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Jeremy Barris

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Jeremy Barris

Philosophy Department
Marshall University
Huntington, WV 25755
USA
barris@marshall.edu

Abstract

The paper argues that metaphysical thought, or thought in whose context our general framework of sense is under scrutiny, involves, legitimates, and requires a variety of informal analogues of the "true contradictions" supported in some paraconsistent formal logics. These are what we can call informal "legitimate logical inadequacies." These paradoxical logical structures also occur in deeply pluralist contexts, where more than one, conflicting general framework for sense is relevant. The paper argues further that these legitimate logical inadequacies are real or inherent in sense itself rather than conventional, shows how they can feature in argumentative practice in these metaphysical and pluralist contexts, and discusses some of their implications for metaphysical truth and for philosophical inquiry and disagreement.

Metaphysics, Deep Pluralism, and Paradoxes of Informal Logic[1]

In this paper, I shall try to show that metaphysical thought, or thought in whose context our general framework of sense is under scrutiny, involves, legitimates, and requires a variety of informal analogues of the "true contradictions" supported in some paraconsistent formal logics.[2] These are what we can call "legitimate logical inadequacies." By this I mean that in this kind of context informal fallacies like, for example, (informal) contradiction, non sequitur, circularity, equivocation, and category confusion can be elements of legitimate argumentation and thinking, and in fact are often necessary to adequate reasoning. I do not mean that they cease to be fallacies, but that they are logically legitimate elements precisely and paradoxically in virtue of their logical flaws. I use the term "legitimate" to cover both "valid" and "adequate or helpful as reasoning," since some fallacious argumentative structures, like circular reasoning, are technically valid.

I shall argue that these legitimate logical inadequacies occur both in strictly metaphysical contexts and in the related (as I shall also argue) contexts in which more than one comprehensive and conflicting framework for meaning or sense is relevant, which I shall call deeply pluralist contexts. I explain what I mean by these two contexts and make this argument in the first section below. I subsequently try to show some implications of these legitimate logical inadequacies for reasoning and argumentation in these kinds of contexts.

I argue that in these, frequently occurring contexts there is a type of inadequacy and sometimes even incoherence in the nature of the sense itself of the relevant issues.

Because in these contexts this inadequacy is in the nature of the sense of the issues, it follows from that sense, and as a result we need to think of it as something like a legitimate variety of logical inadequacy or incoherence. For the same reason, it is also an inadequacy or incoherence that we cannot avoid by, for example, reconstructing our language or suitably selecting our patterns of expression or argument, as philosophers like Bertrand Russell and Richard Rorty have famously undertaken in responding to related concerns. Instead, our understanding and teaching both of metaphysical thought and of legitimate reasoning and argument needs to acknowledge this kind of inadequacy or incoherence, find ways of giving an account of it, and develop ways of negotiating it.[3]

I discuss ways of working with this kind of incoherence and arriving at adequate sense in the third and fifth sections below, but let me note here that, like the paraconsistent "true contradictions" mentioned above, it does not "explode" into undermining the sense of anything else that can be said, but is limited and manageable. I make this argument in detail elsewhere, and I will only sketch it briefly here.[4] This kind of incoherence is limited because it occurs only in the kinds of contexts I have mentioned, where relevant sense as such is in question. As will become clear in the following sections, these contexts are specialized and so have definite boundaries. Once these contexts are no longer relevant this incoherence no longer has relevance or, in fact, even meaning. This kind of incoherence is also manageable, because it is built into it that it cancels itself. Since, as I have proposed and will become more clear below, it is an incoherence that applies to the nature of relevant sense as such or in general, it also applies to its own sense, and consequently renders its own sense as "incoherence" meaningless and so inapplicable. As a result, it itself necessarily takes us out of those

contexts where it has relevance and meaning. Despite its self-cancellation, however, we cannot simply dispense with it as self-contradictory. As I argue below, this kind of incoherence emerges necessarily from coherent sense itself in these situations, and so is not an avoidable error but a self-reflexive paradox, like the liar's paradox. But because it is less limited than that paradox, it applies even to its own character as a paradox, and consequently undoes itself.

I give a first example of this kind of legitimate logical inadequacy at the start of the first section below. But that there are occurrences that are logically vexed in this kind of way is often immediately visible in the issues and situations we encounter. These include, for example, tragic situations, and those involving moral dilemmas or, in politics, "dirty hands," where equally obligatory moral requirements are in irresolvable conflict with each other.[5] A famous example of a moral dilemma is the one presented in the book and movie *Sophie's Choice*, where a mother must choose which of her two children will be shot, while if she does not choose both of them will be shot. Whatever decision she makes in this situation will violate the very moral requirement it exists to honor, the requirement to avoid doing great harm to her children. In fact, since the child she saves will only live because of the involuntary death of the other child, the child who lives may understandably feel responsible for that death. Consequently, honoring the requirement to do no great harm to the child who lives may violate that same requirement for that very child. In this kind of case, then, it is evidently at least arguable that the contradiction in moral principles is not an avoidable flaw of understanding the situation but part of its correct description.

Again, certain types of humor work on the basis of logical errors, and there are real situations whose overall sense is humorous in these kinds of ways. So, for example, if someone claims invariably unflappable dignity and then sees a mouse and shrieks and leaps up on a restaurant table, the humor depends on the contradiction between the person's claim and the evidence his behavior gives. In these kinds of situations, if we eliminate the logical errors, we eliminate the humor. Consequently, we can only describe the reality of these humorous situations *as humorous* if we retain the logical errors as part of their meaning or, in other words, as part of the sense they make.

In these various contexts, the articulations of the logical flaws represent or recapitulate logical incoherencies or inadequacies that are an inherent part of the sense of a real situation itself.

This thesis that there are legitimate logical inadequacies involves two connected lines of thought. The first is the proposal I have already mentioned about the role of legitimate fallacies in metaphysics and the related deeply pluralist contexts. The second is that these paradoxical structures of argumentation—and by extension the structures, patterns, or devices that are the topic of informal logic or argumentation theory in general—are not simply human constructs or conventions, but are real.[6] Since these "legitimate fallacies" follow from the sense itself of the issues, they are at least to some substantial extent inherent in the nature of meaning or sense, independently of our invented contributions to sense-making.

We could go further and say they are in the nature of the things themselves, which are and work according to that sense. For if these patterns are inherent in meaning, they are inherent in anything we might mean by "things," and so in anything we might mean

in referring beyond our concepts to "things." Here, however, my focus is on the nature of sense in the relevant contexts, and correspondingly on "metaphysics" as referring to the discipline which is the conceptual study of reality rather than to the structure of reality itself. Elsewhere, I do discuss incoherence and confusion as elements of the structure of reality itself and in general, but here my concern is only with the structure of sense.[7] As I have insisted, this sense is the sense *of* things and situations; but this is not to deny that it is nonetheless discriminable as an object of analysis in its own right, as we standardly take it to be, and that is how I take it here.

In describing these structures of argumentation as real, then, I do not mean they are Platonic entities, but only that, however else we understand their reality, they are not the product of our conventions or choices of theoretical approach. As I shall argue, in a sense they pre-exist any conventions or conceptual choices we might make, since those conventions and choices depend on them. The point of insisting that they are real in this sense is that it underscores the claim that they are not artifacts of a misguided approach that can and should therefore be dismissed or avoided. Instead, they are necessary to making adequate sense of the relevant contexts, and so to an adequate account of sense itself in these contexts.

As I mentioned, the reality of these structures of sense also has further implications for our understanding of metaphysical and deeply pluralist argument and inquiry, and I shall explore some of these implications.

Recognizing this real and legitimate type of logical inadequacy or incoherence in the metaphysical and deeply pluralist contexts where, I argue, it occurs has the advantage of allowing us to connect the deepest concerns and insights of philosophy with—

admittedly in an odd and paradoxical way—the everyday, nuts-and-bolts pragmatics of argumentation and its devices. First, it allows us to recognize some metaphysical or existential dimensions of our concrete argumentative experience, involving contexts where our general sense framework reaches its limits. Second, since these logical inadequacies are legitimate and real aspects of sense itself, they are not only flaws in sense but also means of making sense and engaging with it. As a result, they are themselves what enable us to negotiate their own inadequacy and incoherence. Recognizing them therefore allows us further to identify and develop the logical skills necessary to deal with these contexts and negotiate what I argue are legitimate confusion and incoherence. That is, it adds to our resources for negotiating the deep issues of sense associated with the pluralist and metaphysical contexts that give rise to these incoherencies. It is also important that the recognition of legitimate logical inadequacy allows us to set our expectations appropriately for the kinds of logically confused situations that we do in fact encounter. It allows us to identify and foster the attitudinal aptitudes necessary to deal, for example, with the fundamental kind of resourcelessness in which a real or objective failure of sense leaves us.

In the first section below, I shall try to show that there are legitimate inadequacies or failures of logical sense. In the second, I shall argue that these inadequacies are real rather than conventional. In the third section, I shall try to show how these legitimate logical inadequacies can feature in argumentative practice in the relevant metaphysical and pluralist contexts. Finally, I shall discuss some of their implications both for metaphysical truth and for philosophical inquiry and disagreement.

1. Legitimate Failures of Logical Adequacy and Coherence

I have mentioned two contexts in which logical incoherence and failures of logical adequacy are logically legitimate. One of these is that of metaphysical thought, that is, thought in which our general framework of sense is under scrutiny. The other occurs when there is more than one relevant global framework for making sense or for settling the meanings of things in general, or what I shall call deeply pluralist contexts. (There are objections to the meaningfulness of this idea of global frameworks for sense, in either context, and I shall discuss these objections shortly below.) As I try to show in this section, these two kinds of contexts are really different aspects of one and the same more general context. This is the context of reflection on sense as a whole, whether in its own right or in comparison with other versions of sense as a whole. Each context simply emphasizes a different aspect of that more general context. Since, as I shall argue, the logical anomalies that are my topic arise from this more general context, these anomalies occur in and are relevant in many of the same ways to both metaphysical and deeply pluralist contexts. As a result, once I have explained the relevance of each of these contexts to legitimate logical inadequacies, I shall discuss the two contexts interchangeably as I pursue the significance of these anomalous logical structures for reasoning and argumentation.

In this section, I first discuss the deeply pluralist context and its relevance to legitimate logical inadequacies, and I discuss the metaphysical context and its relevance immediately after. I then discuss the objections to the idea of global frameworks. In the last portion of the section, I briefly discuss some prominent but, I believe, inadequate,

attempts in both philosophy and argumentation theory to acknowledge and work with deep pluralism.

In the deeply pluralist context, whatever topic is under discussion actually means two different things at the same time. For example, as I shall discuss below, in a debate between Western religious and materialist perspectives on whether abortion destroys a life, the idea of a soul is central to the meaning of "life" in the religious perspective, so that the absence of that idea cannot be given a coherent sense while still talking about life; but the idea of a soul cannot be given a coherent sense in the system of meanings that constitute the materialist perspective. Consequently, a meaning that is basic to the whole system in one case cannot exist at all in the other case. As a result, the only way to understand what the issue *is*, is to grasp its role within each framework's whole system of meanings. The issue can only be grasped, then, can only be given sense, as simultaneously having two meanings that are not compatible with each other.

In this context, that the topic means two different things does not simply mean that it is really two different topics—that there is no disagreement because there is no common issue. As Alasdair MacIntyre notes about debate between incommensurable standpoints, "each community, using its own criteria of *sameness* and *difference*, recognizes that it is one and the same subject matter about which they are advancing their claim; incommensurability and incompatibility are not incompatible."[8] In at least one phase of the interaction between the frameworks, part of the dispute is exactly whether or not one or both of the proffered meanings is the appropriate meaning, so that it is the appropriate meaning of *this one thing* that is in dispute. And since there is no ground independent of some framework on which to stand and refer to the thing whose meaning

is being disputed, we can only refer to "it" in both relevant, incompatible terms simultaneously. It may be easier to see this in cases where a framework undergoes a revolutionary change into a framework with incommensurable meanings, as, for example, Thomas Kuhn argues occurs in the history of science.[9] There is a phase in the process of change of these meanings where it is unclear which framework constitutes the meaning, or, differently expressed, where it is undecidable which the meaning is. To describe this state of the meaning, we need to make use of both meanings simultaneously. In phases like these, then, the topic of argument *is* inescapably an equivocation or a category confusion, even before we go any further.

For similar reasons, too, it is not possible to resolve the problem by disambiguating our terms. This is not the kind of case where, for example, one of the conflicting meanings expresses the topic in one respect or under one description while the other meaning expresses it in another. Instead, what characterizes this situation of global or comprehensive frameworks of meaning is that each conflicting meaning *wholly excludes* the other, not just as applicable in some respect but as being a relevantly conceivable meaning. Each of the conflicting meanings, as located in a different framework of sense as a whole, does not function in keeping with the criteria for meaning that make the other possible at all. To approach the same point from a different angle, each comprehensive framework provides a construal of every possibly meaningful respect and description of the topic. As a result, the conflicting meanings cannot be said to focus on different aspects of the same thing, but instead conflict with respect to what that "same" thing *is*, and so with respect to what any aspect of it is. In this context, to

disambiguate, then, would be to repeat the paradox, since it would be to describe one and the same thing in two wholly mutually exclusive ways at once.

The second, strictly metaphysical context occurs when our general framework of sense is under scrutiny simply in its own right. Here, if we rely on our fundamental categories of sense or meaning in order to evaluate them, or even to identify them, we proceed circularly. But if we do not rely on them, we are no longer guided by our standards of coherent sense, and we proceed in some degree incoherently or in ways that involve logical confusion. And as I am about to explain, we do need to account for our general framework of sense, and consequently to commit one of these logical inadequacies.

In both contexts, these elements of incoherence or logical inadequacy do not simply occur as avoidable and regrettable products of lines of inquiry or forms of expression that we can or should avoid. Instead, they are required by sense itself in these situations. This is why they are not just artifacts of a certain approach to description or of a certain misguided conception of what contexts can be meaningfully discussed, but are logically legitimate. They are parts of the operation of sense itself. The metaphysical reflection on our general framework of sense as a whole is required in order to account for that framework, given the possibility of alternative and conflicting general ways of making sense of things, and it is also required to account for sense as such.[10] Without that, we are left either without foundations or without an account of why we do not need such foundations. This situation itself involves standard kinds of logical inadequacy: either logical arbitrariness (perhaps a kind of non sequitur) or circularity. The pluralist context also arises as a requirement of sense itself, because the necessary metaphysical

step of accounting for our general sense of things already implies a contrast with other possible general senses of things. Without a contrast with other possible frameworks, the concept of "our" framework does not pick out anything in particular, and so does not mean anything.

The metaphysical and pluralist contexts, then, are really different sides of the same coin. They are different aspects of reflection on sense as a whole, whether in its own right or in comparison with other versions of sense as a whole. And because they arise from the requirements of sense itself, the elements of incoherence and logical inadequacy they involve are parts of the operation of sense itself. These elements are failures of sense that are part of how sense functions.

There are powerful objections to the idea that we can meaningfully talk about these kinds of contexts. Donald Davidson, for example, argues that we cannot attach sense to the idea of globally different frameworks of sense, or even of a single global framework of sense (that we can scrutinize "outside its standards for sense"), in his paper on "the very idea of a conceptual scheme."[11] One of his central argumentative strategies relies on the idea that, very roughly, for us to be able to mean anything by a different "conceptual scheme" we would need to be able to translate it into the meanings that belong to *our* "conceptual scheme." In other words, we cannot even consider the problem without regarding at least some of the "other" framework's meanings as translatable into our own. Consequently, we cannot intelligibly regard its meanings as globally different from ours. As I noted above, it follows that we cannot have the idea even of a single global framework for sense, either. If there is no meaning to the idea of alternative

overall frameworks, then the idea of a single overall framework does not contrast with anything, and so says nothing in particular (198).

But this argument is not conclusive. MacIntyre, for example, argues that the meanings of a language cannot be so intimately tied to the possibility of translation, since we have all learned a first language when we had no language to translate its meanings into.[12] And Peter Winch notes in response to a similar argument to Davidson's, in this case an argument about our general standards of rationality rather than about our meanings (in fact, an argument put forward by MacIntyre in an earlier phase of his career), that it "does not in fact show that our *own* standards of rationality occupy a peculiarly central position. . . . [A] formally similar argument could be advanced in *any* language containing concepts playing a similar role in that language to those of 'intelligibility' and 'rationality' in ours."[13]

More generally, it is arguable that Davidson's general idea of how meaning works itself belongs to a globally different framework from the general conception of meaning in the standpoints that argue for the possibility of a global framework of sense. His idea of meaning certainly contrasts deeply with a variety of other philosophical approaches to meaning, so much so that it leads to conclusions their proponents find strikingly counter-intuitive. He insists, for example, that "there is no such thing as language, not if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed."[14] But the debate about the sense of the idea of global systems of meaning depends precisely on our conception of meaning, and Davidson proceeds on the assumption that his conception of this issue is commensurable with and so responds to and communicates with the opposing positions' conception of it, in this very debate. In other words, at least in the

case of the relation between his own standpoint and those opposed to it with respect to the meanings (of meaning) that are part of the medium of this debate itself, his argument *presupposes* that the relevant meanings are necessarily compatible. As a result, he does not so much establish that meanings must be compatible across positions as circularly presuppose it.

I should perhaps note that, while my aim is to defend circular presupposition as sometimes legitimate, Davidson's argument (and others I criticize below) does not benefit from this possibility. It is only in contexts where globally different positions are being taken into account that this legitimacy applies, and Davidson's whole point is to deny that there could be such contexts. In fact, if he did acknowledge this possibility, and take it properly into account in his argumentation, then by the standards I am defending there *would* be room for a legitimate kind of circularity in his argument. This would then take us in the direction of very different possible kinds of outcomes and their assessment, a kind of direction I shall discuss below.

A different and equally influential kind of objection to talking about global frameworks of sense is the pragmatist argument that a logically contentious way of talking about things is unproductive, and we can simply adopt ways of talking about these issues that are more useful because they do not result in this kind of distracting complexity. Richard Rorty is perhaps the best known contemporary proponent of this kind of argument.[15] But this begs the very large question of how we assess "more useful." For all we know, it might be useful and productive in all sorts of unpredictable ways to make room for the possibility of systematic incomprehension and of a logically legitimate

role for logical incoherence. It is precisely my aim here to argue for a variety of significant functions for this kind of logical paradox.

There is, however, also a widespread endorsement of the idea of globally different frameworks of meaning. Among philosophers, many defend this idea, and also recognize the absence of coherent means of debate between such "incommensurable" frameworks.[16] As these philosophers typically note, each framework automatically registers any of the other's statements as meaning something different from what it means in the context of the other framework—including statements that aim to clarify these meanings. In light of this incoherence of meaning between such frameworks, however, none of these thinkers tries to map the logical elements of the interactions and negotiations between them. On the other hand, some philosophers, like MacIntyre and Charles Taylor, defend the idea of globally different frameworks of meaning, but propose ways in which they can rationally evaluate their comparative merits.[17] But this seems to me inconsistent, since, as in the case of Rorty's reliance on what is "useful," the standards by which we identify the "same" kind of merit in each framework will mean something different in each of them.

There is also an extensive literature in argumentation theory, communication studies, and approaches to critical reasoning that recognizes globally different or "incommensurable" frameworks of meaning, as well as the breakdown of rational debate between them.[18] Like the philosophical authors, these theorists do not attempt to map the logical elements of the "broken down" communication, other than to identify them simply as problems we need to find a way around or to accept. This literature also often looks to overcome this problem by focusing on the skills of receptiveness required to

come to understand such radically different perspectives, and then to hold out the hope that once each party has achieved this understanding of the other it may become possible to construct a common ground on a reasonable basis. This seems to share the inconsistency of the philosophical attempts to allow for rational comparison. If the frameworks constitute meaning differently from each other, they continue to do so once we have come to understand them.

These characteristics of both literatures prevent their respective approaches from being genuinely the "deep pluralism" of my title. On the one hand, insofar as they aim for common ground or shared standards of evaluation, they eliminate the relevance of pluralism of perspectives itself. On the other hand, insofar as they recognize the incoherence of interaction between frameworks but regard it as containing no connection in itself with legitimate sense, they allow nothing that connects with rational negotiation between the frameworks. As a result, they establish relativism as the exclusive, and so absolute, overarching perspective. This is both self-contradictory and, paradoxically, also eliminates pluralism again, in that it denies the truth of all frameworks that reject relativism. Expressing this slightly differently, a genuine pluralism has to be able to make room for and endorse frameworks that reject pluralism. I shall return to this genuine pluralism and make a case for its sense in the context of "legitimate logical inadequacies" in the final two sections on some of the consequences of these logical anomalies.

Paolo Virno recognizes both globally different frameworks of meaning, in the context of radical socio-political change, and to a large extent the incoherence of negotiation between them, and on this basis he makes a particularly interesting attempt to map these negotiations in terms of standard fallacies.[19] But he balks at regarding logical

sense itself as capable of legitimate violation. Instead, he argues that the mappable "space between" the frameworks is not truly without coherent meaning, because meaning has a pre-conceptual, pre-linguistic, quasi-biological basis, independent of frameworks (115, 121-125). Consequently, the "fallacies" that occur in the negotiation between frameworks do not truly violate sense and therefore only look like fallacies without truly being so (139, 151-152). Again, this seems inconsistent. Clearly, we mean something that belongs within our framework of meaning *by* this "meaning independent of frameworks": we cannot specify it independently of our frameworks.

In contrast with these bodies of work, my aim is to combine the consistent recognition that the negotiation of globally different frameworks of sense or meaning is logically incoherent, with Virno's interest in mapping the logical elements in this incoherence. I also want to go further, in two ways. First, as I have discussed, this kind of incoherence also occurs when we inquire into any given framework of sense as a whole. This means that the mapping of the logical elements in this incoherence is relevant to the exploration of metaphysical and meta-logical issues. Second, I want to show that these logical elements and consequently their incoherence are real, that is, that they are part of the reality of sense itself in these contexts. In other words, as I have suggested, they are not just aberrations we should try to find a way around, but are legitimate and inescapable operations of sense itself. This is already a meta-logical implication, in this case one that just the general fact of this kind of incoherence allows us to establish.

2. The Reality of Legitimate Failures of Logical Adequacy and Coherence

As I explained in the introductory section, in describing these structures of logic or sense as real I mean only that, however else we understand their reality, they are not the product of our conventions or choices of theoretical approach. In other words, an adequate account of sense in the relevant contexts cannot avoid taking them into account. I am not, here, arguing that they are ontological structures in any further sense.

It seems clear, in principle alone, that the connections on which argument relies must already exist for us to draw on prior to our arguing. If we had to construct them, we would have to rely on them to do so. Similar lines of thought have been recognized since ancient times. Epictetus, for example, pointed out that in order to assess an argument that logic is necessary, we would need to rely on logic: consequently, "logic is necessary; since without it, you cannot even learn whether it is necessary or not."[20] In recent philosophy, both Wittgenstein and Heidegger make related points. Wittgenstein argues, for instance, that "I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; . . . No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false."[21] A system of meanings and of their relations must already be in place before I can begin to make meaningful decisions about anything. Without such a system, there is nothing meaningful to make decisions about. Heidegger, for his part, argues that "the account of the laws governing thinking pushes us back into the question of the conditions of their possibility. . . . In measuring itself up to that about which it thinks, true thinking seeks in the being itself that on which it supports and grounds itself."[22]

Here, however, I want to make the case specifically with respect to the contexts of incoherence I have begun to discuss. As I mentioned in the introductory section of this

paper, contexts simply do seem to exist whose logic requires that they can only be described or grasped in ways that involve elements of incoherence or logical inadequacy. I mentioned there tragic situations, or those involving moral dilemmas or, in politics, "dirty hands"; and certain types of humor and the real situations that are humorous in those ways. The metaphysical and pluralist contexts I have been discussing are another case. In all of these cases, the articulations of the logical flaws represent or recapitulate logical incoherencies or inadequacies that are an inherent part of the sense of a real situation itself.

The reality of logical connections means that conventionalist and pragmatist accounts of informal logic and argumentation, while illuminating and indispensable within their limits, are not enough.[23] How we connect things may, for example, be partly constituted by our interests and our goals, but the logical materials we manipulate to achieve our ends must pre-exist those manipulations. Otherwise we could not even calculate which means would get us to our ends. That kind of calculation already presupposes that some things connect in certain ways with others and do not connect with them in other ways.

But even more than this, given the reality of elements of logical incoherence and inadequacy in particular, there are logically significant situations in which we are simply not in a position to know the relevance of our interests and goals to the issues under discussion, because the sense of those issues, what we ourselves mean by them, is no longer clear. In these situations we can no longer rely even on the sense of things that is already available to us, whether in our individual projects or our social practices. Instead,

we need to let truth emerge independently of our no longer functional assumptions and abilities to construe.

Here we can begin to see one of the further metaphysical implications of the recognition of elements of "legitimate incoherence," in this case an implication for our conception of truth and our relation to it. I shall return to this kind of issue in the final sections.

3. Legitimate Logical Inadequacies in Argumentative Practice

In this section I want to show how various standard fallacies are legitimate elements of the negotiation between globally different frameworks of sense or of reflection on a single framework of sense as a whole. (We can usefully regard "negotiation" in this context as referring both to "bargaining" and to "making one's way through obstacles.")

As I pointed out in the first section, the topic of discussion in negotiation between different frameworks of sense as a whole is necessarily an equivocation or category confusion from the start. Each framework constitutes the sense of the topic differently, and there is no neutral standpoint to fix what we mean by "this" topic: what we mean by it is therefore constituted in two different ways simultaneously. For example, in a debate between Western religious and materialist perspectives on whether abortion destroys a life, the idea of a soul is central to the meaning of "life" in the religious perspective, so that the absence of that idea cannot be given a coherent sense while still talking about life; but on the other hand, the idea of a soul cannot be given a coherent sense in the system of meanings that constitute the materialist perspective at all. Consequently, a meaning that is basic to the whole system in one case cannot exist at all in the other case.

The only way to understand what the issue *is*, is to grasp its role within each framework's whole system of meanings. But to do that is also to grasp each contrasting meaning as not belonging to the opposed system of meaning, and so in that context to see it as unintelligible. The issue can only be grasped at all, can only be given sense, as simultaneously having two meanings that are not compatible with each other.

As is the case with all the logical inadequacies that are the consequence of this kind of conflict of systematic meanings, then, the equivocation here partly *constitutes the meaning of the issue under discussion,* and so is not simply an error but an expression of the real sense of the situation. It is valid. It may then happen that the discussion proceeds so that, for whatever motives, one of the frameworks is given up for the other (say, a "conversion" in either direction: as Kuhn argues occurs regularly in science, for example),[24] or a third, compromise framework is established. In that new context, the equivocation is no longer valid, but describes a meaning situation that is no longer relevant to the debate. For the debate at that point, the only meaningful logical content of the equivocation is its character as a logical error.

Given these possible shifts of relevant context, the fallacy is valid at two moments in the process of the negotiation between the frameworks. First, it is valid when both meanings are in play, either because the disputants have not yet sorted out that there are two meanings or, at a later point, because they have not yet established one of them (or an alternative) as the right one. When they have not yet sorted out that there are two meanings, both meanings are a real part of the conceptual situation the disputants are working on or in. Both meanings therefore play a necessary role in the process of the disputants' working intelligently with that situation, and both are therefore necessary to

describe the situation. And when the disputants have not yet eliminated one of them, they have to think in terms of both at once in order to compare them and make that decision.

We should be careful to note that this is not like the case where one considers alternative construals of something that exists independently of these construals, so that it can act as a neutral basis of comparison with reference to which their different perspectives on it can be set side by side and compared. Here, the topic does not exist independently of the two construals. Each meaning, as part of a global system of meanings that excludes the other, claims to be the *whole relevant meaning* of the topic, and consequently the conflict about the topic cannot be described *at all* without employing both meanings at once in all the same respects. If we describe the conflict in terms of one meaning only in any respect at any time, we have already wholly excluded the claims of the other to be the (wholly exclusive) relevant meaning, and so we have already decided the debate rather than still being in process of deciding it. The equivocation, then, is part of the real sense of the situation.

The second moment at which the fallacy is valid occurs after everything is sorted out and decided (should this happen), when we describe the whole process. In that description, the situation where both meanings are in play becomes relevant again. Since here, too, there is no neutral standpoint to fix the meaning of the topic independently of the two construals, the equivocation between them becomes necessary to the description itself, and so enters into its own meanings. Again, it is part of the real sense of the situation and, equally, a necessary part of the expression of that sense.

As I mentioned in the introductory section, the reality of legitimate logical inadequacies does not only mean that they are a fact we have to negotiate as a dimension

of sense itself. It is also what *allows* us to negotiate and come to grips with them, and also with the deep issues of sense associated with the pluralist and metaphysical contexts that give rise to them. Since these are logical inadequacies that are also legitimate, and so are real aspects of sense itself, they are not only flaws in sense but also means of making and engaging with it. What is more, as inadequacies of sense, they allow us to learn and establish sense from a point before it is already in place, and so allow us to come to engage with frameworks whose sense we do not yet have any grip on. This gives us the tools to deal with either the pluralist or the metaphysical contexts.

In the case of equivocation, for example, the persistent and specific type of failure of sense allows us to establish that two meanings are in play. This in turn alerts us to the need to learn the framework in which the other meaning has its sense, and also gives us a relevant starting issue or question on whose basis to proceed. In this process, we also establish a sense of the contrast of our own system of meanings as a whole with the new one, and so get a grasp of our own whole framework, either for the first time or in a new way.

I have described equivocation in this context as applying conflicting meanings to the same thing in the same respect at the same time. In other words, equivocation here is also contradiction. More precisely, statements that incorporate the conflicting meanings would be contradictory, but in this context only statements that incorporate both meanings can accurately describe the situation. The equivocation, then, sets up contradictions, and these are equally parts of the very sense of the situation.[25] (We could describe this in reverse: the contradictory character of the situation establishes equivocations. This interchangeability is also the case with the other violations of sense

and fallacies I shall discuss. Fallacies notoriously blend into each other, and it can be a judgment call which "standard fallacy" we select to name a particular breach of sense.)

In a related way, the equivocations also set up non sequiturs as part of the situation's sense. Each meaning provides the material for lines of thought leading to conclusions to which the other meaning cannot lead. And since each meaning is both necessary and claims to constitute the *whole* sense of the issue, some conclusions that legitimately follow from the meaning of the issue are nonetheless also non sequiturs with respect to that meaning. They are part of the situation's sense, and so are legitimate.

Henry Johnstone argues that philosophical positions involve comprehensive systems of meaning in the sense I have discussed, and that consequently "a philosophical argument cannot be valid unless it is addressed *ad hominem*" (*Validity*, 53). Any attempt to appeal to facts or evidence independent of the addressed philosophical position "is doomed, because a philosophical position always is, or implies, a decision as to what is to count as facts or evidence" (55). The valid way—and in fact the *only* valid way—to argue with a philosophical position is in terms of the idiosyncratic features of its framing of the situation: that is, ad hominem. These considerations apply, for the same reasons, to argument with *any* comprehensive framework for meaning. (It follows from Johnstone's view that all philosophical discussion occurs in the kind of contexts I discuss here, and so in the medium of legitimate logical inadequacy. Presumably the reverse also applies, that in encountering these contexts we are engaging in what defines philosophy.)

Tautology or circularity also has a place here. Since the sense of a framework only occurs once the basic elements of the framework are already in place, these elements themselves cannot be justified, and there is no meaning to the idea that they be justified.

Justification itself only has sense within a framework that enables sense. Wittgenstein, for example, points out that "all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system," and, further that "If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not *true*, nor yet false" (*On Certainty*, 16e, no. 105, 28e, no. 205). And Rorty argues that our perspectives each rest on what he calls a "final vocabulary," by which he means that "if doubt is cast on the worth of these words, their user has no noncircular argumentative recourse. Those words are as far as he can go with language."[26]

In debates between scientific theories of evolution and religious ideas of creation, for instance, it is basic to the scientific position that our senses and rationality are the touchstones of reliable conclusions, while it is basic to the religious position (or at least to some versions of it) that human rationality is so feeble and human senses so limited that we cannot rely on them for anything fundamental (as, for example, the experience of dreaming suggests). In each case genuine justification of these ideas does not come into play, because these ideas are a *basis* for proceeding in all argument. Consequently they are asserted as self-evident, and the side that rejects them is dismissed as being intellectually blind or defective in such fundamental ways that genuine discussion is precluded from the ground up. Because these ideas are the *basis* for proceeding rationally, regarding them as self-certifying is legitimate: their self-certifying character is part of what constitutes the sense of the situation, and so it is inherent in that sense. As the Wittgenstein quote about the necessary context of a system above continues, "this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments: no, it belongs to the essence of what we call an argument. The system is not

so much the point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life" (16e, no. 105).

In addition to fallacies and logical incoherence, there is another type of logically inadequate rhetorical form that is legitimate in these contexts. This is ornamental or display rhetoric, which, precisely because it bypasses logical connection altogether, is neutral with respect to either framework in these kinds of dispute. As a result, it offers neutral ground on which to reconsider the issues, and also on whose basis each disputant can *gain entry to* and *learn* the new sense of the other framework, in a context free of the distorting patterns of her own framework. On the other hand, analogously to the role of circularity and ad hominem discussed above, this neutral ground constituted by ornamental rhetoric helps to establish the sense in question as, in Wittgenstein's phrase, the "element in which it has its life," and as a result it enters into that sense, or "belongs to its essence." That is, it is both entirely irrelevant to legitimate connection, and part of it. Ernesto Grassi, for example, argues that since argumentative procedures like Aristotelian "demonstration" cannot argumentatively demonstrate their own premises, those premises can only be established by non-argumentative rhetoric, in which he includes rhetoric designed to elicit feeling: by the kind of rhetoric that "exhibits," that allows its objects to emerge to the receptive apprehender and in this way certify themselves.[27]

4. An Implication for the Nature of Metaphysical and Deeply Pluralist Truth

The fact of and the encounter with real, objective failure of sense automatically raises the question of and offers some insights into the nature and status of sense and meaning

themselves. One insight this kind of encounter offers is that in the context of conflicting frameworks for the whole of sense, it is less appropriate to think of truth as relative or as needing to be reduced to an overarching absolute truth than as consisting in a variety of absolute truths. As I have argued, there must be more than one conceivable framework: the concept of a single framework requires the contrast of a possible alternative framework to be meaningful. But each framework considered in its own terms constitutes the meaning of the *whole* of things, and so within each framework there simply is no meaningful alternative. Within each framework, then, there is no sense to the idea of relative truth. When we are considering more than one framework, however, sense fails, and so any relevant questions and issues do not make clear or proper sense. They only make clear sense once we are no longer negotiating frameworks (or reflecting on our own from the "outside"): and at that point we are within one or another framework again, and there are no meaningful alternatives. It is true that the phrase "a variety of absolute truths" is incoherent. But that phrase has its place in reflecting *on* frameworks as a whole, and so it occurs in the kind of context of legitimate failures of sense I have been discussing.

This idea of alternative absolute truths also allows what I have called a genuine pluralism. I have discussed how the relativist version of pluralism self-contradictorily eliminates all frameworks that reject relativism; in fact, in being relativist, it arguably eliminates much of what goes with a claim to *truth*, as what just is the case, in *any* framework. In contrast, the idea of alternative absolute truths in the contexts I have discussed makes room for genuine claims of truth in different global frameworks, not

excluding claims denying its own sense—and it also offers the means for negotiating the failures of sense that this kind of "making room" involves.

5. Some Consequences for the Nature of Philosophical Inquiry and Disagreement

Debate about metaphysical issues and between philosophical systems is clearly situated in the kinds of contexts I have been discussing. Let me suggest, however, that philosophical inquiry and disagreement in general are distinguished from other kinds of discussion by being largely concerned with the nature of relevant sense as such. In other words, rather than focusing, for example, only on the correct application of a concept to a given issue, distinctively philosophical thought also focuses on the correct characterization of the concept itself. And insofar as philosophical thought deals with concepts or sense as such, it operates in the contexts of reflection on sense that I have discussed. Philosophical inquiry and disagreement, then, typically invoke issues that involve the kinds of necessary and legitimate failures of sense that I have explored here.

In the following comments on the consequences of these legitimate logical inadequacies for philosophical debate, therefore, I shall discuss not only debate between philosophical systems but philosophical deliberation generally. Even if the reader finds this extension implausible, however, the following discussion of philosophical deliberation still usefully applies, I hope, to debate about metaphysical issues and between philosophical systems.

Philosophical deliberation and disagreement, then, typically do not consist in weighing one perspective straightforwardly against another, but in the logically paradoxical process of seeing *everything* relevant to the issue under discussion one way,

without conceivable exception or remainder, and seeing everything relevant similarly comprehensively another way. That is, it involves seeing each wholly to the exclusion of the other. For the same reasons that produce the legitimate logical inadequacies I have discussed and that make, say, non sequitur part of the accurate description of the mutual engagement of the two views, the kind of "weighing" of each against the other that occurs here involves the entire meaninglessness and unintelligibility of the other as each is considered.

As a description of "weighing," this is of course incoherent. This process and therefore also the description of it, however, occur in the kind of context of conflicted meaning where these legitimate logical inadequacies hold, like the phrase "a variety of absolute truths" in the previous section. As a result, their sense and articulation appropriately involve elements of the failure of that sense.

For the same reasons, again, the outcome of philosophical disagreement and inquiry too does not consist in deciding straightforwardly in favor of one perspective over the other, or in favor of a compromise or a third alternative. Instead, it consists either in an alternating understanding of both without the resources to decide between them (since each contains all the conceivable resources to the exclusion of the other) or in emerging into one in such a way that the other can satisfactorily be regarded as unintelligible, that is, without any need to pursue the process further to allow the other's potential intelligibility to emerge again. The other view then has no meaning as an alternative or candidate for deliberation at all, and the issue is then—in that context—absolutely decided.

One way in which this kind of satisfactory decision can happen is if we find that, in the end, one of the perspectives is just not a live or honest option for us, while the other is. This kind of consideration is in fact one whose legitimacy we already recognize intuitively or at the level of common sense in many contexts involving general worldviews. For example, when someone is faced with a decision between religious standpoints, or between a scientific and a religious worldview, or between a current and an emerging scientific paradigm, or between giving herself over primarily to one or some world causes (for example, that of the environment, gender, or world poverty) rather than the unmanageably many possible others, or, for that matter, between comprehensive philosophical frameworks, we recognize the sense and at least the possible legitimacy of saying that this is a personal decision, that no one can decide for that person or produce considerations that should in the end securely tilt the decision one way or the other for her.

Before I pursue further the role of live or honest options in philosophical deliberation, let me note that their role does not make philosophical decisions subjective. First, the criteria for truth depend in part on the meaning of the relevant issues, and the kind of decision at stake here is precisely about the nature of relevant sense and so the relevant meanings themselves. As a result, the decision is part of establishing what the criteria for relevant truth or falsehood might be. Consequently, it is prior to their applicability and, with it, the applicable distinction between objective truth and subjective conviction. Second, the meanings of the issues we are inquiring into are themselves partly constituted by the concerns we have in asking our questions, and these concerns in turn are partly constituted by our social and historical particularities, what Wittgenstein

called our forms of life. That is, at the level of the structure of meaning or sense itself,

our particularities as the specific creatures that we are, with the specific lives we live, are

internal to the character of that meaning or sense, including what it demarcates as

objective. As Dewey similarly argues, for example, "nature is an environment only as it

is involved in interaction with an organism, or self," and he understands the propositions

that resolve inquiry to have their meaning essentially as resolutions of the specific,

contextualized doubts that we, the inquirers, experience. In contrast to my own view, he

sees this as true (and, further, as significantly or non-trivially true) of the results of all

inquiry, but as he clarifies it in connection with the kind of context that I discuss here, the

inquiry into logic or sense itself: "This conception implies much more than that logical

forms . . . come to light when we reflect upon processes of inquiry that are in use. Of

course it means that; but it also means that the forms *originate* in operations of inquiry. . .

. Primary inquiry is itself *causa essendi* of the forms which inquiry into inquiry

discloses."[28]

  To return to the role of live or honest options, then: Raimond Gaita, in his work

on moral judgments, makes a case against what he calls "blackboard conclusions" about

moral appropriateness. As he points out, "if I am deliberating about what morally to do,

then I cannot pass my problem over to anyone else. It is non-accidentally and inescapably

mine."[29] Consequently, "we can of course extract arguments from what [anyone] says

and write them on a blackboard, and we can try to improve on them, but until someone is

prepared to assert them seriously in his own name, then they are arguments only in

inverted commas for they yield only inverted commas conclusions—'conclusions,' that

is, which no one is seriously prepared to conclude" (316, my insertion). In reasoning

purely impersonally or in the abstract about moral issues, then, we are in fact avoiding the kind of thinking they require, which requires us to be able stand behind our conclusions sincerely, that is, to be committed to them as the particular, concrete, and irreplaceable persons we are (149).

I propose that the same is true of all philosophical deliberation and disagreement. Johnstone, for example, argues of philosophical debate in general, for reasons, as I noted above, like those I offer here, in debates between "rival philosophical systems . . . the partisan of each system is, in principle, incapable of conceiving the system espoused by the other" (*Validity*, 114). But he points out that a philosopher nonetheless "stands outside his own view" and so is capable of being "both totally immersed in his point of view and not totally immersed in it." This is possible because, as this capability itself shows, a human self is "a being which in its being is what it is not, and is not what it is" (121). He concludes that "the *self* . . . is the perspective from which the poles of a contradiction are unified," so that "the self is the pivot of philosophical controversy" (121). Philosophy that is not just "an exercise in logic-chopping" (122), then, turns on the kind of personal commitment for which Gaita argues in the case of morality: "Unless a man is willing to reveal the stake he has in criticizing another position, we need not listen to his criticism" (122).

Peirce, more generally and simply, points out that doubt which we develop on abstract principle "will be a mere self-deception, and not real doubt. . . . Let us not pretend to doubt in philosophy what we do not doubt in our hearts."[30]

Philosophical questions are not resolvable in the abstract, that is, on the basis of impersonal principles of logic or justification, alone. As I have argued, in the kind of

context in which they distinctively arise the character and working of pure principles of

sense and evidence—that is, of the criteria for impersonal resolution—are precisely what

is at issue. But once, as we often can, we establish what truly is a lived consideration for

us in the concrete particularity of our lives and what is not, these same questions become,

in that context, not only resolved, but in many cases, as I have proposed, absolutely

resolved. (Gaita argues that this is true of our properly moral responses.)

We need not take too narrowly the idea that what is live for us involves the self.

In the context I have tried to establish here for the role of what is live for us, we can think

of it more broadly as whatever occurs as an actual issue for us as we go about our lives

with our actual commitments. This will then be an issue we can and should take

seriously: because it is part of our lives it is real for us, it has weight we should take into

account. Our lives do in their own course produce conflicts of understanding and

decision-making in which the sense as such of the relevant issues comes into question. If,

on the other hand, we artificially raise such conflicts, they are subject to the kinds of

objections of self-deception and pretence raised by Gaita, Peirce, and Johnstone above.

It may seem that our own honest and lived considerations must necessarily be so

obvious to us that they are not the kind of thing that needs to be established, so that if

they play a deciding role then the problem is not a philosophical or deep one, but one in

which, in a moment of aberration, we have somehow overlooked the obvious. But

establishing our own most fundamental lived considerations typically really is a

discovery, since we typically do not reflect on these very basic issues of sense. As

Wittgenstein notes, " The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden

because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something—because

it is always before one's eyes.) The real foundations of his enquiry do not strike a man at all. . . . And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful."[31] It is one of the distinctive contributions of philosophy that it provokes and enables this kind of discovery.

In fact, it does so partly in virtue of the elements of failure of sense that make abstract philosophizing on its own inadequate. Because the sense of philosophical deliberation is unsettled in the ways I have discussed, it allows us to recognize the fundamentals of our own lived sense that we otherwise take for granted.

What is more, in addition to coming to this kind of recognition, precisely because we have come to recognize ways in which issues are *not* live for us, and the consequent irrelevance of that dead abstraction, we are then *justified* in settling into the ways in which they are live for us, rather than simply being blindly dogmatic in doing so.[32] This is another distinctive and important contribution of philosophical inquiry.

This picture of philosophical debate has consequences not only for deciding between philosophical views, but also for the subsequent interaction between the disagreeing persons or positions. Having undergone this process of reflection via legitimate failures of sense, we are in a position both to be responsibly committed to our own sense framework (to the extent, of course, that it meets its own particular standards of sense), and also to be able to understand, in the abstract, others (again, to the extent that they meet their own standards of sense) that are, strictly, inconceivable within our own. And given this understanding, we are also in a position to understand how this for us strictly inconceivable purported worldview is for its inhabitants the honestly lived and therefore, equally with ours, the legitimately and responsibly grasped reality for which

ours is in turn strictly inconceivable and without force to convince. In this light, interaction between the two viewpoints allows for both the firm conviction that the other is wrong, with the conduct that follows on that conviction, and simultaneously an understanding of the reverse perspective, with the conduct that follows on *that* insight. So, for example, while we may appropriately fight for the dominance of our view, we will not demonize the other for doing the same, and may be sympathetic and motivated to help the opponent in the many contexts that are to some degree independent of the directly conflicted issues, and perhaps even in some contexts that are directly part of the conflict.

That there are elements of legitimate failure of sense in philosophical thought has consequences, too, for the procedures of philosophical deliberation and disagreement. For example, reliance on our intuitions or on what is currently intelligible to us is insufficient in this kind of inquiry. Since mutually exclusive construals of relevant sense or of sense in general characterize the contexts in which this kind of deliberation occurs, the failure of a line of thought to meet our intuitions or standards of intelligibility may signal not the inadequacy of that line of thought, but the role of a sense framework or conceptual order that is not currently available to us, and so the need to develop new conceptual resources with their corresponding intuitions.

What is more, because elements of failure of sense necessarily characterize these contexts, and because here this failure is part of the working of sense itself, it is generally the case that the procedure of philosophical reasoning and disagreement requires us to negotiate failure of sense, and to do so in this non-dismissive way. That is, it necessarily involves moments on our own part, as arguers or reasoners, of deep conceptual confusion

and incapacity to find our way with respect to the issues under discussion, and it requires suspension of judgment with respect to the ultimate import of that confusion, a patient making room for the unfolding of what may be sense in a framework or conceptual order not yet available to us. (It may happen, of course, that in the end we find there is no relevant alternative framework that can be established, and then the incoherence we have encountered is simply incoherence, and warrants dismissal of the view in question. But we cannot legitimately decide that in advance.) Similarly, it requires us to treat those same kinds of loss of resource in those we are debating with not as an indication of the likely inadequacy of their stance, but as possibly a phase of their competence in their own negotiation of a logically anomalous situation. Again, the immediate unintelligibility of another view or of its presentation, or of our own to the other person or position, in contexts where relevant sense as such is in question, requires not dismissal but suspension of judgment about what counts as sense.

On the other hand, as I discussed in section 3, because these logical anomalies are part of the working of sense itself, they also give us clues as to how to resolve the confusion. It is part of the philosopher's capable procedure, then, to work with and under the guidance of moments of incapacity to make sense, whether these moments are our own or of those with whom we engage. I began this section by saying that philosophical argument is not and should not be understood as a straightforward balancing of views. Instead, as a procedure that involves accepting the confusion and failure of our conceptual capabilities in order to reconstitute them in this way, it is the exercise of that aspect of reasoning which is our access to a deeper or renewed sense of our lives, of the world, and of our place in it.

As a final note, let me suggest that we ourselves consist partly in awareness and in activities of sense-making, and that the reality of sense for which I have argued is in our case therefore also a matter of our ontology, and so of metaphysics in the sense of the structure of reality and not only of its study. This is a case where the reality of sense and reality in the more fully ontological meaning coincide. If this is true, then for us the issue of the nature of sense and meaning themselves is not only an intellectual or cognitive question, but one that engages our very substance as creatures ourselves partly consisting in awareness and its fabric of meanings. The fact of and encounter with real failure of sense in the context of philosophical argumentation is then not only a cognitive or observational engagement with deep questions about meaning and reality, but is also an encounter with and an activation or quickening of our own meaningful being, and of our relation, in which we ourselves partly consist, to meaning as a whole. That is, philosophical argumentation is then, in part, our being carrying itself out and in that sense emerging.

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Notes

1 I would like to thank one of the journal's anonymous referees, who made several suggestions that helped to make this a significantly better paper.

2 There is a growing literature on paraconsistent formal logics, some of which allow and manage "true contradictions." See, for example, Manuel Bremer, *An Introduction to Paraconsistent Logics* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2005), e.g., 16, 19ff.; Graham Priest, *An Introduction to Non-Classical Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), e.g., 67ff., 151.

3 I discuss the character, legitimacy, and negotiation of this kind of incoherence, as well as some of its consequences, in other connections at length elsewhere. See, for example, Jeremy Barris, "The Convergent Conceptions of Being in Mainstream Analytic and Postmodern Continental Philosophy," *Metaphilosophy* 43 (2012): 592-618; *The Crane's Walk; Plato, Pluralism, and the Inconstancy of Truth* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009); *Sometimes Always True: Undogmatic Pluralism in Politics, Metaphysics, and Epistemology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

4 For this more developed argument, see *Sometimes Always True*, especially chapters 1-3.

5 For an overview of the debate on moral dilemmas, and a useful bibliography, see Terrance McConnell, "Moral Dilemmas," in Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2010)*, URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2010/entries/moral-dilemmas/>. On "dirty hands," see, for example, Stephen de Wijze, "Dirty Hands: Doing Wrong to Do Right," in Igor Primoratz, ed., *Politics and Morality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 3-19.

6 As Russell, for example, puts it in connection with the standard laws of logic (although not the "legitimately inadequate" structures I am proposing), they are a matter of "the very heart and immutable essence of all things actual and possible," and not "something more or less human and subject to our limitations"; Bertrand Russell, "The Study of Mathematics," in *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays* (London: Unwin Books, 1963), 55.

7 For this more properly ontological focus, see, for example, "Convergent Conceptions"; *Sometimes Always True*, especially chapters 6 and 8.

8 Alasdair MacIntyre, "Relativism, power, and philosophy," in Michael Krausz, ed., *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 190.

9 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

10 See, for example, Thomas Nagel, (1979) "The Absurd," in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), on the meaningful continuity between the requirement for an account of issues within the context of our general sense of things and a requirement for an account of that general sense of things itself.

11 Donald Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 183-198.

12 Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 374.

13 Peter Winch, ''Understanding a Primitive Society,'' *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1.4 (1964): 307–324, 318. Hilary Putnam makes the further point that if we recognize

that Davidson's translator "himself may have more than one 'home' conceptual scheme, and that 'translation practice' may be governed by more than one set of constraints, then one sees that conceptual relativity does not disappear when we inquire into the 'meanings' of the various conceptual alternatives: it simply reproduces itself at a metalinguistic level!"; Hilary Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face,* ed. James Conant (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 104.

[14] Donald Davidson, "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs," in Ernest Lepore, ed., *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1986), 446.

[15] For example, Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers Volume 1* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 42: "All the pragmatist can do is . . . point to the seeming futility of metaphysical activity."

[16] See, for example, R. G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940); Everett W. Hall, *Philosophical Systems: A Categorial Analysis* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1960); W. V. O. Quine, Ontological Relativity and Other Essays (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969); Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., *Validity and Rhetoric in Philosophical Argument: An Outlook in Transition* (University Park, PA: The Dialogue Press of Man and World, 1978), e.g., chapters 7 and 16.

[17] For MacIntyre, see, for example, *Whose Justice?* For Taylor, see, for example, "Rationality," in Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers Volume 2: Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 134-151.

[18] See, for example, Richard W. Paul, "Teaching Critical Reasoning in the Strong Sense: Getting Behind Worldviews," in Richard A. Talaska, ed., *Critical Reasoning in*

Contemporary Culture (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 135-156; W. Barnett Pearce and Stephen W. Littlejohn, *Moral Conflict: When Social Worlds Collide* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997); Frans H. van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, and Francisca Snoeck Henkemans, eds., *Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory: A Handbook of Historical Backgrounds and Contemporary Developments* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996), 341-342; Charles Arthur Willard, *Argumentation and the Social Grounds of Knowledge* (University, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1983).

[19] Paolo Virno, *Multitude between Innovation and Negation*, trans. Isabella Bertoletti, James Cascaito, and Andrea Casson (New York: Semiotext(e), 2008), part 2.

[20] Epictetus, *Moral Discourses*, trans. Elizabeth Carter and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, ed. Thomas Gould (New York: Washington Square Press, 1964), 142-143.

[21] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 15e, no. 94.

[22] Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. Michael Heim (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 19-20.

[23] For examples of conventionalist accounts, see Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation,* trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969); Willard, *Argumentation*. For examples of pragmatist accounts, see F. C. S. Schiller, *Logic for Use: An Introduction to the Voluntarist Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt Brace,

1930); Douglas Walton, *Argument Structure: A Pragmatic Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

[24] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970), e.g., 111-112.

[25] On the admissibility of contradiction in informal contexts, see, for example, Johnstone, *Validity*, 45. For the permissibility and manageability of contradictions in paraconsistent formal logics, see the references in note 2.

[26] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 73.

[27] Ernesto Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanist Tradition*, trans. John Michael Krois and Azizeh Azodi (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001 [1980]), e.g., 24-27.

[28] John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Henry Holt, 1938), 105–6, 4.

[29] Raimond Gaita, *Good and Evil: An Absolute Conception*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 103.

[30] Charles Sanders Peirce, "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities," in Philip P. Wiener, ed., *Charles S. Peirce: Selected Writings* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 40.

[31] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1958), 50e, no. 129.

[32] I discuss this kind of justification at length in "Convergent Conceptions"; *Sometimes Always True*, especially chapter 2.