

EXCAVATING *DISSOI LOGOI* 4

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I

I BEGIN with a necessary apology for the extreme obscurity of the text I shall discuss. The *Dissoi Logoi*, whose fourth chapter is the subject of this paper, is perhaps unique among texts in the history of philosophy for its murkiness. It is an anonymously authored philosophical work appearing to argue, among other things, for the sameness and then the difference of properties such as good and bad, just and unjust, true and false. Almost every aspect of it likely to interest scholars is monstrously undetermined. Thus:

(1) Its date is unknown. Many suppose it to be a Sophistic moot book or the like from around the late fifth/early fourth century BC.¹ Others take the location of its only manuscripts, always in the works of Sextus Empiricus, to indicate a dating anything up to six hundred years later. One scholar has suggested that it might have been written as late as the medieval end of the Byzantine era.²

(2) Its original dialect is unknown. It is largely composed in Doric, but with numerous Atticisms and dashes of Ionic. The relation between the first two is not sufficiently clear to indicate whether the work was written by a non-Doric speaker for a Doric audience, or whether the text we now have was composed entirely in Doric

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I am very grateful to Brad Inwood, David Sedley, and an anonymous referee for *Oxford Studies* for some extremely helpful criticism and advice. I should also like to express my gratitude to Robert Wardy, who encouraged this piece in its original form as an essay submitted for the Cambridge University M.Phil. in Classics in 2000.

¹ For a detailed discussion of one disagreement, even among those who view the text as belonging to the early Sophistic movement, see T. M. Robinson, *Contrasting Arguments: An Edition of the Dissoi Logoi* (Salem, NH, 1979), 34–41. I rely on this magnificent work of scholarship throughout.

² T. M. Conley, 'Dating the So-Called *Dissoi Logoi*: A Cautionary Note', *Ancient Philosophy*, 5 (1985), 59–65.

and then progressively Atticized by later scribes less and less familiar with the Doric dialect.

(3) Partly because of its content, and partly because of (1) and (2), its purpose is unknown. Even for someone confident that the work belongs roughly to the period during which the Sophists flourished, there are several options. It could be a serious, and hence disappointingly bad, treatise; a heavy-handed spoof of such works; a spot-the-errors workbook for novice dialecticians; or a sample of some Sophist's wares meant to persuade the unwary buyer that he too will eventually be able to argue both sides of any argument.

Given (1), (2), and (3), it is almost impossible to say anything about the *Dissoi Logoi* that goes beyond *mere* conjecture. But it would be a pity to let caution silence all contributions to the understanding of this most mysterious text. In what follows, I discuss two issues—the meaning of the word *logos*³ in 4. 1–5, and the argument of 4. 6—with a view to assessing just how Sophistic this chapter is, and asking what there is about it that might have aroused interest in later Sceptical traditions. I shall not count the exercise a failure if all I can achieve is to make this text even more intriguing than it has seemed beforehand.

II

Here is a complete translation, with some explanatory footnotes, of chapter 4:⁴

(1) Twofold arguments are also asserted about what is false and what is true. Some assert that the false *logos* is different from the true one, others that they are the same. (2) And I affirm the latter view. Firstly, because they are expressed in the same words; and then because whenever a *logos* is expressed, if things have come to pass as the *logos* says, then it is true, but if they have not come to pass then the same *logos* is false. (3) For example, a *logos* accuses someone of temple robbery. If the deed occurred, the *logos* is true, but if it did not, false. The same goes for the *logos* of the one defending himself. Also, law courts judge the same *logos* to be both false and true. (4) Next, if when sitting in a row we say 'I am an initiate', we all say the same thing, but only I am right since I *am* an initiate. (5) It is clear that the

³ I leave this word transliterated but not translated throughout so as not to prejudice the investigation.

⁴ I am very grateful to David Sedley for help with the translation, and for making me see that the text makes sense unemended (see the following footnote).

same *logos* is false when the false is present to it and true when the true is present to it, just as a man, too, is the same when he is a child and a youth and an adult and an old man. (6) But it is also affirmed that the false *logos* is different from the true one, the word differing.⁵ For if someone were to ask those maintaining that the same *logos* is false and true which of the two⁶ they mean, then if the answer were ‘a false one’, it is clear that there are two of them.⁷ But if the person replied ‘this same one is true and false’,⁸ and if he has ever said or sworn anything true, it follows that those same things are false too. And if he knows some truthful man, he knows that the same man is also a liar. (7) And on the basis of their *logos* they assert these: that if the event has happened then the *logos* is true, and if it has not happened the *logos* is false. In which case it makes no difference (8) later for the jurors what they judge, for they were not present at the events. (9) And even they agree that that with which the false is mixed is false, that with which the true is mixed, true. But this is an entirely different matter.

My thoughts about this chapter were partly inspired by a remark of Martha Kneale’s. Writing about 4. 4, she claims that ‘We may have here the origin of the Stoic distinction between *phōnē* and *lekton*.’⁹ In the thought-experiment described in 4. 4, there is a sense in which everyone says the same thing in so far as everyone makes the same noise (the noise made by saying ‘I am an initiate’), but also a sense in which the author says something different from everyone else in so far as he alone says something true. Kneale’s thought was that if you can make this distinction, then you have not got far to go in making the distinction between a mere expression—a form of words—and a proposition—the meaning that a form of words can express. The Stoics made this distinction in terms of that between the part of an expression that is corporeal and hence perceptible—a *phōnē*—and that which is incorporeal and hence imperceptible,

⁵ Here I follow the text and avoid the emendations favoured by Diels and Robinson. The point, already suggested by more explicit formulations earlier in the *Dissoi Logoi* at 1. 11 and 3. 13, is just that a difference of terminology indicates a difference in the world. Since ‘true’ is a different word from ‘false’, then supposedly a true *logos* will be a different thing from a false one.

⁶ I take this question to be about the pair ‘a true *logos*’ and ‘a false *logos*’.

⁷ That is, it is clear that the true *logos* and the false one are *two* distinct things, and not one and the same *logos*, as the identity thesis maintains.

⁸ I take the thought here to be that the proponent of the identity thesis cannot maintain that his thesis is false—for obvious reasons—but he cannot simply say that it is true either. For according to (this shifty interpretation of) the identity thesis, the true *logos* is the same as the *false* one. So if the identity thesis is true at all then it is true and false.

⁹ W. and M. Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford, 1960), 16. I have transliterated the Greek expressions in the original text.

a *lekton*. A *lekton* is the Stoic bearer of truth and falsehood, an incorporeal meaning that gets expressed by a corporeal *phōnē* when the latter is both articulate and significant.

It is not my intention to say much about Stoic semantics in this paper, or to evaluate the arguments of those such as Fabricius who actually thought the *Dissoi Logoi* was written by a Stoic.¹⁰ Instead, I want to exploit this distinction between the perceptible parts of language which are not meaningful taken by themselves (I shall call these *tokens*) and the meaningful imperceptible parts that they can express (I shall call these *propositions*) to investigate what our author means when he uses the term *logos*. Initially, my conclusion is negative. An analysis of *Dissoi Logoi* 4. 1–5, the ‘identity thesis’ attempting to establish that the true *logos* is the same as the false one, shows that he could be using *logos* to mean either a token or a proposition. But the transfer of these materials to the second half of the chapter, the ‘difference thesis’ attempting to establish that in some sense the true *logos* is different from the false, reveals some surprising consequences. They provide some evidence to support or encourage both those unconvinced that the writer is a pre-Platonic sophist, and for those curious about why the work might have been of interest to philosophical Sceptics in (supposedly) later antiquity.

III

At 4. 2 the author argues for the identity thesis with the claim that the true *logos* and the false one are said ‘with the same words’. We might plausibly take *logos* here to mean a token, for something can be a word just by virtue of being composed of perceptible parts, sounds, or marks, without thereby having any semantic properties. For example, there are words, properly so called, such as ‘*blituri*’,¹¹ which we do not read as being meaningful, and surely any *logos* composed of such words will be itself a mere token, lacking semantic properties. Perhaps the sameness of this thing across true and

¹⁰ Fabricius thought the author was Sextus of Chaeronea, Plutarch’s nephew and a teacher of Marcus Aurelius. He held that it was the accident of having the same *praenomen* as later antiquity’s most celebrated sceptic that explained why the *Dissoi Logoi* always appears in the latter’s manuscripts. See Robinson, *Contrasting Arguments*, 2–3.

¹¹ The example is Stoic; it is taken from D.L. 7. 57. See. A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley (eds.), *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. i (Cambridge, 1987), 195–202.

false *logoi* reveals the sense in which the true *logos* is the same as the false. Alternatively, the author might think that something with semantic properties is the same in the true *logos* as the false one. With Robinson, I translated *τοῖς αὐτοῖς ὀνόμασι* as ‘with the same words’, but one might equally translate it as ‘with the same names’. It is possible that the *Dissoi Logoi* antedates Plato’s discovery in the *Sophist* that *logoi* are composed of logically heterogeneous parts, names and verbs. If that is so our author might well suppose that a *logos* can comprise just names. But names are not mere tokens like ‘*blituri*’. They are words used in a certain way, read as having the semantic property of referring (or at least in some sense trying or pretending to refer). In that case there would be more to the author’s *logoi* in 4. 2 than the typographical or phonetic properties that constitute tokenhood. And whether he is familiar with Plato’s discovery or not, we certainly need not suppose him to be talking about mere tokens in 4. 2 because in 4. 4, the passage which sparked Kneale’s interest, any reference to words or names drops out altogether. All we get is the claim that in the thought-experiment ‘we all say the same thing’. But this still leaves us in the dark about the author’s *logoi*—we do not know precisely what the thing is *that gets said*. For all we know from 4. 2, the thing that is common to true and false assertions might be a mere token, or it might be what Kneale calls, in this context, ‘the statement or proposition’.

The interpretation of *logos* in 4. 3 can be argued reasonably either way as well. Here the *logos* in question expresses an accusation against someone of temple robbery, where the same *logos* is true if the defendant robbed the temple and false if he did not. One could easily argue against taking *logoi* as tokens here. For it seems quite unlikely, at least when thinking of their oral performances, that the accuser and the defendant will introduce the same phonetic object. The defendant would not normally refer to himself in the third person, nor will his counsel be prohibited from referring to his client with pronouns. Rather, there will be something the prosecutor affirms when he utters the token ‘Callias robbed the temple’, and that very same thing will be denied by Callias when he utters the different token ‘I did not rob the temple’. What is the same in each case, but affirmed in one, denied in the other, is not a mere token but a proposition. But there is still the possibility of a token reading. For it might be that there is some affidavit put before the jury, written on a scroll or wax tablet, in which case there

would be a clear sense in which both prosecutor and defendant would be disputing about the truth-value of the same perceptible object. (Imagine them pointing, the former saying ‘That’s true’, the latter ‘That’s false’.)

The investigation becomes more serious and interesting once we return to 4. 4. This contains the strongest evidence for understanding the author’s *logoi* as tokens. For surely it is only the sounds, or how things would look when transcribed into a suitable language, that are the same when a group of people all say ‘I am an initiate’. Once those sounds are understood as having semantic properties, then there is a sense in which they do *not* all say the same thing, for the author’s ‘I’ refers to him and no one else, his neighbour’s ‘I’ to his neighbour and no one else, and so on.

But this is not decisive. For there is a way of interpreting the thing that is the same in each utterance of ‘I am an initiate’ as having *some* semantic properties, while keeping the author’s thought that everyone says exactly the same thing even without everyone being right. How?

Frege claimed in his famous paper ‘The Thought’, when discussing how ‘I’ refers, that ‘everyone is presented to himself in a special and primitive way, in which he is presented to no one else’.¹² Colin McGinn has pointed out that there is a scope ambiguity in this claim.¹³ Does Frege mean that, *for everyone*, there is some mode or other in which he presents himself to himself and in which he is presented to no one else? Or does he mean that *there is some mode or other* such that everyone presents himself to himself in that mode, and is presented to no one else in that mode? The former is compatible with there being as many different modes of presentation as there are people, while the latter is not. The latter says that if there is a mode in which I present myself to myself and no one else, then you present yourself to yourself in that mode and no one else, and Gottlob Frege presented himself to himself in that mode and no one else, etc.¹⁴

Which of these Frege meant does not concern us. The point is just that, if the second reading of his claim at least makes sense,

¹² In M. Beaney (ed.), *The Frege Reader* (Oxford, 1997), 323–45 at 333.

¹³ C. McGinn, *The Subjective View* (Oxford, 1987), 58.

¹⁴ In order to avoid contradiction here we should have to understand each individual’s mode as being a token of the same type as everyone else’s mode, or a trope of the same universal.

then there is a way in which even though the *reference* of 'I' varies from speaker to speaker, there is none the less something semantic common to every use of that expression. Even though my 'I' *refers* to me and yours to you, there is some meaning element common to both expressions because their senses involve the same mode for each of us.¹⁵

In this sense there will be *something* that all the people in a row say when each one says 'I am an initiate' that is not confined to the level of the mere tokens formed by their mouths. I see no reason to rule out in principle the thought that our author could have had a vague sense in which all those saying 'I am an initiate' *mean* the same thing even though one of those utterances is true and the rest false. So even in 4. 4 we cannot be precise about what our author's *logoi* are. Perhaps they are mere tokens, but perhaps in this context they are meaningful entities.

What about 4. 5? Here, the sameness of a *logos* across truth and falsehood is compared with the identity of a man across the different stages of his life—childhood, adulthood, and so forth. Here it might be important that a man is some material object, a perceptible public thing that we can see persisting over time. It is the same person who is now an adolescent, now an old man, because he has (albeit rather roughly) the same body. If corporeal facts determine the identity of a man across the changes wrought by age, perhaps the author's thought is that it is the corporeal properties of a *logos* that remain the same across changes wrought by the world, in which case he will be talking about tokens here.

There might be further grounds for taking 4. 5 this way. The same *relata* used for the argument in 4. 5 appear in Aristotle's *Categories* at 4^a10–b²5. But here Aristotle is using the identity of a man over time as a *contrast* with the identity of his truth-value bearers, statements or beliefs, across truth-value changes. Aristotle is considering whether statements or beliefs qualify as substances just as men do according to his criteria. Initially it looks as if they do. For substances are things capable of receiving contraries while retaining their identity across the change. Dark and pale are contraries; one and the same man can go dark in the sun and pale again in

¹⁵ Note that I write 'involve' rather than 'are'; for according to Frege sense determines reference. So if your way of presenting yourself to yourself when you use 'I' is a token of the same type as my way, whatever that token is had better not be *identical* with the sense of 'I'. Perhaps this is a reason for taking Frege to have meant the scope distinction to be clarified in the former way in the main text.

the shade; so men are substances. Likewise, the statement or belief that Callias is sitting is the same statement or belief when it is true as it is when it is false. True and false are contraries no less than dark and pale; so, the argument runs, the bearers of truth-values are substances.

Aristotle rightly rejects the conclusion of this argument by pointing out an important difference between the cases. When a man goes from being dark to being pale, it is the man who changes. Things are not like this when a statement changes its truth-value. When a statement about Callias changes its truth-value, what changes is *Callias*, and nothing else. The relevant change is not suitably describable as a change in the statement. So the bearers of truth-values are not substances.

The point of this discussion is that if, unlike Aristotle, you see the bearers of truth-values as being like men in terms of their capacity to sustain their identity over changes from one contrary to another, perhaps this will be because you see them as corporeal, perceptible objects no less than men. And if you think like this, you will probably think that *logoi* are tokens. Now I agree that this is implausible; not even the Giants of the *Sophist*, you might say, are the sort to think that what is now true but later false is *just* something you might hold in your hand on a piece of paper, or hear with your ears. But it is implausible simply because we are now powerfully aware of how many relational factors and values for variables—worlds, times, places, agents, etc.—affect the truth-value of a *logos*; and of how such relations and values cannot be reduced to the mere material properties of a written mark or spoken sound.¹⁶ Such relations and variable-values do not figure in material bodies exchanging their contingent properties while remaining the same things over time. But if you can so much as recognize the relations and variable-values required for something logical to remain the same while something non-logical changes, like Theaetetus passing from sitting to not sitting, then you are well on the way to making the sort of distinction we have just seen Aristotle making. And if you are on that path, you will not think that *logoi* retain their identity in anything like the way in which men do over time.

¹⁶ For instance, logical form must also be involved in the continuity of a *logos* when it changes truth-value; and logical form will not in general be reducible to any material properties of an expression.

But it will come as no surprise that we can take 4. 5's *logoi* as having semantic properties as well. We could take the *relata* of the analogy to be *logos* identity over truth-value changes and *personal* identity over time. Here we can suppose without controversy that what sustains the latter over changes from one contrary to another need not be anything perceptible like a material body. For the Greeks could certainly imagine changes in personal identity that are not accompanied by any perceptible material changes: the phenomenon of metempsychosis was, I dare say, a subject of considerable intellectual interest whenever and wherever the *Dissoi Logoi* was composed. Look, for example, at the peregrinations of Pythagoras' soul described in detail at Diogenes Laertius 8. 4–5. It is presumably an immaterial soul that successively determines the personal identities of bodies named Aethalides, Pythagoras, Euphorbus, and Hermotimus. And presumably there is no immediate and perceptible difference in one of these bodies when this soul leaves it. What determines personal identity lies beyond the perceptible. So it might be that the relevant analogue for a *logos* in 4. 5 has properties beyond the perceptible too, and counts as something other than a mere token.

IV

So far the results have been negative. But they will become useful later on in Section V of this paper. For the moment, I want to dwell on what I take to be a surprising fact about the argument for the difference thesis of 4. 6–9.

Semantics after Plato's *Sophist* was geared, quite rightly, to making a sharp distinction between the meaning of a truth-evaluable expression, what I have so far been calling a proposition, and the truth-value that it actually has.¹⁷ This is part of the point Aristotle is making in the passage mentioned above from the *Categories*. At 4^b8–11 Aristotle says 'it is because the thing is or is not the case that the *logos* is said to be true or false, not because the *logos* itself can receive contraries. For quite simply no *logos* or belief is changed by anything.' The point can be put as follows. When truth-

¹⁷ You might say: Plato formulated arguments showing how there can be such a thing as the truth-conditions of *p* even though there is nothing that actually makes *p* true.

values change it is because matters in the world have changed. But meanwhile something essentially changeless persists throughout that change in things, what philosophers now call the content of a proposition or belief.¹⁸ The content of the statement 'Theaetetus sits' is the same whether the referent of the name is sitting or not. The same considerations motivated the Stoics to theorize about non-material subsisting meanings, *lekta*.

It is precisely this thought—that there is some meaningful entity that is the same when it is true as when it is false, something that does not change when things in the world change—that we should expect to see under attack in *Dissoi Logoi* 4. 6–9. In 4. 6 the difference thesis is affirmed: the false *logos* is different from the true one because when the terminology differs, so does the thing to which it refers. An argument for this position might go as follows. The expressions 'true *logos*' and 'false *logos*' do not semantically have the '*logos*' bit in common any more than 'Socrates' and 'Cratylus' semantically have the 'rat' bit in common.¹⁹ Such a difference thesis would treat them as unit names, identifying expressions like 'giraffe' and 'tarantula': and there is nothing that can be a giraffe and a tarantula, or now a giraffe, now a tarantula. As the names differ, so do their referents.

This version of the difference thesis would cohere well with the prevailing view that the second contrasting argument of *Dissoi Logoi* 4, like others throughout the work, represents a fallacious switch satirized in some of Plato's dialogues, that of trying to refute an argument that treated some predicate as expressing a contingent property of things by pretending that the property is part of the essence of things that have it. On this view, although it seems that 4. 1–5 treat truth and falsehood as contingent properties of *logoi* (4. 4 especially), 4. 6–9 should be expected to attack that thesis by supposing that the truth or falsehood of a *logos* determines what *logos* it is, from which it infers the truth of the difference thesis.

Now to maintain that truth-values are essential properties of the

¹⁸ Modern philosophers ordinarily recognize at least two levels of linguistic content, in large part precisely because of the issues raised by indexicals such as 'I' in the discussion earlier in the main text. Such refinements are not directly relevant to the coarser Aristotelian distinction I am here mentioning.

¹⁹ This may seem implausibly extreme. But we need something like this in order to make a difference of terminology sufficient for the falsity of the identity thesis. The expressions 'Water' and 'H₂O' are different items of terminology without that showing that nothing is both water and H₂O.

things that bear them is just to maintain an intolerably close relation between *logoi* and how things stand in the world. It is how things stand in the world, as Aristotle saw, that constrains truth-value. But according to the imagined difference thesis I am describing, the world also determines *what is said* about how those things stand in the world. If the world determines truth-value, and truth-value is an essential property of a *logos*, then the world determines what is said about it. In effect the semantic relation between *logoi* and what they are about has become as simple as that between a name and its referent. But then we are plunged into familiar Sophistic problems about how there can be any such thing as a false *logos* at all.²⁰ For it will not now be clear how something's not being the case can go towards determining the meaning of a *logos* that wrongly says it is the case. *Which* thing that is not the case determines the meaning of such a falsehood, if the truth-value of a *logos* determines its meaning, and how? To use my analogy with terms: it is the existence of giraffes and tarantulas that makes it the case that the expressions 'giraffe' and 'tarantula' refer. But now what is it that does *not* exist that makes it the case that the expression 'snark' does not refer, and how does it do so? You had better not reply 'snarks', since their non-existence prevents them from having any effects at all, let alone the effect of making an expression non-referring.

But what is so striking about the second contrasting argument in *Dissoi Logoi* 4 is that this is *not* what we get. Far from giving us an argument that says that the true *logos* is different from the false one in such a way as to suggest scepticism about falsehood, 4. 6 gives us what appears to be a self-refutation argument. That is, it offers an argument *depending* on the possibility of a false *logos*.

Our author can be convicted of the slide from (a) treating truth and falsehood in the identity thesis as *contingent properties* of *logoi* to (b) implying in the difference thesis that, were the identity thesis correct, *all logoi would enjoy truth and falsehood together at the same time*. This is the only explanation I can think of for the moves made in 4. 6. The identity theorist is asked 'And which kind of *logos* is yours, then?' There are four possible answers: 'true', 'false', 'true and false', or 'neither true nor false'. The identity theorist

²⁰ For an extensive discussion of this topic, see N. Denyer, *Language, Thought and Falsehood in Ancient Greek Philosophy [Language]* (London, 1991). Chapter 3 shows that scepticism about falsehood was widespread among Plato's predecessors and contemporaries; chapter 4 shows that even Plato himself was tempted by it.

wrecks his own position if he gives either of the second or fourth answers here. But he cannot give, as he might like, the first one, for according to this prejudicial reading of his slogan 'the same *logos* is true and false', no *logos*, including his own, is *just* true: if it is true at all it must be false as well, in which case, his sneaky opponent can infer, it is false.

The important point is that, for all the naughtiness of the moves in 4. 6, its conclusion depends on treating a *logos* as true or false depending on whether things are as it says they are. And here we just have a situation where, supposedly, things cannot at all be as a *logos* says they are, as in the traditional 'Liar' paradox. But to wonder whether things are how a *logos* says they are is pretty clearly to recognize a distinction between those things and what is said about them. In fact the perspective of the actual difference thesis involves treating *logoi* as true or false according to the theory of truth sketched in 4. 7, where a *logos* is true when the thing it is about has occurred, false if not. Such a formulation is not very distant from the fuller definition of truth given by Aristotle at *Metaphysics* Γ, 1011^b26–7: 'to say of what is, that it is not, or of what is not, that it is, is false; while to say of what is, that it is, or of what is not, that it is not, is true'. Aristotle's formulation is important in the history of semantics in part because of how cavalier he can afford to be when speaking of what is not, as if the problems of falsehood and non-being had not troubled him. The likely explanation for this, borne out by his claims about the heterogeneous parts of *logoi* in the *De interpretatione*,²¹ is that Aristotle knew the *Sophist* and felt that it had solved once and for all the problems about non-being.²² Hence he need not worry about them when it comes to giving a definition of truth. The author of the *Dissoi Logoi* looks no less carefree: and while this is certainly not hard evidence that he wrote after Plato, I think it does call into question the claims of those who take him for a Presocratic sophist labouring under the influence of Protagoras. For he does not follow a Protagorean way of establishing the difference thesis on the back of scepticism about falsehood.

To conclude this section, let me urge the thought that this is not the only feature of *Dissoi Logoi* 4 with a Platonic or post-Platonic flavour. The account of truth-values in 4. 5 sounds very much like

²¹ For discussion see P. T. Geach, 'History of the Corruptions of Logic' in id., *Logic Matters* (Oxford, 1972), 44–61.

²² This is the conclusion argued for by Denyer, *Language*, 183–5.

an instance of the general account of properties from the end of the *Phaedo*, where things are *F* when *F*-ness is present in them. More tellingly, my understanding of 4. 8 gives it a whiff of the jury passage from *Theaet.* 200D–201C. The latter tries to make the point that, since the jurors were not present at the events over which they deliberate, they can never *know* how things turned out. The best they can do is to acquire a true belief about those events. *Dissoi Logoi* 4. 6 is apparently making a related point: that jurors cannot come to know what happened just by inspecting a *logos*. For it is the events themselves, things by implication different from the *logos*, that make it true or false, and the jurors do not have access to those. These points, taken together with our author's comfort with the concept of falsehood, suggest to me that the *Dissoi Logoi*, or at least its fourth chapter, may well have been written after Plato.

V

Return to the fact that our author appears comfortable with the thought that *logoi* can be false. What is the connection between that and the investigation in Section III that showed we cannot pin him down in 4. 1–5 on whether his *logoi* are tokens or propositions? The last suggestion I want to make is that the neutrality of 4. 1–5 on that question might give us a clue about why at least the fourth chapter of *Dissoi Logoi* might have been of interest to Sceptical traditions in periods later than the generally agreed dating to the era of the Sophistic movement (on which Section IV above has tried to cast some doubt). Recall the identity thesis, 'The same *logos* is true and false'. Prescinding for the moment from the details of the text, is there anything substantial and genuinely informative to be gained from objecting to this claim? That is, is there something to be gained from denying that a *logos* is some third thing that can be expressed now by a contingently true token, now by a contingently false one? I think there is. Such a denial would amount to the claim that, whatever *logoi* are, they are not things capable of changing truth-value. Whatever truth-value they have, they have *once for all*. Nothing that is ever true can change from being true to being false, and vice versa. This claim is certainly consistent with the theory of truth sketched in 4. 7, which showed that our author is not susceptible to Sophistic problems about non-being, and quite different from the claim that

both truth-values are always enjoyed at the same time together by every *logos*, the suppressed premiss that drives the self-refutation in 4. 6. Moreover, it is also a plausible claim. The thought that truths and falsehoods are once-for-all truths and falsehoods has been held in our own time by Quine. On this interpretation, the difference thesis would be a denial that the same *logos* is ever now true, now false, or true in one mouth but not in another. It is the thought that there is no further meaningful entity, such as a proposition, which is there to be expressed by different tokens. Quine holds something similar. He denies that there is some semantic entity which gets 'expressed' by true and false token sentences because he holds that such entities—propositions—would have identity conditions indeterminable by his method of radical translation. Such semantic items as propositions so understood are therefore well beyond the pale of his naturalism. Hence Quine's theorizing about so-called 'eternal sentences', sentences²³ whose truth-values are fixed for all time once they are read as being meaningful.²⁴

Now if this idea can be retrieved from the murky details of the difference thesis, it might be that someone reading it in later antiquity saw 4. 6–9 as a claim that semantic properties enter *only* when we fix the truth-value of an utterance, and that the *logoi* whose nature we found underdetermined in 4. 1–5 are therefore *mere* tokens by the lights of 4. 6–9. According to this reading of the difference thesis, there is no independent thing whose meaning we express when we all say 'I am an initiate'. All that we have in common is an

²³ Quine's distinction between sentences and propositions is not the same as the one I have been using in this paper. For he holds that there are both token-sentences and type-sentences, both of which can be meaningful; and also that he can countenance both of these while rejecting the need to admit propositions into his ontology. But I have been contrasting propositions with tokens alone; I have treated the latter solely as individuals and not also as universals, and also as lacking semantic properties. I have done so in order to discuss this work in the light of the distinction between Stoic *phōnai* and *lekta*. But the difference between my framing of the issues and Quine's more elaborate theory is irrelevant to the main point here. Quine is responding to philosophers who have felt a need to suppose the existence of propositions as what tokens in different languages share, or as bearers of truth and the objects of propositional attitudes etc. Sometimes such philosophers, he claims, have argued in the following fashion: 'if we can speak of a sentence as meaningful, or as having meaning, then there must be a meaning that it has, and this meaning will be identical with or distinct from the meaning that another sentence has' (W. V. O. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), 206). Quine is rightly suspicious of this move; it is suspicion of a quite similar move in the inference to the existence of Stoic *lekta* that I claim might be fostered by my imagined reading of the difference thesis.

²⁴ Quine, *Word and Object*, 191–232.

object formed by our mouths. So, reading the whole chapter as a pair of contrasting arguments about the need to postulate semantic entities, one might read the identity thesis of 4. 1–5 as asserting that *logoi* can have semantic properties before reference is determined—the analysis in Section III shows that nothing rules out taking 4. 1–5 in this way, not even 4. 4—while the difference thesis of 4. 6–9 attempts to deny this, holding that *logoi* have permanent truth-values once they are read as having any semantic properties.

Of course, it would be much too far-fetched to attribute this position to the author of the *Dissoi Logoi* himself. He is nowhere near so subtle. The self-refutation argument of 4. 6 would need quite a few extra premisses spelt out in order even to look as if it was directed against the thought that there are meaningful entities which different tokens, true and false, are capable of expressing. But it might provide an explanation of why the *Dissoi Logoi* was associated with our major source for Pyrrhonism, Sextus Empiricus, in whose manuscripts the *Dissoi Logoi* is always found. It might also explain why, according to Diogenes Laertius 9. 106, the earlier Sceptic Zeuxis (a friend of Aenesidemus) wrote a treatise ‘On *Dissoi Logoi*’. For regardless of when our work was written, if we can read *Dissoi Logoi* 4 as arguing for, then against, the existence of semantic items beyond perceptible tokens, then we can read it as something Pyrrhonian sceptics might have been seriously interested in, as urging (however incoherently) suspension of judgement about Stoic *lekta*.

As Burnyeat puts it, ‘sober readers will suspend judgement on every question about [*Dissoi logoi*]’.²⁵ Quite so. I do not expect to have persuaded anyone that this chapter was written later than the scholarly consensus holds, or that and why it was of serious interest to later sceptical traditions. But I do hope to have uncovered a bit more evidence for these views.

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