

ON PARMENIDES AND THE LAW OF CONTRADICTION

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ABSTRACT: Is it possible to think and say reasonably, meaningfully, that something is here and now or that something is not here and now? Aiming to show that the answer to that question is far from obvious, I refer to the fragments of Parmenides of Elea, an early Greek thinker who was probably the first to raise the question and try to provide an answer. I start by offering my understanding of Parmenides' poem 'On Nature', noting the shortcomings of his approach and endeavouring to continue his thought. Having shown that our conception of thinking and speaking, which stems from the Ancient Greeks and is still dominant today, leads us to a dead end, I propose an original theory of meaning and reference at the heart of which lies not one or another form of interdependence of one thing with another thing but your freedom and mine. This theory helps me overcome factually the effect of the law of contradiction and thus dissolve the problem, which renders my thinking consonant with what was said by Heraclitus of Ephesus.

KEYWORDS: Metaphilosophy; Reference and meaning; Logical contradiction; Parmenides; Heraclitus

Enumerating what you see, for instance in your room, it is easy to lose sight of one very important detail, through which alone vision is possible, namely light. What if, when contemplating the world, its past, present or future, we become oblivious and overlook one very important detail, through which alone this world is possible? In Parmenides' view, that detail is being here and now. To begin, I would like to draw your attention to what, in my opinion, The great Greek thinker does and does not do in his poem 'On Nature'. Parmenides, at least in the first and second parts of his text (Proem, fr. 1 and 'Aletheia', frs 2–8.50), is not trying to tell us what or how the world is. For him, any such

statements regarding this world, including his own (frs 9–19), are ultimately just ‘the beliefs of mortals in which there is no true trust’ (fr. 1.30), ‘deceitful ordering of words’ (fr. 8.52).¹ Parmenides thinks thinking.

Parmenides, at least in the first and second parts of his text, is not trying to tell us what or how thinking is, because thinking, in his view, is inseparable from this world (fr. 3). Therefore, any such story, including his own (fr. 16), is ultimately just deceitful ordering of words (fr. 8.50–52). Parmenides attempts to think about thinking about what and how this world is, which in his opinion comes down to thinking about what is and of what is not (fr. 2.1–5). He does this to clarify what we can really (reasonably, meaningfully) think and say about the world and what we cannot. Without this clarification, we will never arrive at the evidentness of this world for us, i.e. at a state in which nothing is concealed or incomprehensible, where everything is clear and indisputable. Achieving this is the main purpose of his work.

To put it more precisely, Parmenides, through the rethinking of thinking about what is and the rethinking of thinking about what is not, having established thinking and speaking about what is possible and thinking and speaking about what is not possible, expects to reach the ‘heart of evidentness’ (fr. 1.29), i.e. to think and to say reasonably, meaningfully something without which this world will never become plain and clear to our understanding, to our perception: that which will make the world evident to us. Therefore, we can say that in the course of his reasoning, Parmenides hopes to figure out and to reveal something basic, something not realised before. He intends to come to a certain indisputable tenet: the fundamental principle of being, the acceptance of which will finally free us from ignorance, prejudice and superstition, and will make this world fully evident to us. Hence, perhaps, his minimalistic writing style. In other words, what is involved is enlightenment through revelation, achieved in a rational way.

Here it is necessary to draw attention to the fact that I treat Parmenidean ‘aletheia’ not as the truth (i.e. not as a property inherent in what we think and speak, consisting in correspondence of our thoughts and words to fact or facts, or in the coherence of our thoughts and words with a specific set of other

¹ Here and hereinafter, Gallop’s (1991) translation is used.

thoughts or words), but as a state of not being hidden or of being evident: the property inherent in what we think and say, or in what we see and perceive, and consisting in complete plainness, clearness, either for our understanding or for our perception. If the word ‘aletheia’ etymologically derives from the words for ‘unhidden’ and ‘unforgotten’, then my interpretation of Parmenidean ‘aletheia’ comes from its etymology.²

Therefore, let us not rush to put Parmenides on a par with his predecessors, contemporaries or descendants, who with greater or lesser success have told and continue to tell their enthusiastic audience what and how this world is. When, for example, Parmenides discusses the problem of the coming-to-be of what is, he is primarily interested in whether it is possible to think and speak reasonably, meaningfully about the coming-to-be of what is (fr. 8.6–21), not whether what is comes to be in this world. This is probably why, at least in the first and second parts of his poem, Parmenides appeals to reason rather than to observation (fr. 7.2–6). Here, it should be noted that at the level of formulation of the problem and identification of possible ways of solving it, Parmenides’ text is already a first-class achievement that has lost none of its relevance today.

Therefore, not observation and measurement, but ‘right and justice’ (fr. 1.28) lead Parmenides to evidentness, and in order that we may know its heart, he proposes to think over two routes of inquiry:

The one that [it] is, and that [it] cannot not be ...
(fr. 2.3)

The other that [it] is not and that [it] needs must not be ...
(fr. 2.5)

What does it mean to be? One of the meanings of the word ‘to be’ is to exist. It is probably clear from the above that I suppose Parmenides to be using the verb ‘to be’ in exactly this sense, because it is such an understanding of this word that makes his text highly intelligible. Moreover, I will insist on the fact that Parmenides concretises the meaning of ‘to be’ to the maximum.

What is meant here? First, Parmenides uses the verb ‘to be’ in the present tense. Second, the way the routes of inquiry are formulated (especially when

² For more on this subject, see Levet (1976, p. 6 and pp. 14–17) and Cole (1983, pp. 7–28).

presented in the form of questions, such as ‘what is and cannot not be? what is not and must not be?’) allows us to assume that he is proposing that we comprehend our thinking of what is in space ‘right here’ and in time ‘right now’, i.e. something present to our mind or senses, something in our direct awareness, something clear for us. He is also proposing that we comprehend our thinking of what is not in space ‘right here’ and in time ‘right now’, i.e. something absent from our mind or senses, something outside of our direct awareness, something concealed from us. Otherwise, why would Parmenides limit what is—to what cannot not be; and what is not—to what must not be? The validity of this approach is confirmed by, among others, the passage where Parmenides uses the combinations of words ‘what is’ and ‘firmly present to the mind’ as synonyms:

Look upon things which, though far off, are yet firmly present to the
mind;

For you shall not cut off what is from holding fast to what is ... (fr. 4.1–
2)

Our interpretation of ‘aletheia’ as the state of being evident leads to the same thought. After all, evidentness presupposes rather than excludes this kind of space-time limitation of what is and what is not. From this point of view, Parmenides, by reducing the thinking of what is to the thinking of what is here and now, and the thinking of what is not to the thinking of what is not here and now, makes another important step on the path to evidentness of this world to us.

Note that this exclusively double-aspect understanding of the world requires us to attribute to what is not here and now absolutely everything that is currently beyond our perception, including well-known persons such as Walter Scott and Sherlock Holmes, and equally well-known animals such as flying horses and dinosaurs. As for the subject of ‘is’, Parmenides does not specify it, probably because at this stage of the reasoning he considers it to be anything, i.e. treating the subject as broadly as possible, as anything, internal or external.

Keeping in mind the above, we are invited to think over the following routes of inquiry: that something (anything, no matter what exactly) is here and now; and that something (anything, no matter what exactly) is not here

and now. Parmenides finds it necessary to reject the second route of inquiry immediately as unlearnable, for we could not know what is not here and now. We could not have or express in words a thought about what is not here and now with respect to which we could have held a rational belief (for that is not feasible); nor could we point it out, for example, referring to what is not here and now by means of a thought or a word (fr. 2.6–8). For how and in what way could we form and express in words an idea of what is not here and now or refer to it using a thought or a word? After all, what is not anything in the place where and at the time when we think or utter ‘here and now’, in the place where and at the time when we think or utter ‘here and now’, is not (fr. 6.2).

In other words, in order for what is not in any place where and at any time when a thought is being thought or a word being uttered – in any place where and at any time when a thought is being thought or a word is being uttered – not to be, that which is not in any place where and at any time when a thought is being thought or a word being uttered – in any place where and at any time when a thought is being thought or a word being uttered – must not be, no matter what we thought or said. It is necessary that none of our thoughts or words and what is not in the place where and at the time when they are being thought or uttered should depend on one another, since to consider a certain thought or word and that which is not in the place where and at the time when it is being thought or uttered as determining one another is to acknowledge this: what is not in the place where and at the time when that certain thought is being thought or that certain word is being uttered – in the place where and at the time when that certain thought is being thought or that certain word being uttered – is.

But if none of our thoughts or words and what is not in the place where and at the time when they are being thought or uttered determine one another at all, then how could we produce an idea of, and express in words or refer to, what is not in the place where and at the time when we think the thought or utter the words ‘here and now’?

Here, we are talking about the impossibility of increasing (doubling) the absent. Indeed, if believing that here and now is not what here and now is not, nevertheless, considering it possible to think and say what is not here and now

means acknowledging the possibility of doubling it (what is not here and now) – i.e. agreeing with the possibility of somehow adding one more absence to what is already absent by means of a certain thought or word, essentially acknowledging the possibility of turning what is here and now into what is not here and now by means of a certain thought or word. This seems to Parmenides wrong, unjust, useless, unreasonable.

I could elaborate as follows to show the course of his thoughts. According to Parmenides, most of us mortals believe that this world, at the very least, consists of what is here and now and of what is not here and now. From the point of view that these two areas are equally present for us, we consider them one and the same; but from the point of view that, after all, what is here and now and what is not here and now are different things, we believe that they are not the same; and then, what is here and now can become what is not here and now, and vice versa (fr. 6.8–9). Parmenides believes that regarding acknowledgement of the presence of the absent, such a generic picture of the world does not deserve any true trust (fr. 6.2). It should be noted that, in this manner, apparently for the first time in the history of thinking, Parmenides identifies and immediately calls into question the fundamental paradigm of Western thought, his DNA.

Indeed, as we mortals think and say that something is not here and now, therefore, we believe it is possible to conceive of or refer to what is not here and now, which means that, consciously or unconsciously, we proceed from the fact that the absent is somehow present. Accordingly, each time we think or say that something is not here and now, we thereby intentionally or unintentionally affirm the presence of the absent.

But how could the absent be present? How could here and now be what is not here and now? It looks as if this tenet, which is the starting point for our judgements about the absent, contains a logical contradiction and is therefore meaningless. According to Parmenides, we must proceed from the fact that the absent is absent (fr. 6.2). This means that any endeavour to conceive of or refer to what is not here and now would become an effort to double what is not here and now, which does not look feasible. Therefore, any attempts to think and say what is not here and now must be acknowledged as useless, unreasonable.

But then, not only do thinking and speaking of what is not here and now go beyond the limits prescribed by reason, so too do all the concepts based on the assumption that this is possible (fr. 8). It is impossible to think and speak reasonably, meaningfully about time, because the concept of time (in particular, its two components of past and future) presupposes the possibility of thinking and speaking of what was or will be, i.e. of what is not here and now. It is impossible to think and speak reasonably, meaningfully about space, and thus about objects and events in it, because the concept of space presupposes the possibility of thinking and speaking emptiness, i.e. what is not here and now. Therefore, it is impossible to think and speak reasonably, meaningfully about change and changelessness.

Here, in my view, contrary to Parmenides (fr. 8.26), it is necessary to reject the possibility of thinking and speaking reasonably, meaningfully about changelessness, if only because the concept of changelessness (i.e. preservation of sameness, identity), just like the concept of change (i.e. becoming something else, different), involves, among other things, the knowledge of what it was originally (i.e. has as its premise the possibility of thinking and speaking of what is not here and now). In this case, Parmenides, in believing that it is possible to think and speak reasonably and meaningfully about changelessness, contradicts his own logic.

Taking into account all that has been said above, if, for example, having thought or having said that ‘there is no glass of water on the table here and now’, it may only seem as if you are thinking and saying what is not here and now. In fact, from your having thought and said ‘there is no glass of water on the table here and now’, it follows only that you have thought and said ‘there is no glass of water on the table here and now’. It does not follow that you have conceived of or referred to what is not here and now. On the contrary, it follows that you could have only an irrational belief that your unreasonable opinion, expressed by a deceitful ordering of words, is ‘the thought’, ‘the word’ about what is not here and now.

Since an attempt to acknowledge the presence of the absent appears meaningless, and as a consequence, there arises a need to build on the fact that here and now is not what here and now is not, Parmenides arrives at his conclusion about the impossibility of thinking and saying reasonably,

meaningfully that something is not here and now, and consequently at the need to let go of the second route of inquiry as unthinkable, unnameable. In so far as an attempt to acknowledge the absence of the present looks meaningless in turn, according to Parmenides (fr. 7.1), we must proceed from the fact that here and now is what here and now is, and therefore, to acknowledge as possible only thinking and saying what is here and now (fr. 6.1), i.e. to consider the first route of inquiry as the only indisputable one (fr. 8.1–2).

Taking into account all of the above, it is necessary to speak and to think that what is here and now is unchangeable and impermanent (see the above comment on the impossibility of thinking and speaking about changelessness) – that it is atemporal, indivisible and complete (fr. 8). That is, at this stage of his reasoning, by virtue of the fact that the second route of inquiry was discarded by him as unthinkable and unnameable, Parmenides comes to the conclusion that it is impossible to distinguish or separate anything using thoughts or words, even among what is here and now, without finding ourselves in the realm of the seeming.

From this point of view, having thought or having said that, for example, ‘a glass of water is on the table here and now’, it may only seem that you are thinking and saying what is here and now. In fact, from your having thought or said ‘a glass of water is on the table here and now’, it follows only that you have thought or said ‘a glass of water is on the table here and now’. This, your assertion, is just an unreasonable opinion, a deceitful ordering of words. Moreover, based on this, it is necessary to speak and to think that thinking and speaking themselves are inseparable from all that is here and now, that they are one and the same with it; i.e. everything that we think or speak is nothing more than an embodiment or a manifestation of being here and now (frs 3, 4).

Then, strictly speaking, all that can be understood plainly and clearly out of everything that we think, say, see or perceive – ultimately the only thing that can be thought and said reasonably, meaningfully – is that being is not concealed. This is probably why Parmenides considers all his statements regarding the world from the third part of poem (‘Doxa’, frs 9–19) to be ‘deceitful ordering of words’ (fr. 8.52) and makes these statements only so that ‘no opinion of mortals should ever overtake you’ (fr. 8.61).

Here, I follow Parmenides' thought in its essence rather than its form. Nowhere in the text does Parmenides directly assert that being is not concealed. However, given my reading of Parmenidean 'aletheia' as the state of being evident, the state of not being hidden, that Parmenidean 'is' is being here and now, the tour de force of fragment 8, comes down to this exactly.

William James once accurately outlined the cause of typical (for the Western mind) 'schizophrenic' thinking, i.e. excessive discreteness of the mental process, saying, 'How comes the world to be here at all instead of the nonentity which might be imagined in its place? ... From nothing to being there is no logical bridge' (1916, 38, 40). Parmenides' text can be seen as an attempt to overcome this 'schizophrenic' thinking at the cost of acknowledging the impossibility of thinking or saying what is not here and now. Perhaps the only thing we could find him guilty of, at this stage of our reasoning, is his unwillingness to think thoroughly over thinking and speaking of what is here and now.

Meanwhile, it seems that there is every reason to reject this route of inquiry, too, as unthinkable and unnameable. Exploring the problem of thinking and speaking of what is here and now, we probably cannot proceed from the assumption that the present is absent, because this tenet appears to contain a logical contradiction and, therefore, to be meaningless. How could it be that here and now is not what here and now is? On the other hand, if, when answering the question whether it is possible to think and speak what is here and now, we proceed from the fact that the present is present, we are likely to come to the conclusion that any attempt to think or speak what is here and now already looks infeasible by virtue of the starting point we have chosen. Indeed, how could we form and express in words an idea of what is here and now, or refer to it using a thought or a word, if what is anything in the place where and at the time when we think or utter 'here and now' – in the place where and at the time when we think or utter 'here and now' – is?

In other words, in order for what is in any place where and at any time when a thought is being thought or a word being uttered – in any place where and at any time when a thought is being thought or a word is being uttered – to be, that which is in any place where and at any time when a thought is being thought or a word being uttered – in any place where and at any time

when a thought is being thought or a word being uttered – must be, whatever we think or say. That is, it is necessary for our every thought or word and what is in the place where and at the time when it is being thought or uttered to be dependent on one another, since to consider a certain thought or word and that which is in the place where and at the time when it is being thought or uttered as not determining one another is to acknowledge this: that what is in the place where and at the time when that certain thought is being thought or that certain word is being uttered – in the place where and at the time when that certain thought is being thought or that certain word being uttered – is not. But if our every thought or word and that which is in the place where and at the time when it is being thought or uttered determine one another exactly, then how could we produce an idea of and express in words or refer to what is in the place where and at the time when we think the thought or utter the words ‘here and now’?

Once again, we are talking about the impossibility of increase, but this time about the impossibility of increasing (doubling) the present. Indeed, if believing that here and now is what here and now is, nevertheless, considering it possible to think and say what is here and now, means acknowledging the possibility of doubling it (what is here and now) – i.e. agreeing with the possibility of somehow adding one more presence to what is already present by means of a certain thought or word, essentially acknowledging the possibility of turning what is not here and now into what is here and now, by means of some certain thought or word. This also seems wrong, unjust, useless, unreasonable.

It looks as if our conviction in the fact that we can think and speak reasonably, meaningfully about what is here and now is also groundless, which means that from our having thought or said ‘being is not concealed’, it should follow only that we have thought or said ‘being is not concealed’, i.e. this assertion, too, is just an unreasonable opinion, a deceitful ordering of words. Thus, at this stage of the reasoning, we conclude that we cannot gain access by means of a thought or a word either to what is not here and now or to what is here and now.

It is necessary to digress a little to say a few words about a fashionable direction in contemporary thought, whose proponents believe that the

problem of thinking or speaking what is not here and now and the problem of thinking or speaking what is here and now, as well as related problems, can be removed by rewording or rephrasing statements. In my opinion, these proponents simply demonstrate once again that logicians, no less than physicists, feed an inclination for spells.

Leaving open the question of the possibility of thinking and speaking reasonably, meaningfully about objects, properties and relations (a positive decision concerning which is of fundamental importance for the adherents of this approach but also, taking into account all of the above, extremely problematic), let us consider a specific example. From the point of view of the proponents of rewording and rephrasing, to think or to say that ‘a glass of water is not here and now’ does not at all mean to attempt to conceive of or refer to the absence of a glass of water (i.e. to what is not here and now). To think and to say ‘a glass of water is not here and now’ is to think and say something like the property of being a glass of water is not instantiated (exemplified) here and now. Since we are interpreting the subject of Parmenides’ ‘is’ broadly and, as mentioned earlier, we are interpreting his subject of ‘is’ as broadly as possible, nothing prevents us from asking the following question: do the adherents of the rewording approach try to conceive of or refer to the absence of an instantiation relation between the named property and external objects, i.e. to what is not here and now?

Suppose that, in full accordance with the logic of the proponents of removing the problem of thinking or speaking what is not here and now through rewording or rephrasing of statements, we say that in this case the instantiation relation between the property of ‘being a glass of water’ and external objects is not instantiated here and now. Again, a fair question arises: are we trying to conceive of or refer to the absence of instantiation of an instantiation relation, i.e. to what is not here and now? Continuing to reason in this way, we will inevitably be faced with the need to answer another legitimate question: are we trying to conceive of or refer to the absence of instantiation of an instantiation of an instantiation relation? And so on, *ad infinitum*. Thus, an attempt to remove the problem of thinking and speaking of what is not here and now through rewording or rephrasing statements initiates Bradley’s regress, and the regress is vicious because we cannot

disconnect a property and objects by means of a thought or a word (1893, 16–18).

A similar difficulty arises when trying to remove the problem of thinking and speaking of what is here and now by rewording or rephrasing statements, with the only difference being that in this case, Bradley's regress is initiated, and the regress is vicious because we cannot by means of a thought or a word link a property and an object. It turns out that the attempt to reword or rephrase statements confirms rather than removes the problem of thinking or speaking of what is not here and now, and the problem of thinking or speaking of what is here and now. Therefore, neither Parmenides' arguments in favour of the impossibility of thinking or saying what is not here and now nor mine in favour of the impossibility of thinking and saying what is here and now lose any of their weight.

Thus, we have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to think or say reasonably, meaningfully that something is here and now, or that something is not here and now. However, it remains completely unclear how we managed to do this. After all, to deny the possibility of thinking or saying reasonably, meaningfully that something is here and now, and that something is not here and now, is to think or say, among other things, that here and now there is no possibility of linking a thought or word with what is here and now or of linking a thought or word with what is not here and now. Thus it turns out that to deny the possibility of thinking and saying reasonably, meaningfully that something is here and now, and that something is not here and now, it is necessary to think or say reasonably, meaningfully that something is not here and now!

It remains completely unclear how could we argue that it is impossible to conceive of or refer to what is here and now, and to what is not here and now, on the basis of 'here and now is what here and now is', and on the basis of 'here and now is not what here and now is not'. So it turns out, to substantiate our claim that it is impossible to conceive of or refer to what is here and now, and to what is not here and now, it is necessary that we conceive of or refer to what is here and now, and to what is not here and now!

Moreover, if it were really impossible to think and speak of what is here and now and what is not here and now, then we could not, here in this text,

use reasonably, meaningfully the words ‘the present’, ‘the absent’, ‘what is here and now’ and ‘what is not here and now’. On the other hand, it is difficult to deny the indisputable fact that every day we think or say ‘something is here and now’, ‘something is not here and now’ – and do so effectively, it appears.

What if – while enumerating what we see or do not see, reflecting on this world, what or how it is, was or will be, asking what we can think and say about the world reasonably, meaningfully and what we cannot, getting carried away or becoming oblivious – we lose sight of or overlook one very important detail that makes thinking and speaking possible in the first place?

A cow was walking past a window. The horns and hooves could not pass, while the tail passed.

What if we are having difficulties with the answer to the question of whether we can or cannot think and say reasonably, meaningfully that something is here and now, that something is not here and now, simply because in reality, more often than not, not paying attention to it or immediately forgetting about it, we imagine or pretend that we can think and say that what is allegedly here and now is, or that what is allegedly here and now is not? In other words, what if we think, speak and ultimately act as if we can conceive of or refer to what is allegedly denoted by a set of mental symbols or words (‘it is here and now’) and to what is allegedly denoted by another set of mental symbols or words (‘it is not here and now’)? What if what is generally called freedom allows or forces us to imagine or pretend that allegedly separate things that do not require any such ‘connectedness’, ‘non-connectedness’, ‘separateness’ or ‘non-separateness’ between them are connected or not connected to each other?

Suppose that you concentrated your attention, focused your vision on something and thought, or pointed with your hand at something and spoke – for example, any object on the table and a thought or a word ‘glass’ – i.e. you started thinking, speaking and acting as if these allegedly separate things are connected with one another. What if, as soon as you have in some way imagined or pretended that these allegedly separate things are connected with one another, you are immediately able to imagine, to pretend again, but now your method of imaginary, feigned connection and the thought or the word ‘is’ are as if connected with one another? As a result, it would become possible

for you to think and speak about the alleged existence of a glass plus its alleged existence here and now (if, of course, you have imagined or pretended that the thought/the word 'here' and the place where it is being thought/uttered are connected to each other, and that the thought/the word 'now' and the time when it is being thought/uttered are connected to each other). In other words, it would also become possible to imagine or pretend that the mental symbols or words 'a', 'glass', 'is', 'here', 'and' and 'now' are connected to each other, i.e. it becomes possible to form in the mind or utter 'a glass is here and now'.

Suppose that you scattered your attention, defocused your vision and thought, without pointing at anything with your hand spoke – for example, any object on the table and a thought or a word 'glass' – i.e. you started thinking, speaking and acting as if these allegedly separate things are not connected with one another. What if, as soon as you have in some way imagined or pretended that allegedly separate things are not connected with one another, you are immediately able to imagine, to pretend again, but now your imaginary, feigned non-connectedness and the thought or the words 'is not' are as if connected with one another? As a result, it would become possible for you to think and speak about the alleged non-existence of a glass plus its alleged non-existence here and now (if, of course, you have imagined or pretended that the thought/the word 'here' and the place of where it is being thought/uttered are connected to each other, and that the thought/the word 'now' and the time when it is being thought/uttered are connected to each other). In other words, it would also become possible to imagine or pretend that the mental symbols or words 'a', 'glass', 'is', 'not', 'here', 'and' and 'now' are connected to each other, i.e. it becomes possible to form in the mind or utter 'a glass is not here and now'.

Then our statements regarding the presence or absence, existence or non-existence of something are built on imagination or pretence, not on empirical fact or facts. At the same time, a thought remains a thought, a word remains a word and reality remains reality.

Indeed, what will you find between the mental image 'a glass', the mental symbol 'a glass', the word 'a glass' uttered by you, and the physical object on the table except an imaginary, pretended separateness or non-separateness, connectedness or non-connectedness? How otherwise could we 'connect' or

‘not connect’ mental images, mental symbols, spoken words, written words and objects that are allegedly separate from each other? Moreover, in what other way would it be possible to ‘connect’ or ‘not connect’ allegedly separate sounds and letters into words, words into sentences, sentences into narratives, narratives and reality? Then, reference and meaning in general (and the reference and meaning of thoughts and words, in particular) are determined by imagination and/or pretence, while the role of reason is by no means some kind of a ‘mystical’ conclusion, but rather a choice. On top of it all, memory and habit act as prompts, and in no way do they serve as an indisputable argument in favour of this or that make-believe.

Probably for this very reason, thinking and speaking have no direct material impact; for example, a variety of languages are possible, and we are often incapable of understanding each other, able to deceive ourselves and others. In this case, you should have no problem with that in relation to what you have imagined or pretended is a ‘movement’ or, let’s say, a ‘hand’.

Indeed, can you really have any problem with that for, by means of which, in what way, to what effect and when you imagine, pretend, in relation to what and when you do not imagine or pretend? Moreover, can you really have any problem with that for, by means of what, in what way and when you can or cannot imagine or pretend? Of course, you may experience certain difficulties, mainly in relation to that for, by means of which, in what way and when imagining or pretending is worth it or not worth it; better or worse, or in relation to that for, by means of which, to what effect and when not you but someone else imagines or pretends; or in relation to what and when someone else does not imagine nor pretend.

Do we really have any problem with, for example, that in what way and which written symbols are ‘connected’ with certain speech sounds, or vice versa, with that in what way and which speech sounds are ‘connected’ with certain written symbols?

W-h-a-t c-a-n b-e r-e-a-d b-y m-e-a-n-s o-f t-h-e-s-e g-r-o-u-p-s o-f l-e-t-t-e-r-s.

1; 2; 3; 4; 5.

A; B; C; D; E.

Then, to reach evidentness, you need to realise what for, by means of which,

in what way, to what effect and when you imagine and pretend; or it is sufficient to simply stop imagining and pretending. But in this case, how should we evaluate scientific work, including this text? Perhaps in exactly the same way as it is accepted we should evaluate literature, painting, music, cinema and other types of art, namely by the degree and quality of their impact on us.

Then, solely aesthetic considerations could prevent me from making assertions here and now that our statements regarding the presence or absence of something are built on empirical fact or facts; that absence is present and that presence is absent; that it can be thought and said reasonably, meaningfully that something is here and now, that something is not here and now, and that it can only be imagined, pretended that it is impossible; that it is impossible to think and say reasonably, meaningfully that something is here and now, that something is not here and now, and that it is impossible to imagine or pretend that it is possible. Solely aesthetic considerations could prevent discussion of the absolute non-evidentness of this world for us; of language as a picture of the world; of science as a systematic enterprise for unlocking the Great Mysteries of the Universe; of ‘to be’ as about to be the value of a variable, and of the complete absence of that which is usually called freedom.

Taste will save the world.

This concludes my argument, which can be seen in part as an attempt at an interpretation and setting of context for the fragments of Heraclitus of Ephesus ‘The Clear’, in general, and in relation to his fragment B 56 DK, in particular:

Men have been deceived as to their knowledge of what is apparent in the same way that Homer was – and he was the wisest of all the Greeks. For some children who were killing lice deceived him by saying ‘What we saw and caught we leave behind, what we neither saw nor caught we take with us.’³

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³ Here, Barnes’s (1987) translation is used.

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