Jacques Lacan
Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty: A New Sophism

A Logical Problem

A prison warden has three prisoners summoned and announces to them the following:

" I have here five discs differing only in color: three white and rwo black. Without letting you know which I have chosen,I shall fasten one of them to each of you between his shoulders; outside, that is, your direct visual field. At that point, you will be left at your leisure to consider your companions and their respective discs. **The first to be able to deduce his own color will be the one to benefit.** His conclusion, moreover, must be founded upon logical *and not simply probabilistic* reasons. "

How can the subiects solve the problem?

The Perfect Solution

After having contemplated one another for *a certain time*, the three subjects take *a few steps* together and pass side by side through the doorway. Each of them then separately furnishes a similar response which can be expressed thus:

"I am a white, and here is how I know it: as my companions were whites, I thought that, had I been a black, each of them would have been able to infer the following: 'If I too am a black, the other would have necessarily realized straight away that he was a white and would have left immediately; therefore I am not a black'. And both would have left together, convinced that they were whites. As they did nothing of the kind, I must be a white like them. At that, I made for the door to make my conclusion known."

All three thus exited simultaneously, armed with the same reasons for concluding.

Σχόλια για την ενότητα "Discussion of the Sophism"

Reasoning of B , C for *Case 2* : A is black, B, C are white

B: 'If I am **black**,

C would have **known** that he was white   (by *Instant of the Glance* for C)
and would have left immediately.

Since C is *hesitating* :
I know *now* that I am not black'.   (by *Time for Comprehending* for B)

C: <u>αντίστοιχα</u> καταλήγει ότι είναι λευκός

Όταν ολοκληρώνεται το Time for Comprehending για τον παίκτη B ,

ο B έχει ανιχνεύσει *δισταγμό* στον παίκτη C .

Ετσι, ο B συμπεραίνει ότι είναι λευκός, επειδή ο C *δεν ξεκίνησε αμέσως*.

Αντίστοιχα, όταν ολοκληρώνεται το Time for Comprehending

για τον παίκτη C , ο C έχει ανιχνεύσει *δισταγμό* στον παίκτη B .

Ετσι, ο C συμπεραίνει ότι είναι λευκός, επειδή ο B *δεν ξεκίνησε αμέσως*.

Verification of the reasoning of B for *Case 2*

B supposes that, had he been a ***black***, the white player C would not have been long in realizing he were white and leaving.

Since C is hesitating, B ***starts*** towards the door assuming he is white.

He must nevertheless go back and think again;

I For at the very moment at which B   is ***stirred into action*** by his conclusion,
   he sees C ***setting off*** with him.

> Αυτό συμβαίνει επειδή οι B , C *κάνουν τους ίδιους συλλογισμούς*,
> *στον ίδιο χρόνο*. Όμως ο B δεν μπορεί να είναι σίγουρος γι αυτό,
> αφού δεν ξέρει ακόμα το χρώμα του.

If   B, seeing C set off with him, <u>wonders again</u>
   whether C has not in fact seen that B is ***black*** :

> Ο B σκέφτεται μήπως ο C ξεκίνησε αφού ολοκλήρωσε
> (στο τέλος του Instant of the Glance)
> τον παραπάνω συλλογισμό του, έχοντας δει τον B ***μαύρο***.

> Δηλαδή, σκέφτεται μήπως η απόφασή του ήταν βιαστική: ο B γνωρίζει
> ότι ο χρόνος που θα χρειαστεί για να ολοκληρωθεί ο συλλογισμός του C
> είναι πεπερασμένος, αλλά δεν γνωρίζει ακριβές όριο.

It suffices for B to: ***stop*** and pose the question again in order to answer it.

For he sees that *C too* ***stops***:

> Since each of B , C is really in the same situation,
> each encounters the same doubt at the same moment as his counterpart.

II B now will have every right to *conclude* that he is a white.
   For, <u>had he been a ***black***</u>, C ***would continue***;

> Άν ο B ήταν μαύρος: ο C ήδη θα γνώριζε (*Instant of the Glance*) ότι είναι λευκός.

Reasoning of A for *Case 3* : A, B, C are white

1 If I am **black**, B (respectively C) will be able to infer that:

B: 'If I am **black**,

C would have **known** that he was white   (Instant of the Glance)
and would have left immediately.

Since C is *hesitating* :
I know *now* that I am not black'.   (Time for Comprehending)

C: αντίστοιχα καταλήγει ότι είναι λευκός

2 Since B , C are *still not moving* :
I must conclude that I am white.   (by *Moment of Concluding* for A)

Για τον παίκτη Α έρχεται το Moment of Concluding, όταν συμπεραίνει

ότι καθένας από τους παίκτες Β , C *δεν ανίχνευσε δισταγμό στον ομόλογό του.*

Verification of the reasoning of A for *Case 3*

At the second stage of A's deduction, he concludes that he is a white
(supposing that, had he been a **black**, the others would not have been long
in realizing they were whites and leaving).

He must nevertheless go back over it and think it through again;

I For at the very moment at which he is ***stirred into action*** by his conclusion,
he sees the others ***setting off*** with him.

> Αυτό συμβαίνει επειδή οι B , C *κάνουν τους ίδιους συλλογισμούς* με τον A ,
> *στον ίδιο χρόνο.* Όμως ο A δεν μπορεί να είναι σίγουρος γι αυτό,
> αφού δεν ξέρει ακόμα το χρώμα του.

If   A, seeing B and C set off with him, <u>wonders again</u>
whether they have not in fact seen that he is **black** :

> Ο A σκέφτεται μήπως οι B , C ξεκίνησαν αφού ολοκλήρωσαν
> (στο τέλος του Time for Comprehending)
> τον παραπάνω συλλογισμό τους, έχοντας δει τον A **μαύρο**.
>
> Δηλαδή, σκέφτεται μήπως η απόφασή του ήταν βιαστική: ο A γνωρίζει
> ότι ο χρόνος που θα χρειαστεί για να ολοκληρωθεί ο συλλογισμός των B , C
> είναι πεπερασμένος, αλλά δεν γνωρίζει ακριβές όριο.

It suffices for him to: ***stop*** and pose the question again in order to answer it.

For he sees that <u>*they too*</u> ***stop***:

> Since each of them is really in the same situation as he,
> each encounters the same doubt at the same moment as he.

II A now will have every right to conclude again that he is a white.
For he supposes anew that, <u>had he been a **black**</u>,
B and C ***would continue***; or, after acknowledging their hesitation
set off again before him

> Άν ο A ήταν μαύρος: Υπάρχει το ενδεχόμενο καθένας από τους B , C
> να θεώρησε ότι το συμπέρασμά του για τον ομόλογό του ήταν βιαστικό.
> Τότε όμως καθένας τους θα βεβαιωνόταν,
> *βασιζόμενος στο ότι ο άλλος σταμάτησε, ότι ο ίδιος δεν είναι μαύρος.*
> Για αυτή την απόφασή του καθένας από τους B , C χρησιμοποιεί
> Time for Comprehending επειδή συλλογίζεται από τη θέση του άλλου.

III Because they, seeing that A is in fact a white, do nothing of the kind,
he himself takes the initiative; which is to say that
they all head for the door together

A must *once again* revert to a state of indecisiveness when he sees the others
moving towards the door in step with him.

> Αυτή τη φορά ο A σκέφτεται μήπως οι B , C ξεκίνησαν, αφού ολοκλήρωσαν
> (καθυστερημένα) τον συλλογισμό στο **II** μέσω (Time for Comprehending)
> έχοντας δει τον A ***μαύρο***.

It suffices for him to: ***stop*** and pose the question again in order to answer it.
For he sees that <u>they too</u> ***stop***.

This time A can draw but one unequivocal conclusion from the common cessation of
movement: had A been a **black**, B and C *absolutely should not have stopped.*

> Άν ο A ήταν μαύρος, οι B , C ήδη θα γνώριζαν από τον προηγούμενο συλλογισμό
> στο **II** ότι είναι λευκοί.

The Modulation of Time in Lacan's logic

Instant of the Glance

> I) *Being opposite two blacks, one knows that one is a white.*

Time for Comprehending

> II) *Were I a black, the two whites I see would waste no time realizing they are whites.*

Moment of Concluding

> III) *I hasten to declare myself white, so that these whites, whom I consider in this way, do not precede me in recognizing themselves for what they are.*