In this article, a supplementary yet original contribution is made to the ongoing attempts at refining ways of comparative-philosophical conceptual clarification of Qohelet’s claim that "הבל הֲבֵל הֲבָלִים אָמַר קֹהֶלֶת הֲבֵל הֲבָלִים הַכֹּל הָבֶל in 1:2 (and 12:8). Adopting and adapting the latest analytic metaphysical concerns and categories for descriptive purposes only, a distinction is made between the properties of המַעֲשֶׂה and the properties of הֲבֵל in relation to הֲבֵל. Involving both correlation and contrast, the second-order language framework is hereby extended to a level of advanced nuance and specificity for restating the meaning of the book’s first-order language on its own terms, even if not in them.

Contribution: By considering logical, ontological, mereological and typological aspects of property theory in dialogue with appearances of המַעֲשֶׂה and of הֲבֵל in Ecclesiastes 1:2 and 12:8 and in-between, a new way is presented in the quest to explain why things in the world of the text are the way they are, or why they are at all.

Keywords: Ecclesiastes; חַשְׁבָּה;_COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY; properties (philosophy).

Introduction

One of the fundamental associated comparative-philosophical foci in research on המַעֲשֶׂה in Qohelet is its appearance as המַעֲשֶׂה in Ecclesiastes as its way of first forming and inclusion to the book as a whole (1:2 and 12:8) with the traditional archaic English rendering as most readers have come to know it:

 verdad de las cosas, a simple, de causa normal, e inmediata. (p. 201)

Involving both correlation and contrast, the second-order language framework is hereby extended to a level of advanced nuance and specificity for restating the meaning of the book’s first-order language on its own terms, even if not in them.

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Most of the research concerned with these verses is primarily focussed on the word המַעֲשֶׂה as first-order term of art and second-order essentially contested concept (Fox 2019:559–563; Sneed 2017:879–894; Weeks 2020:248–260; cf. Mokoena 2019 and classically Fox 1986:409–427). The word המַעֲשֶׂה takes second place and might have been ignored, were it not quantifying itself in 1:2 and 12:8 and therefore part of what has been variously called the book’s ‘motto’, ‘thesis’, ‘challenge’, ‘theme’, amongst others (cf. Crenshaw 2009:497 and recently Weeks 2020:248 for an overview; Anderson 1998:289–300 for a neglected voice of reason). The major concern here is how Qohelet related המַעֲשֶׂה to המַעֲשֶׂה, a problem was succinctly formulated by Lohfink (1989:201–216) in a highly influential related publication entitled: Koh 1, 2 ‘alles ist Windhauch’ – universale oder anthropologische Aussage?:

Koh 1,2, der erste Satz des Buches, Motto und Rahmenvers zugleich, ist subtil gebaut. Zunächst liegt die ganze Emphase auf dem Prädikat. Also auf hece/. Der Leser merkt, daß es darauf ankommt: Alles ist nicht etwa schön, wertvoll, bleibend, ewigkeitssträchtig oder wie immer, es ist ‘Windhauch’. Doch mitten im Satz wird die Emphase verlagert. Das noch nicht genannte Subjekt der hbl/-Aussage wird unverhältnismäßig zurückgehalten. Dadurch steigt die Spannung darauf. Wenn es dann endlich kommt, steht es nicht in Normalposition, hinter dem Prädikat, sondern durch einen Neuansatz des ganzen wird ihm ermöglicht, an der Tonstelle, vor dem Prädikat, zu stehen. Das bedeutet, daß der Satz in einem gewissermaßen noch eine zweite Aussage enthält. Nicht nur die, daß die Wertung ‘Windhauch’ gilt, sondern dazu, daß sie nicht von diesem oder jenem gemacht werden muß, sondern von hakkol. Also von einem universal zu fassenden Subjektbereich. (p. 201)

1 The Hebrew and English translation in this article represent a selective adaptation and at times modernisation of the online resource Mechain Mamer (2016). Some of the anachronistic punctuation marks have been removed (commas in the Hebrew). The latter is a version of the Hebrew — English Bible according to the Masoretic Text and the JPS 1917 Edition. As indicated on the site: ‘The English text in this HTML edition of the Hebrew Bible is based on the electronic text (c) by Larry Nelson (P.O. Box 1681, Cathedral City, CA 92234 USA, nelsonlarry@juno.com) as found on the Internet in differing copies.’ Online: https://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0.htm

Note: Special Collection: Historical Thought and Source Interpretation, sub-edited by Johann Cook (Stellenbosch University).
Lohfink (1989) followed the tradition of calling 1:2 a ‘Motto’ (amongst other things) and also used terms such as ‘predicate’ and ‘subject’, mostly in their linguistic, that is, grammatical senses, implying that for Qohelet, הבל was somehow an attribute of כל.

Doch was meint hakkol genau? Das ist hier keineswegs klar, denn es handelt sich um den ersten Satz des Buches. Die Windhauchaussage ist bei Kohelet geradezu das Leitmotto des Buches. Das muß nicht lange nachgewiesen werden. Was aber hakkol, das Subjekt, angeht, so wird aus den deutschen Übersetzungen ein entscheidendes Faktum kaum ersichtlich: kol ist im Hebräischen determiniert. (p. 201)

The way Lohfink sought to make sense of how כל was understood in relation to 1:2 had to be mentioned and opposed:

Neu sei jedoch, daß hakkol bei ihm nicht mehr als Objekt einer Aussage über die Allmacht Gottes dient, sondern Subjekt einer Aussage wird, die das ‘All’ in seinem Wesen untersucht. Hier zeige sich der neue, griechische Hintergrund des Denkens. Seit den Vorsokratikern waren im griechischen Raum Thesen über das Universum formuliert ... Traktate können mit solchen Sätzen anfangen, genau wie das Buch Kohelet. Dessen gesamter Satz, mit gleichem Subjekt und Prädikat, findet sich nun wieder in einem Satz des Kynikers Monimos. (p. 206)

This classic reading and its formulation of the problem of what Qohelet meant by וכל in relation to כל in 1:2 and 12:8 (and elsewhere) is still the accepted frame of reference for the related research problems (see Weeks 2020:248–260; cf. Bartholomew 2009; Crenshaw 1987; Fox 1989, 1999; Köhlimoos 2015; Krüger 2001:184–195; Krüger 2000; Idem 2000; Lohfink 2003, 2009; Longman 1998; Murphy 1992; Schellenberg 2013; Schoors 2013; Schwienhorst-Schönberger 2004; Seow 1997 et al.). As for the mode of description in the literature as to how Qohelet is thought to relate כל to כל, the philosophical flavour of the book of Ecclesiastes as it is known in English and the popular dating of the text to the Persian or Hellenistic periods have made comparative-philosophical perspectives on the text comparably less controversial than they would be when applied to other biblical modes of discourse. Not surprisingly then, existing comparative-philosophical readings include correlating and contrasting Qohelet with not only Western but also Eastern counterparts (see, e.g. Heard 1996:65–93; Lorgunpai 1994:155–162; Sekine 1991:3–54; for a more extensive overview of the associated research, see Gericka 2015a:1–7) for a more complete list of related research).

The present study’s original contribution to the related comparative-philosophical research is motivated by Lohfink’s seminal findings. A supplement to existing perspectives will be offered in light of new comparative-philosophical concepts, concerns and categories that have been doing the rounds (cf. Littlejohn 2021:n.p.) More specifically, the discussion to follow will investigate the pros and cons of a new way of restating what is involved when Qohelet used the words כל כל by way of an experimental adoption and adaptation of the language of ‘properties’ in analytic metaphysics (cf. Allen 2021:n.p.). This choice of the particular domain of second-order discourse is motivated, on the one hand, by the already accepted use of certain second-order terms indicated here (e.g. the relatively unproblematic tendency to refer to כל and כל as ‘concepts’ in a more or less technical sense in conjunction with linguistic cum philosophical jargon that include speaking of the concepts in connection with their relation to other theoretical entities, for example, כל as ‘predicate’, ‘attribute’, ‘feature’, ‘quality’, ‘characteristic’ of כל). On the other hand, the metaphysical assumptions, as opposed to epistemological and ethical ones in Qohelet, remain under-represented in the research (see Gericka 2015b:n.p.)

Theoretical argument of the study states that a fruitful distinction can be made between כל as property (of כל) and the properties of כל (in relation to כל). The discussion to follow will operate mostly on the level of illustrated theory. Given the limited application value of opting for any particular interpretation of כל and כל, these terms will be left untranslated. When a specific interpretation is nevertheless presupposed or implied, it is used only
as part of the hypothetical examples and as such does not imply committing to or being dependent on the associated meanings of הֶבֶל and כל therein.

It is, however, not assumed that all perspectives in the related research and all possible translations of הֶבֶל and כל are equally valid. In addition, the involvement of property theory as it has taken shape within analytic philosophy is motivated by comparative-philosophical interests and not by an assumption that the associated presuppositions, problems and perspectives represent a perennial philosophical idiom. Although not usually treated in the same idiom in ‘Continental’ and other thinkers, as one recent commentator observed:

[7] The nature and existence of properties as such have always been central and controversial issues in philosophy since its origin, and interest in them keeps flourishing (cf. e.g. Allen 2016; Koons & Pickavance 2017; Marmodoro & Mayr 2019). (Orilia & Paoletti 2020:n.p.)

All the pros and cons associated therewith are readily granted and the present discussion is limited to conceptual clarification in the service of historically oriented exegesis, being neither dependent on the assumption that Qohelet is a (better) philosophical text (or not) or philosophically important (or not) (cf. Littlejohn 2021).

In comparative-philosophical terms it follows that in the literature, for example, ‘being’ is further corroborated by the generally accepted use of singular terms in the literature, for example, ‘being’ (or ‘vanity’) and in Qohelet’s use of demonstratives, for example, ‘this too is הֶבֶל’ (cf. Heal 1997).

Once הֶבֶל is seen as (also) a property (of כל) and as such distinguished from the properties of הֶבֶל (in relation to כל), in comparative-philosophical terms it follows that in the world of the text certain objects (in the broad metaphysical sense) can be said to instantiate or exemplify הֶבֶל as a property of כל. In different related terminology, כל is assumed to possess, bear or have הֶבֶל as a property so that, inversely, הֶבֶל characterises or inheres in כל. In this sense, כל is assumed to be a property (of כל) and there are assumed to be properties of כל (in relation to כל) in the ontological assumptions in the world of the text to investigate, irrespective of our choice of associated vocabulary or whether כל was in fact assumed to be part of one or more than one kind of instantiation or exemplification (see, e.g. Lowe 2006:77).

There appears to be a general agreement in the literature that הֶבֶל-exemplifying states of affairs obtaining within relations in the world of the text involve just one kind of exemplification, applying indifferently to different categories of הֶבֶל-bearing entities in כל. This monist view may indeed be considered the default one as condition of possibility for the meaningfulness of the generalisation in Qohelet in 1:2 and 12:8. Even so, different theories of conceptual structure already in place can be supplemented with additional nuance and specificity by distinguishing כל as a property (of כל) as particular from it as a relation or state of affairs exemplified. Alternatively, a pluralist ontology in our categorial distinctions means the instantiation of כל as property (of כל) and the properties of כל (in relation to כל) in Qohelet can be treated as different sorts of objects, namely kinds (substantial universals), attributes and modes (tropes) (see Lowe 2006).

In different related terminology, כל as a property of כל is often located in ‘םשונא ומכסהש המשלים’ (see, e.g. Lowe 2006:77). This is further evidenced in the different number of ways in which the word כל is grammatically and semantically used and configured in relation to כל elsewhere in Qohelet:

Then I looked on all the works that I had laboured to do; and, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun. (2:11)

For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that man hath no pre-eminence above a beast; for all is vanity. (3:19)

http://www.hts.org.za
As has already been noted in the research but not restated in these terms, the use of the word כי in Qohelet is not limited to the sense and reference it has in 1:2 and 12:8 in relation to כל. Interestingly, appearing only in 8 out of 222 instances, after 1:2 and 12:8 have been excluded, כי appears at least twice in four of the six verses (2:11; 3:19; 9:1; 11:9). It only features once in 2:17 and 8:9. In 10 of these 13 appearances in the book’s total of 15, only 4 instances connect it directly to כל as property in ways related to 1:2 and 12:8 (2:11; 2:17; 3:19 and 11:9). In only three of these does it appear as כל (11:9 only has כי). Of these four, two have כל as property, not of any metaphysical particular but of Qohelet’s ‘agency’ (and that related to him). An alternative philosophical term for what is present in the particular states of affairs would be ‘events’ (ишען תחת תקנין לתת תקנין foreseen 2:11, 17). The other two simply refer to כל as property, once undefined as כל in the context of the mortality of living things (3:19) and the other as exemplified undefined in what is to come (11:9).

In the four texts observed, the property is lost in translation in the sense of being temporarily located as being exemplified specifically (also) in the present twice (2:11 and 3:19), in the past (2:17) and in the future (11:9). Spatially all are either explicitly or implicitly תחת תקנין ‘under the sun’ (3:19; 9:1; 11:9 lacking the phrase in the verse but featuring it in the surrounding pericope). The other uses of כי with or without prepositions are as indicative of both every particular subject and object in the domain of discourse (2:11 x 1; 8:9 x 1; 9:1 x2) and is extended in use to refer to all being of one ‘air, breath’ (3:19) and all of the ‘days’ and ‘all this’ (גֵּל-לָגְּנָה 8:9 x 2 and 9:1 x 1) that Qohelet has seen, thought of and sought (thus links to as property of כל and the properties of כי only implicitly).

In the light of these observations, it would seem that interpreting כל as a property of כי and the properties of כי in relation to כי in 1:2 and 12:8 and in explicit references to כי or כי quantified over one state of affairs or another is both unified and diverse. Although Qohelet is of course focussed on the human condition, the anthropological domain is supervised on by cosmological spatio-temporal mereological part–whole relations for כי. Here a problem arises for an analytic metaphysical or ontological restatement operating in tandem with the comparative-philosophical counterpart for כי as property of כל and the properties of כי, that is, the predication of כי as property of כי and the properties of锲 are not univocal. This makes formal-logical specificity in analysis seeking to clarify the identity and existence conditions and mereological nuances in the nature of the relation between כל and the properties of כי impossible. That being granted, as Qohelet uses כי in a metaphorical sense and כי rarely quantifies over a universal state of affairs, analogical predication and a fictional ontology, perhaps a neo-Meinongian framework able to operate with two modes of predication (‘external’ and ‘internal’) is better suited to comparative philosophical restatement (cf. Allen 2021:n.p.).

The above-mentioned alternative approach combined with an exemplar (as opposed to classical or prototype) theory of conceptual structure when considering extensions in texts explicitly mentioning כי and with reference to which it can be restated property of כי in terms of its constituent parts, for example, ‘… This is also כי 2:1 [of enjoying life in pleasure]; 2:15 [of being wise yet suffering the same fate as the fool in the end]; 2:19 [of the possibility of wise bequeathing success to fools]; 2:21 [of those who toiled leaving the fruits of their labours to those who did nothing to obtain it]; 2:23 [of vexed and restless prosperity]; 2:26 [the gift of wisdom and happiness from favour and the material benefits therefrom obtained from those without it]; 3:4 [excellence in work as made possible by envy]; 3:7–8 [hard work and self-sacrifice and deprivation without joy, satisfaction or beneficiaries]; 3:16 [the eventual loss of however great one’s fame, power and role]; 5:10 [the loving of prosperity as unsatisfactory and insatiable]; 6:1 [lacking nothing through divine blessing unable to enjoy it whilst others will]; 6:9 [seeing better than desiring]; 7:6 [hearing the laughter of fools]; 8:10 [the burial and forgottenness of the pious wicked]; 8:14 [when the good suffers the fate of the bad and vice versa]. Atypical contexts without the conclusion that ‘This is also כי include 6:4 [as the state of the stillborn]; 6:11 [as something that is increased the more words one uses]; and 11:10 [of youth and early life].

Restated in comparative-philosophical terms, כי and כל are clearly fuzzy concepts as their boundaries of application in the world of the text and in their relations to each other vary considerably according to Qohelet’s foci. The associated vagueness gives the impression that both terms lack fixed meaning in spite of obviously and most certainly not lacking in specificity. This relativises the value of even a formal fuzzy concept analysis, which usually seeks to link כי and כל by making the former the point of departure. In the given table, this relation is inverted according to extensional and intensional aspects of כי in relation to כי in 1:2 showing the problematic, somewhat arbitrary and generally unsatisfying outcome of attempting precisng descriptions of the relation to the respective כי-instantiating states of affairs in conjunction with dispositional attitudes, agency and events in their metaphysical senses.

What is apparent from the intensionally and extensionally inadequate representation of כי as a property of כי and the properties of כי instantiated in all is that Qohelet sometimes does diverge to include exemplification
It seems hard to affirm or deny that in the world of the text the property of being whole (mereological) relations between them there is always more than one part of whole instantiating the property of being and more than one property of whole included in the state of affairs comprising a contextually sensitive exemplification link in whole.

Of course, an alternative and roughly contemporaneous comparative-philosophical counterpart for correlation and contrast would be Aristotle’s moderate realism whereby as general term is also a kind of universal existing and exemplified only in particulars instantiating the properties of universal (universalia in rebus). It seems hard to affirm or deny this with reference to the world of the text, which is basically silent about this matter even when using whole as a general term in relation to and quantified by the whole. And thought as the second-order language of the real reader today may assume a form of conceptualism or nominalism in discussing these terms as part of describing a world of the text by default operating on a fictionalist ontological status, attributing this to Qohelet would be conceptually historically anachronistic. It would therefore fail to be descriptively apt in classifying the mereology involved in the one-over-many problem, adapted to the discussion about whole and the properties of whole in relation to whole.

The same applies to literary-critical approaches where whole as a property of whole and the properties of whole in relation to whole are deemed to function in a figurative sense, for example, metaphorical and constructed as tropes. The latter term in the domain of discourse as it appears in biblical scholarship should, however, not be confused with the metaphysical sense of being aligned to nominalism, despite some form of nominalism being the default literary-critical ontology as well. Since trope-theory is often discussed separately from property theory in metaphysics, futher related remarks are beyond the scope of the remainder of the discussion about whole as property of whole and the properties of whole in relation to whole.

To close the discussion, the interest now turns to the type of property that whole as property of whole was assumed to be. Not because Qohelet had such an interest but because the text contains related assumptions allowing for conceptual clarification of the properties involved along these lines and irrespective of one’s ontological commitment to a specific type (or the lack thereof). Although not exhaustive in typological terms, the following will suffice to illustrate the ways in which this element of property theory can be comparative-philosophical correlation and contrasting can be part of conceptual clarification.

Based on their distinction in Aristotle, whole was assumed to be an accidental property of whole in the context of all despite it being permanently instantiated. In other words, it was conceivable for Qohelet that in at least one possible world, the one in which the conditions of possibility for the discontent are found, whole as a whole of sorts with reference to the related mereological parts would not lose its identity as whole was not exemplified as

| TABLE 1: whole as property of whole and the properties of whole in relation to whole. | חיבור | הֲבֵל | whole | whole | whole |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| whole | X | X | X | X | X |
| whole | X | X | X | X | X |
| whole | X | X | X | X | X |
| whole | X | X | X | X | X |
| whole | X | X | X | X | X |

Although not usually approached from this angle, it therefore appears relevant to ask how whole as property of whole is conceived in Qohelet in relation to the universal—particular debate since Plato. When commentators refer to whole or whole by using words such as idea or form they usually do not use these terms with the original metaphysical import of indicating Platonic realism as universalia ante res-whole-ness as coming before particulars in whole. Yet this does not do away with the question of how Qohelet assumed the variety of whole-instantiating things as all capable, (in typical cases) of having the same properties that makes whole and allow for the superlative relation within the broader mereology as condition of possibility to claim: whole. Despite the vagueness in Qohelet’s language, what is obvious is that whole in relation to whole and whole as being whole in Qohelet is nevertheless implied as themselves not identical to ontological particulars, or individuals.

The inference just made is further corroborated by the observation that in the world of the text the property of whole is assumed as being somehow multi-located, both spatially and temporally. Although this does not make Qohelet’s associated metaphysical assumptions Platonicist (which is basically assuming the existence of abstract objects rather than merely extreme realism about universals). Yet there is something about whole as property and the properties of whole in relation to whole so that within the part–whole (mereological) relations between them there is always more.
might have meant by these words, it does help to describe
the way 
is instantiated in relation to 
and its own properties thereby exemplified. Although the language was
philosophical and the distinctions second-order, it is clear
how the concepts under consideration can be correlated and
contrasted in order to restate the associated metaphysical
and ontological assumptions in Qohelet’s language on their
own terms, even if not in them. Thus, constructing 
and distinguishing it from the properties 
in relation to 
, irrespective of the merits of the
philosophical views utilised in philosophy itself, is in the
ways illustrated helpful to describe dimensions of the
conditions of possibility that must be postulated to account
for why things in the world of the text are the way they are,
or why they are at all.

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