

Thinking and Being, by Irad Kimhi. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018. Pp. xx + 166

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1. This is a very important book. It discusses some of the most fundamental issues in philosophy. And in its course, it challenges assumptions that have dominated, and defined analytic philosophy since its inception. Every serious philosopher should read it, and it is hard to believe that those who do will not be changed by it in some way.

The book comprises three essays, and an introduction. The first essay ('The Life of *p*') treats of the idea that the principles of logic 'govern' thinking, and—through drawing on the Kantian idea of self-consciousness—challenges the widespread belief that this is a matter of the principles serving as norms to which thinking is answerable. The second ('The Dominant Sense of Being') seeks to defend Aristotle's remark in *Metaphysics* Theta 10 that 'being' in the sense of being true is the most proper, or the dominant sense of being, through developing an insight into the character of truth that it finds both in Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, and in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. And the third ('The Quietism of the Stranger') offers a new reading of Plato's *Sophist*, which sees its account of judgment as embodying a similar insight, and seeks to show this account to be superior to those of Frege, and Russell. But the essays are not self-contained: they need to be read together. And together they communicate a compelling, and distinctive philosophical vision.

2. With a book as rich as this, there are many places where we might begin. For an audience of Kantians, we might start with its treatment of apperception; for an audience of Aristotelians, we might start instead with its discussion of the different senses of 'being'. But for a general audience of analytic philosophers, it helps to begin with what it calls 'Frege's Observation'—that (as Geach put it) 'a proposition may occur in discourse now asserted, now unasserted, and yet be recognizably the same proposition' (Geach 1965, p. 449).

Here Geach is not using 'a proposition' in Frege's sense of 'a thought', or 'a content', but 'in the sense, inherited from medieval logic, of a bit of language in a certain logically recognizable employment' (Geach 1979, p. 221). The book standardly uses this expression in a more restricted sense—to indicate a simple predicative proposition of the form '*Fa*'. And, except where otherwise indicated, this is how we shall use it here.

The book does not dispute Frege's Observation. But it does dispute the conclusion that Frege drew from it, that (as the book has it) 'assertoric force must be dissociated from a proposition's semantical significance' (p. 39). The book calls this 'Frege's Point'. And it can seem to be compulsory. Consider negation; specifically, consider the contradictory pair of

assertions ' p ', and ' $\text{not-}p$ '. The idea of negation seems to require the very proposition that occurs asserted in the first member of this pair to occur unasserted in the second. But if assertoric force is internal to the proposition, then it seems that the idea of the same proposition occurring now asserted, now unasserted comes to nothing, and with it the very idea of negation. If we reject Frege's Point, then we seem to be sent back to what the book calls 'the gate of philosophy'—to the teaching of 'father Parmenides': that the idea of negation is unintelligible, and with it the idea of falsehood.

Parmenidian difficulties about negation and falsehood might seem to be of merely antiquarian interest, for it might seem that Frege's Point has let us leave them behind. But the book submits Frege's Point to a sustained attack. If the book is right, then we have not left the gate of philosophy, and have no choice but to face these difficulties.

3. Frege's Point runs up against an immediate problem of unity. In the *Begriffsschrift*, Frege introduces a special sign (\vdash)—the assertion sign—that, according to Frege's Point, 'must be external to the semantically significant composition of the proposition' (p. 39). But Frege also recognizes a relational predicate—'... assert(s) ...', or, '... judge(s)...'—that, unlike the assertion sign, can occur as a significant propositional constituent. As Frege understands this predicate, it signifies a certain relation between a thinker, and a thought; and he takes it for granted that different relations to the same thought, signified by different relational predicates—'... think(s)...', '... hope(s)...', and so on—are possible. But what is the unity between what is understood in using the assertion sign, and what is understood in using the predicate? It cannot be that to use the sign is to grasp the same sense that is grasped in using the predicate (as the sign is not a predicate), nor can it be to grasp a different sense that presents the same referent (as the sign is not a constituent of a proposition, and so does not refer to anything). So, what could the unity be?

I do not think this question has an answer. And if this is right, then it brings out a fundamental disunity in (what it might hitherto have been tempting to call) 'Frege's theory of judgment'. To keep track of this disunity, it helps to exploit some terminology that the book introduces. Putting some familiar philosophical words to its own use, it distinguishes between a 'categorematic unit', and a 'syncategorematic unit'. The first is a bit of language that figures as a significant element in a predicative proposition (such as a name, or a predicate), and the second is a bit of language that does not so figure (such as the special sign). Given this, we can call what is understood in using the sign 's-assertion' (or 's-judgment'), and what is understood in using the predicate 'c-assertion' (or 'c-judgment').

In this light, the book presents (what it calls) 'the syllogisms of thinking and being'—central amongst which is the following:

1. A judges *p*

2. *p*

Therefore:

3. A truly judges *p*.

Making sense of the idea of c-judgment seems to require recognizing the self-evidence of this syllogism, which in turn seems to require recognizing the same proposition as occurring both outside of the context of indirect discourse (in which it occurs asserted), and inside of this context (in which it occurs unasserted). But Frege's conception of indirect discourse scotches the idea of the same proposition occurring in these different contexts: because it understands 'A judges *p*' as a relational predication, the *relata* of which are the name of a thinker, 'A', and the name of a thought, '*p*', it fixes it that the significance of '*p*' inside of this context is different from its significance outside. Frege's conception does not conform to Frege's Observation. And because it does not, it seems to make it impossible to recognize the self-evidence of the syllogism, and so impossible to make sense of the idea of c-judgment.

It is widely believed that Frege's conception of indirect discourse is not quite right. And there have been attempts to emend it; Dummett's is perhaps the most notable example (Dummett 1973). But because Dummett does not dispute that the significance of '*p*' inside of the context of indirect discourse is different from its significance outside, his emendation does not provide for the seemingly needed sameness, and so does not avoid the present consequence. And it seems that the same is even true of Davidson's more radically anti-Fregean 'paratactic theory' (Davidson 1968). Through construing c-assertion as a relation, not to a thought, but to an utterance of a proposition outside of the context of indirect discourse, Davidson's account avoids treating '*p*' as enjoying any significance other than that which it enjoys outside of this context; but because, in so doing, it excludes '*p*' from this context, it equally fails to provide for the seemingly needed sameness.

That leaves us with s-judgment. But it faces a difficulty of its own. The book observes that, in Frege's writings, 'truth' is said in three different ways: in the sense of a concept (associated with the predicate 'is true'); in the sense of an object (the truth-value True, to which certain propositions refer); and in a sense associated with force ('the essential moment of a successful judgment/assertion' (p. 135)). But consider the predicative proposition '*Fa*'. For Frege, '*Fa*' is forceless: s-assertion attaches to it only from the outside. But Frege takes it for granted that there is a unity between truth in the first two senses, in both of which it attaches to forceless propositions, and truth in the third sense. And this is because he takes it for granted that '*Fa*' is true, sc., refers to the True, just in case an s-assertion of '*Fa*' would be successful, sc., true in the sense associated with force. But what licenses this assumption? Why could it not be that '*Fa*' refers to the True, but an s-assertion of 'not-*Fa*',

rather than of '*Fa*', would be successful? This must be precluded, if the unity of truth is to be secured. But it cannot be precluded—for if it were, and '*Fa*' refers to the True just in case an s-assertion of '*Fa*', rather than of '*not-Fa*', would be successful, then '*Fa*' would be associated with the s-assertion of '*Fa*', rather than with its opposite. And that would violate Frege's Point, for Frege's Point is that '*Fa*' is not associated with any s-assertion—positive, or negative. Frege's Point sunders the unity of the very idea of truth.

The case that the book mounts against Frege is fascinating, and merits considerable reflection. If it is sound, then its effects are devastating: Frege's Point falls to the ground, and with it 'Frege's theory of judgment'—and we must return to the gate of philosophy. We must face the Parmenidian difficulties anew; specifically, we must explain how the same proposition can occur now asserted, and now unasserted (as in negation), but without dissociating force from sense. How is this to be done?

4. A central burden of the book is to answer this question. And to this end, it advises us 'to consider the notion of a *two-way capacity*, which Aristotle introduces in *Metaphysics* Theta 2' (p. 60). This is a capacity with two opposing acts: 'The very same understanding which is exercised in *informing* (say, healing) is also exercised in *deforming* (say, poisoning)' (p. 60). The capacity for healing has a positive act (of healing); and just for this reason, it equally has a negative act (of poisoning). And the book suggests that we understand the proposition '*p*' through the idea of such a capacity. This requires diverging from Aristotle's conception of capacities in a crucial respect: for Aristotle, capacities are signified by the predicate in a proposition, and propositions cannot be capacities in this sense. But the book thinks that we can employ a notion of capacity that is free of this Aristotelian commitment. And in this light, we can understand the proposition '*p*' as a two-way *logical capacity*. It has a positive act (an assertion of '*p*'); and just for this reason, it equally has a negative act (an assertion of '*not-p*'). That allows force to be internal to the proposition, but without precluding negation. And it allows Frege's fundamental error to be identified: as the idea that a proposition is a one-way logical capacity—for this idea fixes it that, if assertoric force were internal to the proposition, then every one of its occurrences would be an assertion of it (sc., it would not have a negative act): the idea of the same proposition occurring now asserted, now unasserted would dissolve, and the dissociation of force from content would come to seem compulsory.

5. The book as a whole elaborates this conception of a proposition as a two-way logical capacity. To see how, it helps to broaden the focus, by considering the book's discussion of the principles of logic—paradigmatically, the principle of non-contradiction—in the first essay.

Aristotle's *Metaphysics* seems to contain two principles with this title: the ontological principle of non-contradiction (OPNC), and the psychological principle (PPNC).

(OPNC) For the same thing to hold good and not to hold good simultaneously of the same thing and in the same respect is impossible (cited on p. 25).

(PPNC) It is impossible for anyone to believe that the same thing is and is not (cited on p. 28).

It might seem that the only logical principle here is OPNC; properly understood, PPNC is merely an empirical generalization of some kind. Aristotle himself 'often seems uninterested' (p. 29) in the difference between these principles, and for this reason he has often been charged with psychologism—in the form either of psychologizing logic (understanding OPNC through PPNC), or of logicizing psychology (vice versa). Of course, thinkers *ought not* to believe contradictions—but that is a further 'normative' principle:

(NPNC) One ought not believe (judge) that the same thing is and is not (p. 36).

It is because PPNC can be no more than an empirical generalization that NPNC is not merely possible, but seemingly necessary for making sense of logic as 'governing' the activity of thinking. And Frege insists on NPNC: it is through understanding logic as a norm to which thinking is answerable that he takes himself to reject psychologism.

Against this, the book suggests that NPNC comes to nothing, because PPNC is not an empirical generalization at all. On the contrary: it is no less a logical principle than OPNC. But how is its character as such a principle to be understood?

According to a standard reading, Aristotle logicizes psychology, because he understands PPNC as an instance of OPNC. One thing that might hold of a substance is that it believes *p*; by OPNC, it is impossible for a substance simultaneously to instantiate, and not to instantiate, the property of believing *p*; hence, PPNC. But for the book this is wrong—both as such, and as a reading of Aristotle. Of course, the inference is invalid: not believing *p* is not the same as believing not-*p*. But the book rejects, and takes Aristotle not to endorse, an assumption that underlies this reading—that the way in which beliefs or judgments are joined together in the intellect is an instance of the way in which 'properties are joined together in a substance' (p. 30). Seeing what is wrong with this assumption is the key to understanding, not merely where the reading goes wrong, but the character of PPNC as a logical principle.

For the explicit rejection of this assumption, the book turns to Kant; and specifically, to:

Kant's insight that a judgment belongs to a certain context of activity: the activity whose unity is the same as the consciousness of its unity, or self-consciousness. According to Kant, a judgment is a certain unity of consciousness. As such, it is a capacity for identifying consciousness as having this unity [sc., it is self-consciousness]; but in saying [that] one should be careful not to confuse 'an act of identifying consciousness' with subsumption under a general kind... (p. 52)

The book puts its own twist on this insight, through bringing out the internal connection between self-consciousness, and language.

At the heart of the idea of self-consciousness, as the book understands it, is the idea that the significance of '*p*' is not altered when it occurs in certain larger linguistic contexts; in particular, when it occurs in 'I judge...' 'I judge *p*' identifies consciousness as containing the judgment *p*. But this identification is not a matter of referring to a substance (signified by 'I'), and subsuming it under a general concept—for example, that of being related, in the manner of judging, to what is referred to therein by '*p*'. (So, 'I judge *p*' is not a piece of indirect discourse, on Frege's conception of this.) It is not a matter of any predication, over and above that constituted by '*p*'. Rather, it consists simply in the occurrence of '*p*' in this larger linguistic context—a context that is not itself a predication, just because it contains a proposition: in contrast to a name or a predicate, a proposition is itself a syncategorematic unit. And this is not the only larger linguistic context that non-predicatively identifies consciousness as containing a judgment. Another is '... & ...' (Conjunction). The togetherness of judgments in consciousness consists, not in the compresence of attributes in a bearer, but in the capacity for identifying consciousness as combining these judgments, through the occurrence of different propositions in this last linguistic context in particular.

These do not exhaust the linguistic contexts that constitute identifications of consciousness—what the book calls 'operations'. Another is 'not-...' (Negation). 'Not-*p*' is an identification of consciousness, not as containing the judgment *p*, but as disagreeing with this judgment. As such, in contrast to how it occurs in the earlier operations, as it occurs in 'not-*p*', '*p*' is not asserted. Even so, its occurrence in this operation *displays* an assertion of '*p*', in something like the way that a sample displays a repeatable:

For example, Pantone #15-5519 displays turquoise. But not every sample has to be an *instance* of the repeatable. We can display *swimming* without actually swimming (e.g., by performing certain gestures on dry land). (p. 41)

When an occurrence of '*p*' displays an assertion of '*p*', without being such an assertion, the proposition occurs as (what the book calls) a 'gesture'. The one-way idea of a proposition as expressing an assertion (or a judgment) gives way to the two-way idea of a proposition as displaying an assertion (or a judgment) through occurring *either* as (what the book calls) a 'self-identifying display' (sc., as a positive assertion), *or* as a gesture (as in negation).

We can now give a different formulation of the point put earlier in terms of capacities. Like a capacity, a proposition is general, in that it is repeatable; and like a two-way capacity, positivity and negativity are both internal to it, in that it is internal to it that it is repeatable both as the positive assertion '*p*', and as the negative assertion 'not-*p*'. This is an aspect of what the book calls 'the wide context principle': whereas in Frege the context principle is the denial that the elements of a proposition are identifiable independently of the unity of the proposition, the principle remains narrow, because it assumes that the proposition '*p*' is itself identifiable independently of the logical unities that its assertion sustains with other assertions in which '*p*' occurs, such as 'not-*p*'. But it would not be quite right to say that the positive and negative assertions are equally fundamental: the positive assertion is prior to the negative, in that the negative assertion is constituted by the display of the positive assertion, and not vice versa; but the contradictory pair dominates the positive, in that the logical unity of the pair is internal to the positive assertion.

Of course, negation is not the only logical context in which propositions can occur unasserted. Conditionals are another. And the book addresses the issue of how propositions can occur in conditionals through its idea of a truth-operation—an identification of consciousness 'as combining some judgments and disagreeing with others' (p. 58). The basic truth-operations are conjunction and negation, and the book exploits the classical idea that conditionals can be defined in terms of these: if *p* then *q* can be defined as not-(*p* & not-*q*)—that is, in terms of a disagreement of consciousness with the conjunction *p* & not-*q*.

Operations—both the truth-operations, and 'I judge...'—are the core of what the book calls 'the linguistic turn'. As it notes, this term 'is usually used in the literature to name a turn in twentieth-century philosophy toward a concern with language, conceived as a special theme or subject matter, the study of which comes to be regarded as central to making progress with more general and traditional philosophical concerns' (p. 64, n. 48). But the book uses the term differently, to signify what we have just seen: that it is through the repeatability of propositions in different non-predicative linguistic contexts that the agreement of consciousness with itself—its combining certain judgments, and disagreeing with others, sc., the logical unity of thinking as such—is constituted, and displayed.

And in this light, we can understand the character of PPNC as a logical principle. The judgment *p* excludes the judgment not-*p*: it is impossible for contradictory judgments to be together in consciousness. But this impossibility does not consist in the impossibility of a

substance simultaneously instantiating a certain pair of properties. Rather, it consists simply in the repeatability of the proposition ‘*p*’ in an operation containing ‘... & not-...’, where this repeatability is special in that it is self-cancelling: the repetition of ‘*p*’ in such an operation does not display any judgment at all. (And because it does not, we do not “succumb to the illusion that the principle [of non-contradiction] demarcates the thinkable by specifying something unthinkable’ (p. 67).)

It is through this idea of self-cancellation that both of the principles of non-contradiction are to be understood—OPNC no less than PPNC. Both consist in the self-cancelling repeatability of ‘*p*’: in the case of OPNC, in the operation ‘... & not-...’, and in the case of PPNC in the operation ‘I think... & I think not-...’.

We might now wonder what the difference is between PPNC and OPNC. And the book’s label for its position—‘Psycho/logical monism’—is apt to suggest that there is no difference. But this is not quite the book’s position. It says that there is a difference between the principles, and that this corresponds ‘to the difference between the consciousness [displayed] by “*p*”, and the self-consciousness [displayed] by “I think *p*”’ (p. 31). But it also says that:

this talk of ‘difference’ does not mean that OPNC and PPNC are two different principles. In the end the monist will say *neither* that they are two, *nor* one. Or rather: that they are the same *and* different. (p. 31)

How should we understand this?

To try to understand it, it helps first to consider the sameness, and difference of ‘the consciousness [displayed] by “*p*”, and the self-consciousness [displayed] by “I think *p*”’. Here ‘*p*’, and ‘I think *p*’ are assertions. And what is displayed, by any assertion, is the assertion itself. So, we might equally speak of the sameness, and difference of ‘*p*’, and ‘I think *p*’. It is tempting to think that these assertions are the same in one respect, but different in another: they are categorematically the same, but syncategorematically different—in that they involve the same categorematic units, but different syncategorematic units. And it is tempting to think that the book’s thought is that the same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for the unity, and difference of OPNC, and PPNC. However, I think that the sameness, and difference that is presently at stake resists any kind of apportioning into different ‘respects’.

This can be brought out as follows. The book holds that the unity, and difference of ‘*p*’, and ‘I think *p*’ is displayed by the repetition of the proposition ‘*p*’ in these assertions. This means that it is a unity, and difference that can be in view only from within the use of ‘*p*’. And this means that it is neither a unity, nor a difference that a proposition of identity, or its negation, can have in view. To see this, consider a proposition of identity:

(*) Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus.

That consists in a pair of singular terms, flanking 'is identical to'. Equally, consider:

(**) ' p ' is identical to 'I think p '.

That equally consists in a pair of singular terms, flanking a sign for identity. And just because it does, it does not consist in the repetition of ' p '. The proposition ' p ' is repeated only insofar as it is used, and in (**) it is not used but merely mentioned (as it must be, insofar as (**) is an identity-proposition): what is used on the left of 'is identical to' is, not ' p ', but a singular term that refers to an assertion of ' p '; and the same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for what is used on the right. Hence, (**) has in view the unity of the assertions that it mentions, not from within the use of ' p ', but from within the use of singular terms that refer to assertions of ' p '. And the same evidently holds for the negation of this proposition of identity, and for the difference that it has in view:

(***) ' p ' is not identical to 'I think p '.

But as the unity, and difference that is displayed by the repetition of ' p ' in these assertions can be in view only from within the use of ' p ', it is neither a unity, nor a difference that an identity-proposition, or its negation, can have in view. And, for this reason, there is no prospect of apportioning this unity, and difference into different respects—through a proposition of identity to the effect that ' p ' is identical to 'I think p ' in one respect, but not identical to it in another respect—for a unity, and difference that is apportioned in this manner would be in view in a proposition of identity to this effect, and as such would not be the unity, and difference that is displayed by the repetition of ' p ' in these assertions at all.

Insofar as the unity, and difference that these assertions display cannot be apportioned into different respects, the same equally goes for the unity, and difference of OPNC and PPNC—for it is equally a unity, and difference, that is displayed by the repetition of ' p '; specifically, by the pair of self-cancelling repetitions ' p & not- p ', and 'I think p & I think not- p '. That, I think, is why the book says that OPNC and PPNC are the same, *and* different. The idea seems to be that the nexus of these principles is a unity-in-difference—the kind of nexus associated with the post-Kantian speculative philosophy, whose mark is that it is a unity, and difference that cannot be apportioned in this way.

6. This review has covered a considerable amount of ground. And yet, it has barely begun to describe this most enriching book. To read it is to experience genuine philosophical excitement: it is to enjoy new insights, and to see oppositions that continue to structure the ideology of contemporary philosophy—between ancient and modern; history of philosophy and philosophy proper; analytic and ‘continental’—simply fall away. In the depth and purity of its ideas, and the revolutionary character of its overall vision, it is a remarkable achievement. It constitutes a powerful challenge to a raft of orthodoxies. And it shows its author, Irad Kimhi, to be a philosopher of real significance. *

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