhist analysis (prasanga)—a *reductio ad absurdum* argument -is that their demonstrations are non-affirming negations. They negate but don't put forward any conclusion to such negation. This is because their negations are what they call non-affirming negations, they don't affirm anything. What this means is that they exhaust all possibilities of the tetralemma without any affirming conclusion. Now even though they don't put forward a counter position to their negations they do believe nevertheless that all views reduce to absurdity, or meaninglessness via a *reductio ad absurdum* argument [Murti, Fenner, Gangadean Bugault]. According to the Prasangika Madhyamika Buddhists there are four logical possibilities (the tetralemma) as to the nature of a subject. Namely something: 1) it is, 2) it is not, 3) it is and is not, 4) neither is nor is not. The Prasangika Madhyamika Buddhists would demonstrate that each of these alternatives is self-contradictory. In other words the Prasangika Madhyamika Buddhists would reject all these claims without making any affirming conclusion.

The method which the Prasangika Madhyamika Buddhists use in these self-contradictory demonstrations is what they call the prasanga, or as some call it in the West, consequential analysis. The prasanga is no more than a *reductio ad absurdum*. Murti, Bugault, Gangadean and Fenner argue that, in consequential analysis (prasanga), the

³⁶ C.Dean in C.Dean & D.S.Ovenden 1998, pp.xx1x-xxx.

logical axioms of the laws of thought (i.e. the Aristotelian law of contradiction, excluded middle and the law of identity) are used to discover logical inconsistencies within all philosophical arguments. As Murti succinctly notes "... the Madhyamika rejects all views ... by drawing out the implications of any thesis he shows its self-contradictory character ... in a series of *reductio ad absurdum* arguments ..."³⁷ While demonstrating these absurdities the Prasangika Madhyamika do not put forward a thesis. As Hsueh-Li Cheng notes:

“ Madhyamika (Prasangika) dialectic is not intended to establish a thesis but merely to expose the absurdity or contradiction implied in an opponent’s argument. It is purely analytic in nature there is no position to be proved. The Madhyamika [Prasangika] is said not to have his own logic. The contradictory or absurd consequences revealed by the dialectic are unintelligible in light of the opponent logic only.”³⁸

It should be pointed out that some Prasangika Madhyamika Buddhist scholars argue that the Prasangika Madhyamika Buddhists do not accept the law of the excluded middle, notably Bugault.³⁹ The self-contradictions in an argument arise according to the Prasangika Madhyamika Buddhists, because of reified thinking. That is thinking that assumes that ‘things’ exist intrinsically, or in other words have an essence.

The contradictions are generated in order to negate their adversaries' ontic, epistemological, or metaphysical claims, stemming from the belief in essentially existing ‘things’, by demonstrating the insubstantiality or emptiness (*sunyata*) of the reified entities making up the arguments.⁴⁰ This method of generating internal contradictions to a thesis is also called consequential (*prasanga*) analysis. Fenner argues that consequential analysis (*prasanga*) is meant not to perpetuate, or proliferate itself but rather to dissolve itself by

³⁷ T. R. V, Murti, 1955, p.131.

³⁸ Hsueh-Li. Cheng, 1991 , p.37.

³⁹ G. Bugault, 1983, pp. 26-38.

⁴⁰ P. Fenner, 1990, p. 103.

reversing the conceptual process and thus bringing about the complete attrition of conceptuality itself.⁴¹

There can be no final deductive demonstration that proves the thesis that all views reduce to absurdity only an on going series of case studies pointing inductively to the fact that all views end in self-contradiction. This is so because any deductive argument that attempts to prove that logic and language end in self-contradiction, must itself be self-contradictory because it is using and assuming the very things it is denying—a paradox from the start. Similarly any deductive argument that seeks to prove logic and language are epistemic conditions of truth is incoherent; since any proof that logic and language are epistemic conditions of truth would be circular and thus, in terms of logic, not a proof since any proof would have to assume, and use, the very thing it was seeking to prove (i.e. logic and language). In this regard rationalism is self-referential and thus incoherent. In other words no direct proof can be offered, as this would mean that at least one view did not collapse into absurdity, but only an indirect proof based upon the totality of *reductio ad absurdum* case studies.

My belief is that all philosophical premises-essentialist or anti-essentialist-can be reduced to absurdity because their linguistic expressions hide essentialist habits whether, ontological or grammatical. This can be no more clearly seen than in the anti-essentialist writings of the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

Wittgenstein states "... that because a word may be used, we should not get carried away with philosophies about essences and the like."⁴² According to Wittgenstein "...When philosophy uses a word—'knowledge', being' 'object', 'proposition', 'name'—and try to grasp the essence of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language game which is its original home. What we do is bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use."⁴³ For Wittgenstein "... the

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p . 103.

⁴² N, Katz, 1981, p.311.

⁴³ L. Wittgenstein, 1953, p 116.

meaning of a word is its use in the language.”⁴⁴ And “... this language like any other is founded on convention.”⁴⁵ In Wittgenstein’s view, like that of Nietzsche, “... essence is expressed by grammar ...”⁴⁶ “Grammar tells what kind of object something is (Theology as grammar).”⁴⁷

In this system words derive their meaning from their use in the language game. There are no semantic correlates (essences) outside of the words. Wittgenstein denies that there are any ontological essences (“representations”) that ground meaning. Wittgenstein rejects accounts of meaning based upon referring essential objects (semantic correlates). A word’s meaning for Wittgenstein is its use in a language game. For Wittgenstein language makes no metaphysical assertion about the world and what metaphysical assertions are made, are due to wrongly projecting, and conceiving, word meaning as ontological. In other words ontology is nothing but objectified meanings. Wittgenstein’s philosophy rejects the projection of these objectified meanings upon the world.

Now if meaning were in a state of flux then we could not express any meaning at all. Thus ‘meaning must be static with a determinate sense. The determinate meaning of a word for Wittgenstein is generated by its use in the context of the language game. In other words a language game fixes the meaning of words. Consequently the fixing of a word’s meaning by the language gives the word a fixed characteristic which distinguishes it from other words. This distinguishing characteristic is an essence. Thus a word’s essence is not some representation in reality of some ontological essence, but rather the word’s essence is its meaning and its meaning is derived from its context of utterance. Pragmatism claims that under some situations and conditions words are pragmatically useful. In other words it may be pragmatically useful to claim that ‘language’, ‘image, or ‘concept’ is the medium, or basis, or essence of ‘thought’. Nevertheless the pragmatic use of words only works if words have meaning and, as we saw above the meaning of words is their essence i.e. that thing, which if the word lacked it would not be the same

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 355.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 371.

⁴⁷ *PI*, 373.

word. Consequently it is argued that pragmatism will collapse into absurdity, or meaninglessness even though the pragmatic use of words does not entail any ontological claim to the existence of the thing the word signifies. Nevertheless the word does entail a grammatical essence and this, like ontological essence, it is postulated reduces to absurdity via a *reductio ad absurdum* argumentation. If pragmatism argues that the meaning of words, though not fixed, nevertheless have locally and temporally determined meanings, then it is postulated these locally temporally fixed meanings [essence] will collapse via a *reductio ad absurdum* argumentation into absurdity, or meaninglessness like any other fixed determinate essence thus making language absurd, or meaningless. Also if the pragmatic meaning of words is in flux, thus they lack fixed meaning over time and thus over time are meaningless i.e. the word ‘horse’ could signify horse today but tomorrow the same word could signify what we call a ‘cat’ today – this thus indicates that the pragmatic use of words over time makes language incoherent, inconsistent and thus meaningless.

Thus Wittgenstein has only shifted the problem of essence from ontology to use. Wittgenstein has in fact shifted essence as ‘representation’ to essence as meaning. In this way Wittgenstein, and the player in a language game, are still “identity” thinking (i.e. finding fixed meaning (essence)) and as such proves Adorno’s claim that “identity is inherent in thought itself ... to think is to identify.”⁴⁸

Now as the notion of ontological essence collapses into self-contradiction so does the notion of meaning (essence) as use. Even though a word may not have a fixed meaning through time, and across language games, it nevertheless has a fixed meaning for the time of a particular language game. Consequently a *reductio* argument can then be applied to any word in this particular language game and reduce it to absurdity. To give two examples, Kripke and Priest point out that Wittgenstein’s argument entails a skepticism

⁴⁸ T. Adorno, 1973, p5.

about meaning, namely that all language is meaningless.⁴⁹ This places Wittgenstein in a self-contradiction. Wittgenstein writes a book, in a language game, in order to convey some meaning. If the meaning is that all language is meaningless, then the meaning has been conveyed. Thus all language is not meaningless in this particular language game. Priest, in his book *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, has pointed out these self-contradictions in Wittgenstein's views. As he states "... none the less the point remains, the conclusion that results from the skeptical argument and that Wittgenstein wishes us to grasp, is beyond expression (Transcendence). Yet it is possible to express it; I have just done so and so does Kripke (Closure). Hence we have a contradiction at the limit of expression."⁵⁰ Wittgenstein is still inside the bottle the only way out for the fly is not via logic and language but by their complete demolition.

The Chinese scholar Hsueh-li Cheng, in his book on Madhyamika called *Empty Logic*, notes the self-contradiction in the notion of meaning as use. As he states:

"From Nagarjuna's standpoint, the view that "the meaning of a word is its use in language" really involves a contradiction or absurdity. Wittgenstein's thesis indicates that the meaning of a word is "fixed" or "determined" by its particular use in the particular situation. This implies that each word has its own or particular use in the language and that that particular use is its meaning. But language, Nagarjuna might point out, is an organised system of signs where words are inter-related and hence are devoid of their own use. So, the thesis that the meaning of a word is its use in language would be to say that a word has its own use in an organised system of signs where every word is devoid of its own use. That is contradictory."⁵¹

⁴⁹ A, Kripke, 1998, p.71, G, Priest, op. cit., pp.232-233.

⁵⁰ G, Priest op. cit., p.235.

⁵¹ Hsuech-Li Cheng, 1991, pp.118-119.

Thus we see essences are central for logic to work. Also we see that even though anti-essentialists argue that there are no fixed determinate properties in words they need these fixed determinate properties to exist such that the words they use in their arguments are themselves fixed with determinate meanings and definitions across time or for a particular language game.

Logic and language are thus not metaphysically neutral. They both commit us to the implicit belief in the essential entities they both need for their applications. O'Hear makes this point, implied by Putnam above, about logic when he states, "logic, indeed, is not metaphysically neutral but may well reveal the types of thing various forms of 'thought' and argument commit us."⁵² Similarly in regard to language O'Hear notes "both the generality of the predicate and the uniqueness (essence) of reference are essential for the meaning of the sentence."⁵³ It is in this way that Nietzsche can say, with the Prasangika Madhyamika, that the I (soul) is no more than a product of grammar.⁵⁴ With the dissolving of the reified entities (i.e. 'thought', 'thinking' etc) which language and logic require as necessary and sufficient conditions for their existence into absurdity or self-contradiction our conceptual schemes break down from the inside. The success of our scientific or philosophical theories thus remains, for the realist, totally mysterious. Rather than order they are left with chaos and anarchy. The Madhyamika puts all this negation to a soteriological use, but to the logic-centered Westerner all that is left is some sort of Camusian existential angst where people are "... spinning in vast darkness. It's inside me. My conscious self shatters under this dilating darkness."⁵⁵

⁵² A. O'Hear., op. cit., p.154.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p.155.

⁵⁴ F, Nietzsche, 1990. P.55.

⁵⁵ G Flaubert, 1980, p.212.

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