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The conclusions of *IIIA* concerning the one are given in the following table, with *IIIB* for comparison.<sup>50</sup>

	Deduction IIIA		Deduction IIIB
		10.	Is in no state at all.
1.	Is knowable.	9.	Knowledge, etc., are not applicable to it.
		8.	Past, present, and future are not applicable.
2.	Is different from the others.	7.'	It is neither like nor different from itself or others.
3.	Partakes of <i>that</i> , <i>something</i> , <i>this</i> , etc.	7.	<i>This</i> , <i>that</i> , <i>something</i> , etc., are not applicable to it.
4.	Is unlike the others, and like itself.	6a.	The others are neither like it nor unlike it.
5.	Is not equal to the others.	6b.	The others are neither the same as nor different from it.
5.'	Has a share of equality, largeness and smallness.	5.'	Largeness, smallness and equality do not belong to it.
		5.	Nothing that is belongs to it.
6.	Somehow partakes of being.	1.	In no way partakes of being.
7.	Has being and not being.		
8.	Is in motion and at rest.	4.	Is neither in motion nor at rest.
9.	Is both altered and not altered.	3.	Is not altered.
10.	Comes and ceases to be, and neither comes nor ceases to be.	2.	Neither comes nor ceases to be.

<sup>50</sup>The numbering is again Gill's, except that the primes account for my slight restructuring.

The pivots of the deduction in *IIIA* are two. First, for 3, Parmenides points out that if the one is not, or anything else is true of it, it must be possible to predicate things of it, and so to describe it (160e-161a):

“Furthermore, the one that is not partakes of *that* and of *something*, *this*, *to this*, *these*, and so on; for the one could not be mentioned, nor could things be different from the one, nor could anything belong to it or be of it, nor could it be said to be anything, unless it had a share of *something* and the rest.”—“That’s right.”—“The one can’t *be*, if in fact it is not, but nothing prevents it from partaking of many things. Indeed, it’s even necessary, if in fact it’s that one and not another that is not. If, however, neither the one nor *that* is not to be, but the account is about something else, we shouldn’t even utter a sound. But if that one and not another is not to be, it must have a share of *that* and of many other things.”—“Quite certainly.”

Parmenides seems on pretty safe ground here.

The other pivot is the very Parmenidean thought that anything one can speak about has being.<sup>51</sup> As he puts it (161e-162b):

“Furthermore, it must also somehow partake of being.”—“How is that?”—“It must be in the state we describe; for if it is not so, we wouldn’t speak truly when we say that the one is not. But if we speak truly, it is clear that we say things that are. Isn’t that so?”—“It is indeed so.—“And since we claim to speak truly, we must claim also to speak of things that are.”—“Necessarily.” ... “Then the one, if it is not, appears also to have being.”—“Apparently.”—“And of course not-being, if in fact it is not.”—“Doubtless.”

Thus, we have conclusion 6 of *IIIA*; and so, as Parmenides points out at the end of that quotation, by our assumption that one is not, the contradictory 7. We need not pause over the deductions of the other conclusions.

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<sup>51</sup>Which is acceptable if ‘being’ means ‘being something’, but not if it means ‘exists’. See Priest (2005).

Before we move on to Deduction *IIIB*, it is worth pausing for a moment. In the passage omitted in the last quotation, Parmenides gives an argument—as the historical Parmenides does not—as to why if one speaks of something it must be.<sup>52</sup> The argument concerns the one, but is quite general, and goes as follows (162a-162b). This has to be read very slowly and carefully!

“Therefore, as it seems, the one *is* a not-being; for if it is not to be a not-being, but is somehow to give up its being in relation to not-being, it will straight away be a being.”—“Absolutely.”—“So if it is not to be, it must have *being* a not-being as a bond in regard to its not-being, just as, in like manner, what is must have *not-being* what is not, in order that it, in its turn, may completely be. This is how what is would most of all be and what is not would not be: on the one hand, by what is, if it is completely to be, partaking of being in regard to being a being and of not-being in regard to being a not-being; and, on the other hand, by what is not, if in its turn what is not is completely not to be, partaking of not-being in relation to not-being a not-being and of being in regard to being a not-being.”<sup>53</sup>—“Very true.”—“Accordingly, since in fact what is has a share of not-being, and what is not has a share of being, so, too, the one, since it is not, must have a share of being in regard to its not-being.”

In general terms, the crux of the argument is this. For  $a$  to be  $F$ , there must be a bond between  $a$  and  $F$ -ness. This is being. Hence,  $a$  partakes of being. Symmetrically, if  $a$  is not  $F$ , then not-being is a bond between  $a$  and  $F$ -ness, so  $a$  partakes of non-being. Thus, being and non-being are predication. Consider being. (The issue concerning non-being is the same.) In the notation of Section 3, to say that  $Pa$  is to say that  $a \rightarrow \pi xPx$ , where

<sup>52</sup>For seeing the significance of this, I am indebted to Gill (1996), p. 96 ff.

<sup>53</sup>I think that this sentence should be: “on the one hand, by what is, if it is completely to be, partaking of being in regard to being a being and of not-being in regard to *not-being* a not-being; and, on the other hand, by what is not, if in its turn what is not is completely not to be, partaking of not-being in relation to not-being a *being* and of being in regard to being a not-being.”—which is effectively the way Cornford translates it in Hamilton and Cairns (1961).

$\rightarrow$  is participation/being. But if a bond is required in the first place, a bond is equally required in this new case. So we must have  $a \rightarrow \pi y(y \rightarrow \pi xPx)$ . And so on. We have a Bradley-style regress, which is vicious, since no bond ever gets to do any bonding. This is a problem for Plato. Since part of the claim of this paper is that the theory of forms on offer provides a solution to Plato's problems concerning predication, it is worth noting that it solves this one too. According to the theory, to say that  $a \rightarrow \pi xPx$  is to say that  $a$  has a trope,  $p$ , such that  $p = \pi xPx$ . If, instead of ' $p = \pi xPx$ ' we had ' $p \rightarrow \pi xPx$ ', we would obviously have a regress; but we do not. Since  $p$  is identical with  $\pi xPx$ , no further bonding-agent is required to hold them together.

Now to *IIIB*. The deductions in *IIIB* start thus (163b-163d):

"Let's go back again to the beginning to see whether things will appear the same to us as they do now, or different."—"Indeed, we must."—"Aren't we saying, if one is not, what the consequences must be for it?"—"Yes."—"When we say 'is not', the words don't signify anything other than the absence of being for whatever we say is not, do they?"—"Nothing other."—"When we say that something is not, are we saying that in a way it is not, but in a way it is? Or does this 'is not' signify without qualification that what is not is in no way at all and does not in any way partake of being?"—"Absolutely without qualification."—"Therefore what is not could neither be nor partake of being in any other way at all."—"No it couldn't."

And finish thus (164a-164b):

"What about this? Can the others be related to it, if necessarily, nothing belongs to it?"—"They can't."—"So the others are neither like nor unlike it, and they are neither the same as nor different from it."—"No, they aren't."—"And again: will *of that, to that, something, this, of this, of another, to another*, or time past, hereafter, or now, or knowledge, opinion, perception, and account, a name, or anything else that is be applicable to what is not?"—"It will not."—"Thus one, since it is not, is not in any state at all."—"At any rate, it certainly seems to be in no state at all."

In fact, the whole deduction turns round the contrapositive of the second pivot of *IIIA*. What is not can have no properties. This is stated at 5 of *IIIB* (164a): “But in fact, nothing that is belongs to it; for then, by partaking of that, it would partake of being.”—“Clearly.” And of course, anything one can talk about is. Every other conclusion of *IIIB* follows.

A striking fact about Deduction *III* is that Plato chooses to establish the corresponding consequences of its two parts in inverse orders. However, as I have just observed, he could have established 5 first, and then everything else would be a corollary; so he could have ordered the conclusions of *IIIB* in essentially the same order as those of *IIIA*. Why he chose not to do this, I have no idea.

Another slight oddity of *IIIA* and *IIIB* is that some conclusions in one deduction have no mates in the other. The negative half of 7 in *IIIA* could equally be in the *IIIB* column. 10 in *IIIB* is really just a summary of what precedes it. This leaves 5 and 8 of *IIIB* opposite genuine blanks. It would have been easy enough for Plato to fill them in. If one is not, then non-being belongs to it, and non-being, like all things, is. This gives 5 a mate. And Parmenides has already claimed that if something is, it is in time, and so partakes of past, present, and future (151e-152a). This gives 8 a mate. Why he did not fill in the blanks, again I have no idea.

At any rate, these aberrations aside, by the end of *IIIB*, we have established that if one is not, it has contradictory properties. We now come to the crucial question of why Plato is going through this exercise. The reason, I take it, is as follows: Plato thinks that the one is. Deduction *I* has established that it has contradictory properties. If I am right, he takes these conclusions seriously. He expects people—perhaps his own prior self, perhaps others (I will return to the question of who Plato takes his opponents to be at the end of this paper)—to object. The function of Deduction *III* is to show that you are stuck with contradictions even if you suppose that the one is not. So you might as well get used to it! This, of course, was the strategy articulated by Zeno at the very start of the dialogue.



## 13 Deduction IV (164b-165d)

And so we come to the final deduction, *IV*. It is still supposed that the one is not, but now we establish the properties of the others on this assumption. Parmenides commences Deduction *IVA* as follows (164b), and starts by establishing that the others are a plurality:

“Let’s go on and say what properties the others must have, if one is not.”—“Yes, let’s do.”—“They must surely be other; for if they weren’t even other, we wouldn’t be talking about the others.”—“Just so.”—“But if the argument is about the others, the others are different. Or don’t you apply the names ‘other’ and ‘different’ to the same thing?”—“I do.”—“And surely we say that the different is different from a different thing, and the other is other than another thing?”—“Yes.”—“So the others, too, if they are to be other, have something they will be other than?”—“Necessarily.”—“What would it be then? For they won’t be other than the one, if it is indeed not.”—“No, they won’t.”—“So they are other than each other, since that alternative remains for them, or else to be other than nothing.”—“That’s right.”

“So they each are other than each other as multitudes; for they couldn’t be so as ones, if one is not. But each mass of them, is unlimited in multitude...”

And concludes (165d-165e):

“Accordingly, if one is not and many are, the many must appear both the same as and different from each other, both in contact and separate from themselves, both moving with every motion and in every way at rest, both coming to be and ceasing to be and neither, and surely everything of that sort, which would now be easy enough for us to go through.”—“Very true indeed.”

Whether it is very true is a moot point. The arguments are getting terser and terser, and it is not clear how one would fill in all the details. The conclusions of *IVA* and *IVB* about the others are listed in the following table.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Again, the primes indicate a variation from Gill.

	Deduction IVA		Deduction IVB
		1.	Are neither one nor many.
1.	Are other than the others.		
2.	Are each a mass unlimited in multitude.		
3.	Appear one, but are not so.	2.	Don't appear to be one or many.
4.	Appear to be numbered, but are not.		
5.	Appear equal and unequal.		
6.	Appear limited and unlimited.		
7.	Appear to be both like and unlike themselves and each other.	2'(a).	Are neither like nor unlike.
7'.	Appear to be the same and different, in contact and separate, etc.	2'(b).	Are neither the same nor different, in contact or separate, etc.
8.	Appear to have all the usual opposites.	3.	Neither are nor appear to have any of the usual opposites.
		4.	Nothing is.

The most striking thing about the chain of deductions in *IVA* is the appearance of the notion of appearance. After the first few moves, each conclusion is of one of the forms:

(i) appears to be so, but is not

(ii) appears to be both so and not so

Why does Plato bring in the notion of appearances at this stage? This would certainly seem to be a nod in the direction of the historical Parmenides. The *Parmenides'* deductions start, effectively, with a recapitulation of the first part of the historical Parmenides' poem; this is about what is. The next part of his poem was about the world of appearances. So it is at least appropriate

for Plato to finish his deduction with the world of appearances as well. Let us come back to this in a moment.

Deduction *IVB* begins (165e):

“Let’s go back to the beginning once more and say what must be the case, if the one is not, but things other than the one are.”—  
“Yes, let’s do.”—“Well, the others won’t be one.”—“Obviously not.”—“And surely they won’t be many either, since oneness would also be present in things that are many. For if none of them is one, they are all nothing—so they couldn’t be many.”—“True.”—  
“If oneness isn’t present in the others, the others are neither many nor one.”—“No, they aren’t.”

And concludes (175b-175c):

“So they aren’t like or unlike either.”—“No, they aren’t.”—“And indeed, they are neither the same nor different, neither in contact nor separate, neither anything else that they appeared to be in the argument we went through before. The others neither are nor appear to be any of those things, if one is not.”—“True.”—“Then if we were to say, to sum up, ‘if one is not, nothing is,’ wouldn’t we be speaking correctly?”—“Absolutely.”

The deduction is by far the shortest, well under one Stephanus page. Parmenides—or Plato—is clearly running out of steam, and the tight correspondence between the *A* conclusions and the *B* conclusions has disappeared. For the most part, the main form of the conclusion of the *B* deduction is:

neither appears to be (so or not so), nor is (so or not so)

The first conjunct contradicts the generic form (ii) of the *A* conclusions, and the second conjunct grounds the final nihilistic conclusion: nothing is.

We may again ask what Plato is up to here. The answer is essentially as in the case for deductions *I* and *III*. Deduction *II* has shown that if the one exists, which of course Plato takes it to do, the other forms have contradictory properties. Deduction *IV* has shown that even if the one does not exist, the other forms have contradictory properties of the form: *appear*

*to be so and not so and do not appear to be so or not so.* So we may as well accept the contradictory nature of the forms anyway. As Parmenides puts it in the very last statement of the dialogue (166c):

“Let us say ..., as it seems, whether one is or is not, it and the others both are and are not, and both appear and do not appear all things in all ways, both in relation to themselves and in relation to others.”—“Very true.”

—though this is a bit of an overstatement. No conclusions about how the one appears were drawn. And the “all things in all ways” is presumably all the things and ways of the kind discussed, not literally *all* things: no attempt was made, for example, to establish that the one is a frog.<sup>55</sup>

There is a stronger point here as well. Assuming that the one is not, we now have not just contradictory conclusions, but the nihilist conclusion that nothing is (*IVB*, conclusion 4) as well. This seems even more absurd. Some things are, after all, more absurd than some contradictions: that you are a frog is more absurd than that the liar sentence is both true and false. So the final nihilistic conclusion can be seen as making the point that the consequences of the one not being are not just as bad as those of its being; they are worse.

There is an apparent problem with this line of thought, though. In deduction *IA*, Plato himself has argued that if the one exists, then it does not exist—conclusion 13. It would therefore seem that he himself is committed to the consequences of this, and so to this nihilism. What is one to say about this?<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps Plato just didn't notice the matter. After all, as we all know, it is easy to miss what is obvious in retrospect. Moreover, there is an obvious thing he could say once he does notice the matter. Deduction *IA* infers conclusion 13 from conclusion 12: the one is not in time, and so does not exist. He could just reject this conclusion, and truncate *IA* at this point.

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<sup>55</sup>It should be remembered that natural-language quantifiers normally have a range determined by the context, as in: ‘Everyone has voted’.

<sup>56</sup>I am not the first person to note this oddity. For discussion and references, see Petersen (1996).

Given his view of forms, he should have done this anyway. Moreover, and notably, the gluon model itself tells us that the non-existence of the one is *not* to be expected. The one has all the properties of the oneness of Socrates, the oneness of Plato, etc. All of these exist, so the one exists. But we cannot infer that the one does not exist in a similar way; for none of the individual onenesses have this property! Plato need not, therefore, be committed to the claim that the one is not.<sup>57</sup>

However, there is another, and more intriguing, possibility. The conclusions of deduction *III* are essentially just a reprise of things that have gone before in deductions *I* and *II*. The conclusions of deduction *IV* are quite different. As we observed, appearances enter the plot for the first time. Deduction *IVA* starts by establishing that the others are a plurality. Given Parmenides' own view, pluralities are not real; they are all appearances. And given that one is not, there are no unities either. So everything is just appearances. The rest of *IVA* merely spells out the consequences. Deduction *IVB* takes up the theme. If there are no unities, there are only pluralities; and these do not exist either. It's all appearances again. And if it's all appearances, then one can say nothing true of the form 'that something is so and so *is* the case'—not even something of the form 'that something appears to be so and so *is* the case'. And so we end up with the final spectacular nihilism: *nothing* is (the case).

Against Parmenides and the other Eleatics, this is a pretty good argument. Plato does not have to subscribe to the conclusion, however. Even if the others form a multitude, it does not follow that all is appearance. *Plato* is not committed to the view that multitudes are inherently unreal. Even if the one is not, there can still be a many; and a group of things can instantiate the form of being a manifold. The fact that something is a plurality means that it is not one. That is quite consistent with nothing *else* being a one either. The elements of a multitude, then, are multitudes. It's multitudes all

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<sup>57</sup>Nor, as far as this argument goes, to the things that follow from it, conclusions 14 and 15. However, we have already noted in connection with deduction *IB* that the gluon model delivers at least *one* understanding of conclusion 14. And Plato might well have been happy to get away from the obvious self-refutation delivered by 15.

the way down.<sup>58</sup>

I suggest, then, that Plato's real opponents in the dialogue are the Eleatics. Deduction *IV* employs the premise that pluralities are unreal enthymematically. It's not a premise that he subscribes to, but it makes for a powerful *ad hominem* argument.

## 14 Deduction IC (155e-157b)

It remains to consider the apparently anomalous appendix to Deduction *I*, *IC*. What is it doing there? In a way, this is the most puzzling feature of the deductions.

*IC* is still about the one, and starts as follows (155e-156a):

“Let's speak of it a third time. If one is as we have described it—being both one and many and neither one nor many, and partaking of time—must it not, because it is one, sometimes partake of being, and in turn because it is not, sometimes not partake of being?”—“Necessarily.”—“When it partakes, can it at that time not partake, or partake when it doesn't?”—“It cannot.”—“So it partakes at one time, and doesn't partake at another; for only in this way could it partake and not partake of the same thing.”—“That's right.”—“Isn't there, then, a definite time when it gets a share of being and when it parts from it? Or how can it at one time have and at another time not have the same thing, if it never gets and releases it?”—“In no way.”

Parmenides says that he is speaking about the one ‘for a third time’, but unlike the second, he does not go back to the beginning, but, as is clear,

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<sup>58</sup>There is a argument we noted in Deduction *IIB* which might appear to gainsay this interpretation (159d): “In no way, then, are the others one, nor do they have any oneness in them.”—“Yes, you're quite right.” “So the others aren't many either; for each of them would be one part of a whole, if they were many ...’ Each of a multitude of parts is one part of a whole, and so one. But this assumes that there are wholes (ones). This is perfectly acceptable in deduction *IIB*, which is carried out under the assumption that one is. The reasoning cannot be carried out in Deduction *IV*, which is based on the negation of this assumption.

*assumes* the results of the first two deductions. The point is that if the one both is and is not, there is no time at which both are the case. At some times it is one, at some times it is the other. The next paragraph applies the same thoughts to some other categories: one and many, like and unlike, greater and lesser, equal and unequal, rest and motion.

Many commentators<sup>59</sup> have seen this as a way of resolving the contradictions established in *IA* and *IB*. But whatever it is, it is not that. We are taking over the results of *IA* and *IB*. Indeed, it is conclusion 14 of *IB* that the one is in time. But conclusion 12 of *IA* establishes that the one is *not* in time. We still have this contradiction. If we tried to resolve it in the same way, we would get: there is a time when the one is in time, and a time when it is not in time—the second conjunction of which is just as contradictory. In any case, if this were the point of the deduction, it could finish here; but it continues. The conclusions of the deduction, for what it is worth, are as follows:

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<sup>59</sup>E.g., Gill (1996), pp. 85-6.

	<b>Deduction IC</b>
1.	The one partakes of being at one time, but doesn't partake at another.
2.	There is a definite time where one gets a share of being, and when it leaves it.
3.	The one comes to be and ceases to be when it gets and releases being.
4.	If an object moves at one time and is at rest at another, it must change from one state to the other.
5.	At this time, it is neither in motion nor at rest.
6.	There is no time at which an object is neither in motion nor at rest.
7.	The change occurs at an instant which is not in time.
8.	At the instant of change, the one is neither in motion nor at rest.
9.	At the instant of change, the one neither is nor is not, and neither comes to be nor ceases to be.
10.	Similarly with other states and processes.

When the deduction continues, it argues that if an object is in different states at different times, there must be an instant of change, which is itself outside time (156c):

“And whenever, being in motion, it comes to rest and whenever, being at rest, it changes to moving, it must itself, presumably, be in no time at all.”—“How's that?”—“It won't be able to undergo being previously at rest and later in motion or being previously in motion and later at rest without changing.”—“Obviously not.”—“Yet there is no time in which something can, simultaneously, be neither in motion nor at rest.”—“Yes, you're quite right.”—“Yet



surely it doesn't change without changing."—"Hardly."—"So when does it change? For it does not change while it is at rest or in motion, or while it is in time."—"Yes, you're quite right."

Moreover, at the instant outside time, the one is neither at rest nor in motion (156d-156e):

"Is there, then, this queer thing in which it might be, just when it changes?"—"What queer thing?"—"The instant. The instant seems to signify something such that changing occurs from it to each of the two states. For a thing doesn't change from rest while rest continues, or from motion while motion continues. Rather, this queer creature, the instant, lurks between motion and rest—being in no time at all—and to it and from it the moving thing changes to resting and the resting thing changes to moving."—"It looks that way."—"And the one, if in fact it both rests and moves, could change to each state—for only in that way could it do both. But in changing, it changes at an instant, and when it changes, it would be in no time at all, and just then would be neither in motion nor at rest."—"No, it wouldn't."

The next paragraph claims that the same is true of other pairs of states, being and not being, many and one, like and unlike, equal and unequal, etc. The subject is then abruptly dropped, and Deduction *IIA* commences.

What to make of this? The point, it is clear, is to establish something about an instant of change, outside time; and *prima facie* this something is that at this instant, neither of the pairs of states, prior and posterior, is realised. But wait a minute. Weren't these states contradictories: to be in rest is not to be in motion, and vice versa? So to be in neither of them is itself a contradiction. The instant, then, is a contradictory creature. Plato is careful to say that it is only at the same *time* that something cannot, e.g., both be and not be (155e, my italics): "When it partakes, can it *at that time* not partake, or partake when it doesn't?"—"It cannot." The instant is outside time.

It might be suggested that rest and motion, etc., are not contradictories, but contraries. The trouble with this suggestion is that the opposing pairs

are not always specified independently (rest/motion, same/different), but are frequently specified using negation. Thus, we have in Deduction *I*: is [is not] a whole (*IA*, 2; *IB*, 3), has [has not] a beginning (*IA*, 3; *IB*, 6), is [is not] in itself (*IA*, 6; *IB*, 8), is [is not] in time (*IA*, 12; *IB*, 14). And negation is a contradictory-forming operator. To say that something has neither of a pair of contradictory properties is itself contradictory.

Plato is blunt about the matter concerning one such pair: is [is not]. Just after the last passage quoted, Parmenides says (157a, my italics):

“Is it so with the other changes too? Whenever the one changes from being to ceasing-to-be, or from not-being to coming-to-be, isn’t it then between states of motion and rest? And then *it neither is nor is not*, and neither comes nor ceases to be.”

Look at the italicised claim. It says that the one is not, and it is not the case that it is not. Even without the law of double negation (which would convert this into ‘the one is not and is’), this is a flat contradiction.

There is a general point here: to say that something is neither  $\neg A$  nor  $A$  is to say  $\neg(\neg A \vee A)$ , and by De Morgan’s law,<sup>60</sup> this is equivalent to  $A \wedge \neg A$ . To be in a state of *neither* is to be in a state of *both*.

So what is going on here? *IA* and *IB* have established that the one has contradictory properties. Plato expects objections. *IC* starts with a natural one: the one is not really contradictory, since the contradictions may be defused by an appeal to time. The rest of the deduction then shows that, even if one appeals to time, one still ends up with a contradictory object: the instant.

And now, crucially: Plato puts in an appendix to Deduction *I*, but not to the others; why not? He has no reason to. If I am right, the appendix is a reply to an objection to the effect contradictions can be avoided by appealing to time. He does not have to reply to this objection more than once.

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<sup>60</sup>Which is valid in most paraconsistent logics. There is nothing about dialetheism that renders it invalid.

## 15 Putting Things into Perspective

So much for the commentary. Let me now step back and put the whole thing into perspective. According to the interpretation of the *Parmenides* I am mooted, things look like this. At some stage after Plato had formulated his theory of forms, he came to see that there were problems with it, and especially with the notion of participation. Maybe these occurred to him, himself; more likely, I would guess, they were put to him by others. The fact that he has *Parmenides* put the arguments might suggest that it was, perhaps, by some Eleatics. This is the dialogue he wrote about the problems.

In the first part of the dialogue, the problems are expounded. Plato is not sure of the exact solution, though he wants to see if they can be answered. The key to a solution, it occurs to him, could be in the contradictory nature of the forms. A satisfactory solution can not just, of course, simply accept the theory and the contradictory conclusions posed by the objections. That would be *ad hoc* and entirely unsatisfactory.<sup>61</sup> There has to be a principled and unified account of participation that solves the worries. Still, he knows that the possibility of contradictory forms is likely to meet opposition. This is what the second part of the dialogue is about.

He sets things up at the beginning of the dialogue by getting the young (and naive) Socrates to contrast the world of the forms and the world of appearances, and claim that even if the latter are contradictory, the forms are not. This is what gets knocked down in the second part of the dialogue.

Deductions *IA* and *IB* establish that the form of unity is contradictory. The conclusion is liable to force a substantial balk in members of Plato's audience; the arguments of Deduction *I* are therefore the most extensive and detailed. And it doesn't matter if not all the arguments to contradiction work, as long as some of the arguments of the barrage do. At the end of Deduction *I*, Plato imagines an opponent objecting by suggesting that the contradictions may be resolved by appealing to time. *IC* shows that this objection will not work.

For the solution to work, there must be nothing special about the contradictory nature of the form of unity. So Deduction *II* establishes that the

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<sup>61</sup>See Priest (1998), Objections 3 and 4, and more generally, Priest (2006), chs. 7, 8.

other forms have contradictory properties too.

He knows that proponents of the PNC will still want to object; they may do so by denying the assumption of deductions *I* and *II*: that Plato's one exists. So we have *III* and *IV*. These show that the consequences of its not existing (with contradictory properties) are just as bad—or even worse. This was the method reputed to have been used by Zeno in defence of Parmenides. So Plato brings Zeno into the dialogue, and has him spell out the method right at the start (128d):

“[M]y book speaks against those who assert the many and pays them back in kind with something for good measure, since it aims to make clear that their hypothesis, if one is many, would, if someone examined the matter thoroughly, suffer consequences even more absurd than those suffered by the hypothesis of its being one.”

By the end of the dialogue, the contradictory nature of the forms is defended, and the dialogue ends.

What was left for Plato to do to finish this defence of the theory of forms—the dialogue obviously ends in mid air—was to use the possibility that the forms are contradictory to articulate a principled account of the notion of participation which answered the objections to the theory of forms he had found. There are clearly thoughts that might feed into the project at places in the deductions, as we have seen; but he never succeeded in doing this—at least to judge by his extant dialogues. Maybe, like a particularly elusive form, he perceived it dimly, but was never able to get it into exact focus. As he has Parmenides say (135a-135b):

“Only a very gifted man can come to know that for each thing there is some kind, a being by itself; but only a prodigy more remarkable still will discover that and be able to teach someone else who has sifted through all these difficulties thoroughly and critically for himself.”

At any rate, over two millennia later, when the Aristotle-inspired *horror contradictionis* is finally beginning to fade, Plato's project can now be brought to fruition.

Let me end by returning to the very first oddity of the dialogue that I noted in the introduction. Why does Plato make Parmenides the driver of the dialogue? One of the things centrally under attack in the dialogue, as I have interpreted it, is the PNC. Parmenides was the first person to formulate and advocate the Principle:<sup>62</sup>

Never will this prevail, that what is not is;  
restrain your thought from this road of inquiry  
and do not let custom, based on experience, force you along this  
road,  
directing unobservant eye and echoing ear  
and tongue; but judge by reason the battle-hardened proof  
which I have spoken.

Indeed, the Principle is the cornerstone of the view that the historical Parmenides articulated and defended. Ostensibly, the *Parmenides* is a critique of Plato (in the form of Socrates) by Parmenides. But in reality, the tables are actually turned, and the dialogue is a critique of Parmenides by Plato, since it attacks this cornerstone of his view—indeed, if deduction *IV* is *ad hominem*, then Plato is thinking of Eleatics as his real opponents in the dialogue.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, in this critique, Plato not only commandeers Parmenides' argument as part of his own (in *IA*), but mischievously puts the whole argument in Parmenides' own mouth—an act of chutzpah perhaps unique in Western philosophy!

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<sup>62</sup>Barnes (1987), p. 133 f.

<sup>63</sup>For what it is worth, after Socrates' death, Plato studied with the Parmenidean Hermogenes, according to Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, III, 6.

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