

הכל הכל in Ecclesiastes 1:2 and 12:8 – Descriptive metaphysics of properties as comparative-philosophical supplement

**Author:**Jaco Gericke¹ **Affiliation:**

¹Department of Ancient Culture, Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Jaco Gericke,
21609268@nwu.ac.za

Dates:

Received: 02 Apr. 2021

Accepted: 05 May 2021

Published: 07 July 2021

How to cite this article:

Gericke, J., 2021, 'הכל הכל in Ecclesiastes 1:2 and 12:8 – Descriptive metaphysics of properties as comparative-philosophical supplement', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77(1), a6688. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i1.6688>

Copyright:

© 2021. The Authors.
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Read online:

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

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 הכל הכל 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 הכל as property of הכל and the properties of הכל in relation to הכל. 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 הכל and of הכל 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; הכל; הכל; comparative philosophy; properties (philosophy).

Introduction

One of the fundamental associated comparative-philosophical foci in research on הכל in Qohelet is its appearance as הכל הכל to form 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:

ב הכל הכלים אשר קהלת הכל הכל הכל.

² Vanity of vanities, saith Koheleth; vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

ח הכל הכלים אשר הקהלת הכל הכל.

⁸ Vanity of vanities, saith Koheleth; all is vanity.¹

Most of the research concerned with these verses is primarily focussed on the word הכל 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 הכל takes second place and might have been ignored, were it not quantifying הכל 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 2009:47 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 הכל to הכל, 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 hcebe/. Der Leser merkt, daß es darauf ankommt: Alles ist nicht etwa schön, wertvoll, bleibend, ewigkeitsträchtig 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 Mechon Mamre (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, הַכֹּל was somehow an attribute of הַבֵּל:

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 Leitmotiv 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 reference to the presence of the definite article in the Hebrew and the relevance of the choice of words ('determiniert') for the present study will become readily apparent here. But first it is necessary to note what Lohfink (1989) wrote next, as it set the stage for how הַכֹּל was understood or for which interpretation of its meaning and relation to הַבֵּל 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 werden 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)

The way Lohfink sought to make sense of how הַכֹּל was understood in relation to הַבֵּל includes not only linguistic considerations but restatement of what Qohelet was up to in descriptive metaphysical terms. This was part of the reason for this article's interest, namely the comparative-philosophical nuance it was able to add to the ongoing discussion of how Qohelet's words 'הַכֹּל הַבֵּל' might be correlated or contradicted to an old pre-Socratic quest in new post-Aristotelian form (cf. Müller 2003:67–80; cf. von Loewenclau 1986:327–338 and earlier through influential studies like those of Braun 1973, Ranston [1925] and Palm [1885] amongst others). To be sure, in contemporary discussions of the doxography of ancient Greek philosophy and in research on 'pre-Socratic' philosophers, Lohfink's historically uncritical link with anecdotal secondary sources' references to the saying of the Cynic Monimos (and the presumption of verbal equivalence entailing semantic identity) will appear controversial (cf. Curd 2020; Mansfeld 2020:n.p. and as repeated in Crenshaw 2009:41–62). In the end, Lohfink (1989) concluded that:

Wenn der Leser beim Kosmosgedicht angekommen ist, ist er auf jeden Fall schon auf die anthropologische Fragestellung eingeschwungen. Das ist entscheidend für das Verständnis dieses Gedichts. Gälte 1,2 nämlich kosmologisch oder grundsätzlich von allem Seienden, dann müßten die Kreislaufaussagen dieses Gedichts Orchesterklänge eines letzten kosmischen Pessimismus sein. So werden sie ja auch meistens gelesen. Das kommt durch das meist nicht reflektierte, aber wie selbstverständlich vorausgesetzte kosmisch-philosophische Verständnis von 1,2. Ist man von ihm aber nicht schon vorbestimmt, läßt man sich durch 1, auf einen anthropologischen

Sinn des hakkol hinführen, dann entsteht erst der interpretatorische Freiraum, wo Kohelets kreisender Kosmos Schönheit, Fülle und Herrlichkeit sein kann. (p. 216)

This classic reading and its formulation of the problem of what Qohelet meant by הַבֵּל in relation to הַכֹּל 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; Köhlmoos 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 הַבֵּל to הַכֹּל, 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 Gericke 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 הַכֹּל הַבֵּל 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 הַכֹּל and הַבֵּל 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, הַבֵּל as 'predicate', 'attribute', 'feature', 'quality', 'characteristic' of הַכֹּל). On the other hand, the metaphysical assumptions, as opposed to epistemological and ethical ones in Qohelet, remain under-represented in the research (see Gericke 2015b:n.p.)

The theoretical argument of the study states that a fruitful distinction can be made between הַבֵּל as property (of הַכֹּל) and the properties of הַבֵּל (in relation to הַכֹּל). 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 הַכֹּל and הַבֵּל, 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 הבל and הכל therein.

It is, however, not assumed that all perspectives in the related research and all possible translations of הבל and הכל 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:

[T]he 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).

הבל as property of הכל and the properties of הבל in relation to הכל

In related research, הבל is assumed to be property (of הכל) and there are assumed to be properties of הבל (in relation to הכל). This much is implicit whenever their grammatical relation is defined in terms of predicates. The latter linguistic terminology has a history in philosophy and overlaps with philosophical senses of the term 'property'. Of course, some philosophers would argue that הבל as a predicate should contrast with simple nouns such as הכל. Following Frege, nominalised predicates such as הבל came to stand for a 'concept', whilst observing that the associated ontological distinction is motivated by the fact that Qohelet's Hebrew does not, aside from its quasi-appearance as such in 1:2a as הבל הבלים, allow for the use of the predicate הכל in a subject position (for a more in-depth discussion and one to which this study is indebted, see Allen 2021) Second-order nominalisation of the predicate in descriptions of Qohelet as saying הכל 'is הבל' is then taken as implying that הבל is somehow also assumed to be something approximating what in philosophical terms is called a property (of הכל). This inference is further corroborated by the generally accepted use of singular terms in the literature, for example, 'being הבל' or 'vanity' and in Qohelet's use of demonstratives, for example, 'this too is הבל' (cf. Heal 1997).

Once הבל is seen as (also) a property (of הכל) and as such distinguished from the properties of הבל (in relation to הכל), 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 הבל as a property of הכל. In different related terminology, הכל is assumed to possess, bear or have הבל as a property so that, inversely, הבל characterises or inheres in הכל. In this sense, הבל is assumed to be a property (of הכל) and there are assumed to be properties of הבל (in relation to הכל) in the ontological assumptions in the world of the text to investigate, irrespective of our choice of associated vocabulary or whether הבל 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 הבל-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 הבל-bearing entities in הבל. 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 הבל as a property (of הכל) as particular from it as a relation or state of affairs exemplified. Alternatively, a pluralist ontology in our categorial distinctions means the instantiation of הבל as property (of הכל) and the properties of הבל (in relation to הכל) in Qohelet can be treated as different sorts of objects, namely kinds (substantial universals), attributes and modes (tropes) (see Lowe 2006).

In comparative-philosophical counterpart terms, הבל as a property of הכל is often located in 'השמש תחת שְׁנַעְשֵׂת המעשה'. 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 הבל elsewhere in Qohelet:

וּפְנִיתִי אֲנִי הַכֹּל-מַעֲשֵׂי
שְׁעֵשׂוֹ נְדִי
וּבַעֲמַל
שְׁעֵמְלֹתַי לַעֲשׂוֹת:
וְהִנֵּה
הַכֹּל הֵבֵל
וְרִעֵוֹת רוּחַ
וְאִין יִמְרוּן מִתַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ.

Then I looked on **all the works**
that my hands had wrought,
and on the labour
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)

וְשָׂנֵאתִי אֶת-הַחַיִּים
כִּי רַע עָלַי
הַמַּעֲשֵׂה שְׁנַעְשֵׂה תַחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:
כִּי-הֵבֵל הֵבֵל
וְרִעֵוֹת רוּחַ.

So I hated life;
because was grievous unto me;
the work that is wrought under the sun
for **all is vanity**
and a striving after wind. (2:17)

כִּי מִקְרָה בְנֵי-הָאָדָם
וּמִקְרָה הַבְּהֵמָה
וּמִקְרָה אֶחָד לָקָה
כַּמּוֹת זֶה
כֵּן מוֹת זֶה
וְרוּחַ אֶחָד לְכֹל:
וּמוֹתֵר הָאָדָם מִן-הַבְּהֵמָה אֵין
כִּי הֵבֵל הֵבֵל.

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)

אֶת-כָּל-זֶה רָאִיתִי
וְנָתַן אֶת-לִבִּי לְכָל-מַעֲשֵׂה
שְׁמִשָּׁה תַחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ רָשָׁא
עַתָּה אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַט הָאָדָם בְּאֵדָם
לְרַע לוֹ.

All this have I seen,
even applied my heart thereto,
whatever the work that is done under the
sun;
what time one man had power over
another
to his hurt (8:9)

את-כל-זה נתתי אל-לבי
ולביר את-כל-זה
אשר הצדיקים והחכמים ובעבדיהם
ביד האלהים
גם-אהבה גם-שנאה
אין יודע האדם הכל לפניו.

For **all this** I laid to my heart,
even to make clear **all this**:
that the righteous and the wise and
their works
are in the hand of God;
whether it be love or hatred,
man knoweth it not;
all is before them. (9:1)

כי אם-שנים הרבה
יהיה האדם בעולם ישמח
ויןזכר את-ימי החשך
כי-הרבה יהיו
כל-שבא העל.

For if a man live many years,
let him rejoice **in them all**,
and remember the days of darkness,
for they shall be many.
All that cometh is vanity. (11:9)

As has already been noted in the research but not restated in these terms, the use of the word כל in Qohelet is not limited to the sense and reference it has in 1:2 and 12:8 in relation to הכל. Interestingly, appearing only in 8 out of 222 instances, after 1:2 and 12:8 have been excluded, כל appears at least twice in four of the six verses (2:11; 3:19; 9:1 [3x]; 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 הכל 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 הכל (11:9 only has כל). Of these four, two have הכל 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' (המעשה שנעשה תחת השמש) (2:11, 17). The other two simply refer to הכל as property, once undefined as הכל 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 temporally 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 השמש '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 כל 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 x1; 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' (את-כל-זה) (8:9 x 2 and 9:1 x 1) that Qohelet has seen, thought of and sought (thus links to as property of הכל and the properties of הכל only implicitly).

In the light of these observations, it would seem that interpreting הכל as a property of הכל and the properties of הכל in relation to הכל in 1:2 and 12:8 and in explicit references to הכל or כל 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 supervened on by cosmological spatio-temporal mereological part-whole relations for הכל. Here a problem arises for an analytic metaphysical or ontological restatement operating in tandem with the comparative-philosophical counterpart for הכל as property of הכל and the properties of הכל, that is, the predication of הכל as property of הכל and the properties

of הכל 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 הכל and the properties of הכל impossible. That being granted, as Qohelet uses הכל in a metaphorical sense and הכל 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 הכל and with reference to which it can be restated property of הכל in terms of its constituent parts, for example, '... This is also לבה' (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 הכל' 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, הכל and הכל 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 הכל and הכל by making the former the point of departure. In the given table, this relation is inverted according to extensional and intensional aspects of הכל in relation to הכל in 1:2 showing the problematic, somewhat arbitrary and generally unsatisfying outcome of attempting precisising descriptions of the relation to the respective הכל-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 הכל as a property of הכל and the properties of הכל instantiated in all תחת השמש הנעשה is that Qohelet sometimes does diverge to include exemplification

TABLE 1: הכל as property of הכל and the properties of הכל in relation to הכל.

רמת רעיון	הכל	מן	רע	טוב	המצעות שונות תחת השמש
X		x		X	הכמח
			x		אמר
		x		X	קתלה
X			x		כסיל סכלות
X	X			X	דעת
			x	X	עמל
		x		X	הכסף
		x		X	צדק
X		x	x		רשע
X	X	x		X	הרבידים
	X	x		X	משחוק
			x		מסכן
	X		x		והשחדות הילרות
	X		x	X	כל שבא
X	X		x	X	כל

links to and inseparable from more abstract objects such as youth and the future in general (see Table 1). It also shows why an exemplar approach to the properties as concepts may work better than classical and prototype views of conceptual structure. A piece-meal identification goes a lot further than finding a common denominator in either necessary and sufficient conditions or in family resemblances. Doing so in conjunction with property theory may not solve the interpreter's version of the 'one over many problem', that is, of finding unity in diversity with reference to הכל as a property of הכל and the properties of הכל. Yet it will be better able to dissolve some of the problem's rough edges via a more nuanced clarification of its complexity. After all, such was one of the main motivations for including properties in both philosophy and in world of the text ontologies to begin with (Allen 2021:n.p.)

Although not usually approached from this angle, it therefore appears relevant to ask how הכל as property of הכל is conceived in Qohelet in relation to the universal-particular debate since Plato. When commentators refer to הכל or הכל 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* הכל-ness as coming before particulars in הכל). Yet this does not do away with the question of how Qohelet assumed the variety of הכל-instantiating things as all capable, (in typical cases) of having the same properties that makes הכל and allow for the superlative relation within the broader mereology as condition of possibility to claim: הכל הכלים. Despite the vagueness in Qohelet's language, what is obvious is that הכל in relation to הכל and הכל as being הכל 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 הכל is assumed as being somehow multi-located, both spatially and temporally. Although this does not make Qohelet's associated metaphysical assumptions Platonist (which is basically assuming the existence of abstract objects rather than merely extreme realism about universals). Yet there is something about הכל as property and the properties of הכל in relation to הכל so that within the part-whole (mereological) relations between them there is always more

than one part of הכל instantiating the property of being הכל and more than one property of הכל included in the state of affairs comprising a contextually sensitive exemplification link in הכל.

Of course, an alternative and roughly contemporaneous comparative-philosophical counterpart for correlation and contrast would be Aristotle's moderate realism whereby הכל as general term is also a kind of universal existing and exemplified only in particulars instantiating the properties of הכל (*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 הכל as a general term in relation to and quantified by הכל. 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 הכל as a property of הכל and the properties of הכל in relation to הכל.

The same applies to literary-critical approaches where הכל as a property of הכל and the properties of הכל in relation to הכל 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, further related remarks are beyond the scope of the remainder of the discussion about הכל as property of הכל and the properties of הכל in relation to הכל.

To close the discussion, the interest now turns to the type of property that הכל as property of הכל 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, הכל was assumed to be an accidental property of הכל in the context of all המעשה 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, הכל as a whole of sorts with reference to the related mereological parts would not lose its identity is הכל was not exemplified as

a property thereof. To be sure, not all understandings of what it means to be essential are Aristotelian, and there is a range of meanings, some of which would make a form of essentialism appear present (e.g. Qohelet assuming הבל as belonging to *individual essences* or 'haecceities' of 'thisness' of particulars in הכל).

Another type of property that הבל as property of הכל was not assumed to be is a sortal property. Although prima facie the particulars in the world of the text instantiating it can be counted, the vagueness and generalisations in places imply otherwise. The complication involved here partly arises because of הבל being assumed to be an extrinsic rather than intrinsic property of הכל as it is with reference to any instance of הכל; it is only exemplified within this relation. And this is, *mutatis mutandis*, also applicable to the properties of הבל in relation to הכל. This in turn suggests that הבל was a tertiary property of הכל in the sense of being able to alter its primary properties such as number, motion, shape, solidity and form of particulars (and not a secondary property as those connected to the senses or its literal meaning's relation to the classical elements in 1:4–7) (also Lohfink 1985:125–149). Conversely, הבל can now be seen as a multigrade or variably polyadic property in relation to הכל in the sense that being הבל was assumed to be true of various numbers of things not limited to הכל as mereological scope.

Further types can be distinguished and identified, for example, הכל assumed to instantiate הבל as structured property, given the presence of compound properties in their relations, that is, הכל's exemplification of הבל meant having other properties as well as *a result of this relation* (see the given table). Accordingly, one can describe הבל as a property of הכל in the world of the text as supervening through changes the set of properties of הבל necessarily implying a changing set of properties for הכל. This did not, interestingly enough, manifest in ways that precluded the same properties of both from being emergent, that is, not all present in initial conditions but being exemplified over time. From this follows that הבל as property of הכל and the properties of הבל in relation to הכל could get more specific and in both cases involve determinable properties, whatever these are understood to be. Last but not least, all along it has been observed that הכל not only has הבל as property but that the latter has additional sets of properties instantiated in relation to the former, thus implying the presence of higher-order properties in the way הבל as property of הכל and the properties of הבל in relation to הכל are implied to be present in the world of the text.

Conclusion

In this study it was argued that the concepts of הבל and הכל can be fruitfully clarified through correlation and contrast thereof in comparative-metaphysical terms with reference to the second-order term property already in different ways implicit and explicit in the associated research. To this end, a helpful distinction has been shown as between הבל as property of הכל and the properties of הבל in relation to הכל. Although this in itself does not explicate exactly what Qohelet

might have meant by these words, it does help to describe the way הבל is instantiated in relation to הכל 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 הבל as a property of הכל and distinguishing it from the properties of הבל in relation to הכל, 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.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge Prof. J. Cook for the invitation to contribute to the collection in which this article appears. A word of thanks also goes to the reviewers for their critical suggestions and comments and to everyone at AOSIS HTS who assisted in the editing, proofreading and finalisation of the manuscript.

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

Author's contributions

J.G. is the sole author of this research article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

References

- Allen, S.R., 2016, *A critical introduction to properties*, Bloomsbury, London.
- Allen, S.R., 2021, 'Properties', in *The Internet encyclopedia of philosophy*, viewed 18 January 2021, from <https://iep.utm.edu/properties/>.

- Anderson, W.H.U., 1998, 'Philosophical considerations in a genre analysis of Qoheleth', *Vetus Testamentum* 48(3), 289–300. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1568533982722423>
- Bartholomew, C., 2009, *Ecclesiastes*, Baker Academic Press, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Braun, R., 1973, 'Kohelet und die fruhhellenistische Popularphilosophie', in *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, vol. 130, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin.
- Crenshaw, J.L., 1987, 'Ecclesiastes', in *Old Testament Library*, Westminster John Knox Press, Philadelphia, PA.
- Crenshaw, J.L., 2009, 'Sipping from the cup of wisdom', in P.K. Moser (ed.), *Jesus and philosophy: New essays*, pp. 41–62, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Curd, P., 2020, 'Presocratic philosophy', in E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*, Fall 2020 edn., viewed 10 January 2021, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/presocratics/>.
- Fox, M.V., 1986, 'The meaning of לָבָה for Qoheleth', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105(3), 409–427. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3260510>
- Fox, M.V., 1989, 'Qoheleth and his contradictions', in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament supplementum*, vol. 71, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.
- Fox, M.V., 1999, *A time to tear down and a time to build up: A rereading of Ecclesiastes*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Fox, M.V., 2019, 'On לָבָה in Qoheleth: A reply to Mark Sneed', *JBL* 138(3), 559–563. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jbl.2019.0033>
- Gericke, J.W., 2015a, 'A comprehensive typology of philosophical perspectives on Qoheleth', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36(1), Art. #1358, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v36i1.1358>
- Gericke, J.W., 2015b, 'Possible topics for a comprehensive philosophical approach to Qoheleth's metaphysical assumptions', *Pharos Journal of Theology*, Open access, viewed n.d., from http://www.pharosjot.com/uploads/7/1/6/3/7163688/article_11_vol_96_-_2015.pdf.
- Heal, J., 1997, 'Indexical predicates and their uses', *Mind* 106(424), 619–640. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/106.424.619>
- Heard, R.C., 1996, 'The Dao of Qoheleth: An intertextual reading of the Daode Jing and the Book of Ecclesiastes', *Jian Dao* 5, 65–93.
- Köhlmoos, M., 2015, 'Kohelet: Der Prediger Salomo', in *Das Alte Testament Deutsch* 16/5, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen.
- Koons, R.C. & Pickavance, T.H., 2017, *The Atlas of reality: A comprehensive guide to metaphysics*, Wiley Blackwell, Maiden, MA.
- Krüger, T., 2000, 'Kohelet (Prediger)', in *Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament* 19, Sonderband, Neukirchener Verlag, Neukirchen-Vluyn.
- Krüger, T., 2001, 'Alles Nichts? Zur Theologie des Buches Qoheleth', *Theologische Zeitschrift* 57, 184–195.
- Littlejohn, R., 2021, 'Comparative philosophy', in *The Internet encyclopedia of philosophy*, no pages, viewed 02 February 2021, from <https://iep.utm.edu/comparat/>.
- Lohfink, N., 1985, 'Die Wiederkehr des immer Gleichen: Eine frühe Synthese zwischen griechischem und jüdischem Weltgefühl in Kohelet 1, 4–11', *Archiv di Filosofia* 53, 125–149.
- Lohfink, N., 1989, 'Koh 1,2 "Alles ist Windhauch", Universale oder anthropologische Aussage?', in R. Mosis & L. Ruppert (eds.), *Der Weg zum Menschen: Zur philosophischen und theologischen Anthropologie für Alfons Deissler*, pp. 201–216, Herder, Freiburg.
- Lohfink, N., 2003, *Qoheleth: A continental commentary*, transl. S. McEvenue, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN.
- Lohfink, N., 2009, *Kohelet* (Neue Echter Bibel, Altes Testament), Echter Verlag, Würzburg.
- Longman, T., 1998, 'The book of Ecclesiastes', in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Lorgunpai, S., 1994, 'The books of Ecclesiastes and Thai Buddhism', *Asia Journal of Theology* 8, 155–162.
- Lowe, E.J., 2006, *The four-category ontology: A metaphysical foundation for natural science*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Mansfeld, J., 2020, 'Doxography of ancient philosophy', in E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*, Winter 2020 edn., no pages, viewed 08 January 2021, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/doxography-ancient/>.
- Marmodoro, A. & Mayr, E., 2019, *Metaphysics: An introduction to contemporary debates and their history*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Mechon Mamre, 2016, *Hebrew – English Bible*, according to the Masoretic text and the JPS 1917 edition, viewed 17 August 2020, from <https://www.mechon-mamre.org/pt/pt0.htm>.
- Mokoena, L.L.D., 2019, 'Another meaning is possible: A re-reading of Hebel in Qoheleth', PhD thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.
- Müller, H.-P., 2003, 'Kohelet im Lichte der frühgriechischen Philosophie', in D.J.A. Clines & A. Schoors (eds.), *Qohelet in the context of wisdom* (BETHL 136), pp. 67–80, Peeters, Leuven.
- Murphy, R.E., 1992, 'Ecclesiastes', in *Word Biblical Commentary* 23A, Word Books, Dallas, TX.
- Orilia, F. & Paoletti, M.P., 2020 'Properties', in E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*, Winter 2020 edn., no pages, viewed 25 August 2020, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/properties/>.
- Palm, A., 1885, *Kohelet und die nach-aristotelische Philosophie*, Hogrefe, Mannheim.
- Ranston, H., 1925, *Ecclesiastes and the early Greek wisdom literature*, Epworth, London.
- Schellenberg, A., 2013, 'Kohelet', in *Zürcher Bibelkommentar*, vol. 17, Theologischer Verlag Zürich (TVZ), Zürich.
- Schoors, A., 2013, 'Ecclesiastes', in *Historical commentary on the Old Testament*, Peeters, Leuven.
- Schwienhorst-Schönberger, L., 2004, *Kohelet* (HTK.AT), Herder Verlag, Freiburg.
- Sekine, S., 1991, 'Qohelet als Nihilist', *Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute* 17, 3–54.
- Seow, C.-L., 1997, *Ecclesiastes* (Anchor Bible Commentary 18C), Doubleday, New York, NY.
- Sneed, M., 2017, 'לָבָה as "Worthless" in Qoheleth: A critique of Michael V. Fox's "Absurd" thesis', *JBL* 136, 879–894. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jbl.2017.0053>
- Von Loewenclau, I., 1986, 'Kohelet und Sokrates: Versuch eines Vergleiches', *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 98(3), 327–338. <https://doi.org/10.1515/zatw.1986.98.3.327>
- Weeks, S., 2020, 'A critical and exegetical commentary', in *Ecclesiastes*, vol. 1–5, International Critical Commentary, T&T Clark, London.