All of a Sudden: The Role of Ἐξαιφνης in Plato's Dialogues

Joseph J. Cimakasky

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ALL OF A SUDDEN: THE ROLE OF ἘΞΑΙΦΝΗΣ IN PLATO’S DIALOGUES

A Dissertation
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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Joseph Cimakasky

May 2014
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ALL OF A SUDDEN: THE ROLE OF ἘΧΑΙΦΝΗΣ IN PLATO’S DIALOGUES

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ABSTRACT

ALL OF A SUDDEN: THE ROLE OF ἘΞΑΙΦΝΗΣ IN PLATO’S DIALOGUES

By
Joseph Cimakasky
May 2014

Dissertation supervised by Professor Ronald Polansky

There are thirty-six appearances of the Greek word Ἐξαίφνης in Plato’s dialogues. Usually translated as “all of a sudden” or “suddenly,” Ἐξαίφνης emerges in several significant passages. For example, Ἐξαίφνης appears three times in the “allegory of the cave” from Republic vii, and heralds the vision of the Beautiful in Symposium. Commonly translated in the Parmenides as “the instant,” Ἐξαίφνης also surfaces in a crucial section of the dialogue’s training exercise. This dissertation demonstrates the connection obtaining between the thirty-six scattered appearances of Ἐξαίφνης in order to reveal the role it plays in linking Plato’s theory of ideas with education. In short, it discloses how Plato’s step-by-step, methodical approach to philosophical education climaxes with a dynamic conversion experience signified by the appearance of Ἐξαίφνης.
DEDICATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

John W. McGinley inspired this project. He was the first philosopher to introduce me to ἑξαίφνης and the esoteric in Plato. I owe him a debt that I could never repay. There is nobody like John W. McGinley, and I am so happy that he is my friend.

Ronald Polansky directed this dissertation. I admire him more than anyone I have ever met.

Patrick Lee Miller contributed more to this dissertation than he will ever know. His courses inspired more “sudden insights” than any other.

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Chapter I – Introduction: Ἐξαίφνης in Greek Literature Prior to Plato

In Plato’s entire body of work, the Greek word Ἐξαίφνης appears precisely thirty-six times. Usually translated as “all of a sudden” or simply “suddenly,” Ἐξαίφνης emerges in some of the most significant passages of Plato’s dialogues.¹ For instance, Ἐξαίφνης appears three times in the “allegory of the cave” in Republic vii, once during the climactic moment of the “epistemological digression” from the Seventh Letter, and immediately precedes the vision of the Beautiful in Symposium. Translated in Parmenides as “the instant,” Ἐξαίφνης also surfaces in a crucial section of the training exercise that constitutes the latter two-thirds of this challenging dialogue. Because it appears that this term may be highly significant, the purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate the connection obtaining between the thirty-six scattered appearances of Ἐξαίφνης in order to reveal the role it plays in linking Plato’s theory of ideas with education.² In short, I aim to show how in several significant contexts throughout the dialogues, Plato’s step-by-step, methodical approach to philosophical education culminates with a dynamic capstone signified by the appearance of Ἐξαίφνης.³

What appears suddenly is unexpected and out of the ordinary. In Greek literature prior to Plato, “the sudden” generally indicates a quick turn for the worse. What I aim to show is that Plato shifts the meaning of the sudden to a more encouraging state of affairs. In other words,

¹ Ἐξαίφνης is a Greek adverb most commonly translated as “suddenly”. The word is formed by combining the preposition ἐκ, which becomes ἐξ when placed before a vowel, and the adverb αἴφων. Ἐξ admits of multiple meanings depending upon usage, but the most general sense of the word is from out of or away from a thing. The adverb αἴφων, or alternately ἀφων, means unawares, or of a sudden. Thus, the root meaning of Ἐξαίφνης connotes surprise, or being caught unaware all of a sudden.

² For the most part, those commentators who recognize the phenomenon either quickly dismiss it, or are at a loss to explain it. Cornford 1957, 203 offers a typical summation of Ἐξαίφνης in the dialogues: “I have not been able to understand how Plato’s businesslike account of the instant at which the various species of change occur can be connected with the ‘sudden’ vision of the Beautiful and the doctrine of anamnesis. The only link appears to be the use of the word Ἐξαίφνης in its normal sense of ‘suddenly’ at Symp. 210E, and Ep. vii, 341D.” Consequently, I shall demonstrate how the various appearances of Ἐξαίφνης are connected.

³ As a minor corollary to this objective, I will examine the emergence of the Greek words and cognates for “third” and “strange” that often accompany appearances of Ἐξαίφνης in Plato’s dialogues.
with Plato, ἔξαιφνης takes on a much more promising and positive role. Furthermore, Plato’s innovation with respect to the sudden would seem to be a result of the general orientation of philosophy as he understands it, as opposed to the Homeric worldview that had prior to Plato dominated Greek thought. Specifically, it is Plato’s distinctive conceptualization of the natural, metaphysical, and ethical spheres that differentiates his vision of the cosmos from the fatalistic spiritual climate of Homer’s Greece. For example, one special aspect of Plato’s use of the sudden is found in his non-linear development of philosophical education. In Plato’s hands ἔξαιφνης represents something akin to a flash of illumination, and this sudden illumination experience is transformative and self-sustaining. The change that it inspires is enriching and constructive. Consequently, Plato’s philosophy reorients ensuing conceptions about the sudden, and, in turn, supplants the Homeric worldview that characterized sudden change as destructive and disastrous.

The current chapter, however, reviews the use of ἔξαιφνης in all Greek literature prior to Plato in order to determine the background of his usage. There are fifty-nine instances of this term in extant Greek works previous to Plato. The earliest appearances are in Homer’s Iliad. In addition to Homer, ἔξαιφνης appears in the works of Aesop, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Thucydides, Herodotus, Isocrates, Aristophanes, and Xenophon, among others. Thus I intend to compare and contrast these early appearances in order to discern parallel meanings obtaining among the different genres these authors represent. In the examination below, the relevant passages are presented and cited, while the context and significance of each appearance of ἔξαιφνης is clarified by a brief exegesis. In this way I hope to provide a suitable foundation for an investigation of Plato’s usage of ἔξαιφνης.
Homer

That the Homeric epics were known to virtually all Greeks is beyond dispute. The popularity of these masterpieces, coupled with an egalitarian approach to literacy, served to establish the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as a cultural bond for the ancient Greeks. As Garland 2008, 6 notes, “Literacy in the Greek world was not confined to a particular social group, as it was in Egypt, for instance, where only members of the priesthood were literate. This made for far greater openness in all aspects of Greek life – civil, political, and religious.” Notwithstanding the intrinsic advantage of political transparency, the unrestricted nature of learning and literacy facilitated a shared appreciation for the Homeric epics. Consequently, the impact of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* upon ancient Greek culture was all-pervading, and thus the language and worldview of these epic poems was highly influential and determinative for subsequent Greek authors.

Not surprisingly, Plato speaks highly of Homer throughout the dialogues, calling him “the prince of epic poets” (*Laws*, 680c6-7), and “the most profound of our poets” (*Laws*, 776e7). Furthermore, upon being sentenced to death in Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates looks forward to spending time and conversing with Homer, among other Greek poets and heroes (41a-b). What’s more, his influence upon Plato and contemporaneous Greeks, and thus in all probability his words, carefully selected and perhaps refined over centuries, carried much weight. Consequently, it is Homer’s use of ἔξαίφνης that remains decisive until Plato transforms it from the original Homeric sense into a distinctive philosophical conception.

Twice ἔξαίφνης surfaces in the *Iliad* and both instances involve the sudden emergence of a raging fire. The first appearance occurs in book seventeen, which depicts the long struggle ensuing for the possession of Patroclus’ corpse. This struggle is the third portrayal of the
retrieval of a deceased combatant, as recovering the bodies of Sarpedon (16.530-683) and Kebriones (16.751-82) precedes that of Patroclus.\footnote{Edwards 1991, 19 affirms that the brief depiction of Kebriones and Sarpedon purposefully anticipates the lengthier description of Patroclus insofar as “a short form of a type-scene (or other structural pattern) precedes a fuller version, as if to familiarize the hearer with the concept before its most significant occurrence.”} With the battle raging on, Patroclus’ body is being removed from the fight:

Thus the two were hurrying to carry the corpse out of the battle to the hollow ships, and against them was strained a conflict fierce as fire that, rushing on a city of men with sudden (ἐξαιρήσις) onset, sets it aflame, and houses fall in the mighty glare, and the might of the wind drives it roaring on (17.735-740).

The unpredictable nature of both fire and war makes for a seemingly apt comparison. Edwards 1991, 135 links this passage with subsequent sections featuring battle and blaze occurring at 18.207-13, 21.522-4, and 22.410-11 and concludes that “It is hard not to think this sequence of similes rises to an intentional culmination.” Likewise, the repossession of Patroclus’ corpse is the conclusion of similar vignettes involving Sarpedon and Kebriones. Thus, it appears as though ἐξαιρήσις marks the termination of the structural pattern that begins with Kebriones and Sarpedon, and initiates a new structural pattern insofar as it foreshadows the similarities between uncontrollable fire and ferocious combat.

The second example of ἐξαιρήσις appears in book twenty-one. Patroclus’ death enrages Achilles, and his fury divides the Trojans into two separate groups. While one party flees toward the city, the other faction is forced into the river Xanthus. Homer again compares the frenzy of battle with the sudden emergence of fire:

And as before the onrush of fire locusts take wing to flee to a river, and the unwearied fire burns them as it comes on suddenly (ἐξαιρήσις), and they cower down into the water; so before Achilles was the sounding stream of deep-eddying Xanthus filled with chariots and men in confusion (21.10-15).
While the locusts seek refuge in the river, it is here that scores of Trojans will meet their demise.

Although both appearances of ἐξαίφνης in the Iliad feature fire and war, it would seem that Homer’s use of a sudden fire is a metaphor for the destructive consequences and volatile nature of thoughtless rage.

Nevertheless, perhaps the similarity between fire/anger and combat is just a microcosm of the unpredictability of the natural world. Martin 1997, 160-161 cites a passage from Pindar (Olympian 9.52) that also employs ἐξαίφνης to form a hypothesis regarding Homer’s intentions:

If we imagine that the primordial flood scene alluded to in Pindar recapitulates some mythic narrative, and does so with a conventional signal (the adverb ἐξαίφνης), then we can speculate that the similes about sudden fire key the audience to similar mythic descriptions of cosmic disaster, over and above the explicit martial conflict in the similes.

According to Martin’s reading, ἐξαίφνης signifies catastrophic cosmic change. Thus, regardless of context, whether it is war or the volatility of nature itself, the use of ἐξαίφνης in Homer’s Iliad suggests something both ominous and transformative.

Aesop

Like Homer, Aesop’s true identity and the extent to which we may attribute his fables to his own hand remains open to discussion. Traditional accounts suggest that Aesop was born a slave somewhere in Asia Minor approximately 620 B.C. and employed as an emissary by Croesus, king of Lydia. Questionable reports of his life and circumstances notwithstanding, it is his work as a fabulist, and his insights concerning the human condition, that have earned him lasting fame.

Aesop would seem to hold a special place in Plato’s dialogues. After all, it is Aesop’s fables that Socrates decides to put to verse while awaiting his execution in Plato’s Phaedo. He claims that a longtime dream instructing him to “practice and cultivate the arts” had led him to
try his hand at poetry in the event that he was mistaken for having interpreted the dream to mean he should spend his life practicing philosophy (60d-61a). This interestingly suggests that Plato’s Socrates is willing to question his decisions in life until the very end.

Ἐξαίφνης appears twice in Aesop’s fables. It first surfaces in “The Wolf and the Lion”:

A wolf stole a lamb from the flock, and was carrying it off to devour it at his leisure when he met a lion, who suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) took his prey away from him and walked off with it. He dared not resist, but when the lion had gone some distance he said, “It is most unjust of you to take what is mine away from me like that.” The lion laughed and called out in reply, “It was justly yours, no doubt! The gift of a friend perhaps, eh?”

It appears again in fable entitled “The Prophet”:

A prophet sat in the marketplace and told the fortunes of all who cared to engage his services. Suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) there came running up one who told him that his house had been broken into by thieves, and that they made off with everything they could lay hands on. He was up in a moment, and rushed off, tearing his hair and calling down curses on the miscreants. The bystanders were much amused, and one of them said, “Our friend professes to know what is going to happen to others, but it seems he’s not clever enough to perceive what’s in store for himself.”

Aesop’s use of ἐξαίφνης indicates that the term represents an abrupt reversal of fortune. Furthermore, both fables characterize the sudden change of fortune as a fair outcome. For example, the wolf commits an injustice by stealing a lamb from the shepherd, and then “suddenly” finds himself in the shepherd’s role as he becomes the victim of a more cunning and more powerful predator. Likewise, the prophet is depicted as preying upon susceptible citizens in the marketplace when “suddenly” he is informed that his possessions have been stolen. Thus, in both fables Aesop employs ἐξαίφνης to signify a dramatic change of events, the likes of which characterize the perpetrators of an injustice as receiving their just desserts. Aesop, like Homer,

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5 English translations are from Jones 2003. Greek editions are from Chambry 1926. Jones 2003 numbers “The Wolf and the Lion” as 120, and “The Prophet” as 130. Chambry 1926 lists “The Wolf and the Lion” as number 228, and “The Prophet” as 234. Both translations in Chambry are identified as alternate versions.
employs ἐξαιφνης in similar contexts, indicating, again like Homer, the intrinsic unpredictability of a “sudden” turn of events. Nevertheless, Aesop adds a new wrinkle insofar as his use of ἐξαιφνης suggests an unexpected reversal of fortune and an implied righting of a wrong.

The Great Tragedians

Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides are the most celebrated of all the ancient Greek tragic playwrights. All of these poets are mentioned in Plato’s dialogues. More often than not, however, Aeschylus’ words, for instance, are cited as examples not to be followed in the construction of Kallipolis in Republic. Nevertheless, in Plato’s Gorgias Socrates decides “to use the language of Aeschylus” from his Seven Against Thebes to describe the true function of statesmanship: “…this art alone sits at the helm of the state, governing all things, ruling all things, and making all things useful” (Gorgias, 291d1-3).

Aeschylus employs ἐξαιφνης only once in all of his extant works. It appears in line 1077 of his Prometheus Bound. Here Aeschylus contrasts Prometheus’ willing disobedience of Zeus with unintended disobedience, and uses ἐξαιφνης to delineate the difference between deliberate defiance and involuntary impiety:

Hermes: Well, remember what I have proclaimed, and when disaster hunts you down do not complain about your fate, nor ever say that Zeus cast you into a calamity that you had not foreseen. No, indeed; you will have brought it upon yourselves, for knowingly, not by surprise (ἐξαιφνης) nor by deception, you will have been caught up in the inescapable net of disaster through your own folly (1071-1079).

Thus ἐξαιφνης is translated as “surprise” and coupled with “deception” in contradistinction to the calculated actions performed by Prometheus. Aeschylus’ utilization of ἐξαιφνης retains the ominous undercurrent of a damaging transformation insofar as it signals the fate of Prometheus as decreed by Zeus in the concluding passage of Prometheus Bound. On a related note, Griffith

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6 See Republic iii, 381d; iii, 383b; iii, 391e; viii, 550c; and viii, 563c.
1983, I describes *Prometheus Bound* as “designed mainly to illustrate Zeus’ supreme intelligence, and the futility of any attempt to outwit him.” Consequently, the climactic moment of the tragedy suggests that calamitous events happening by “surprise” (ἐξαίφνης) were familiar enough phenomena and indeed worthy of sympathy, but Prometheus’ headstrong defiance and Hermes’ blunt assessment of his fate implies that one should not invite disaster intentionally when it so often comes without warning.

Sophocles is mentioned twice in Plato’s works and in general fares more favorably than Aeschylus. In the *Phaedrus* he is depicted along with Euripides as a master playwright distinguished from pretentious novices in order to demonstrate the breadth and depth of tragic poetry and the training needed to acquire proper expertise. In *Republic* i Cephalus, in speaking of the benefits of old age, relays a story regarding Sophocles’ acquisition of temperance:

Indeed, I was once present when someone asked the poet Sophocles: “How are you as far as sex goes, Sophocles? Can you still make love with a woman?” “Quiet, man,” the poet replied, “I am very glad to have escaped from all that, like a slave who has escaped from a savage and tyrannical master.” I thought at the time that he was right, and I still do, for old age brings peace and freedom from all such things (*Republic* i, 329b5-c5).

Ἐξαίφνης appears six times in five of his plays. In *Ajax*, the term is used by the chorus in counseling Ajax of the nature of those scheming against him, who would reveal themselves as cowards if Ajax were to appear without warning:

Such are the men that clamor against you, and we have not the strength to defend ourselves against them without you, my lord. But when they have escaped your eye, they chatter like flocks of birds; yet were you suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) to appear, they would take fright before the great vulture and cower in silence, voiceless (170).
In *The Women of Trachis*, ἐξαίφνης is used by the nurse in describing the impending suicide of Deianeira:

And when she had ceased from that, suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) I saw her burst into the marriage chamber of Heracles, and watched her, hiding my face; and I saw the woman casting blankets on the bed of Heracles (912-913).

In his *Philoctetes*, Neoptolemus is in the midst of trying to deceive Philoctetes into giving him his sacred bow when the pain of a prior snake bite strikes Philoctetes with particular acuity. Neoptolemus asks, “What is this sudden (ἐξαίφνης) new thing that makes you cry out and groan so much?” (751)

There are two appearances of ἐξαίφνης in *Oedipus at Colonus*, and both surface during the climactic passage describing the supernatural circumstances surrounding Oedipus’ death. The first occurs immediately following a thunderclap heralding Oedipus’ demise:

But when he heard the sudden (ἐξαίφνης) bitter sound, he opened his arms to them, and said, ‘My children, on this day your father is no more!’ (1610-1611)

The second appearance of ἐξαίφνης in *Oedipus at Colonus* is used to illustrate the onset of horror upon hearing the strange and insistent call of a god:

Thus, clinging closely to each other, all of them sobbed; but when they came to the end of their lamenting, and no sound still rose up, there was silence, and suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) the voice of someone hailed him, so that the hair of all stood upright in terror. For the god called him often and from many places: “You there, Oedipus, why do we wait to go? You have delayed too long!” (1620-1625)

Finally, in *Antigone*, Sophocles uses ἐξαίφνης in depicting an abrupt natural transformation:

This lasted until the bright circle of the sun took its place in the sky and the midday heat began to roast us; and then suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) a whirlwind on the ground raised up a storm, a trouble in the air, and filled the plain, tormenting all the foliage of the woods that covered the ground there; and the vast sky was filled with it, and we shut our eyes and endured the godsent affliction (416-418).
The common thread running through all of Sophocles’ plays where ἔξαίφνης surfaces is the sense of malevolence that accompanies each appearance. Clearly one can expect to find many instances of catastrophe and misfortune when reading tragic poetry, but Sophocles’ use of ἔξαίφνης suggests that when the term appears it engenders an immediate intensification, or heightened sense, of the calamities that typify Greek tragedy. In Ajax it is fear that follows ἔξαίφνης, in The Women of Trachnis it is suicide, in Philoctetes it is acute pain, In Oedipus at Colonus it is imminent death and terror, and in Antigone the appearance of ἔξαίφνης is followed by a whirlwind. Thus, Sophocles uses the term as a marker for signifying the sudden emergence of a terrifying event.

Of the three great tragic playwrights Euripides is the one most often cited in Plato’s dialogues. Although Socrates ultimately bans Euripides from Republic’s Kallipolis for his “praise [of] tyranny”, he does acknowledge that “tragedy in general has the reputation of being wise and that Euripides is thought to be outstandingly so” (Republic viii, 568a6-b6).

Ἐξαίφνης appears four times in three of Euripides’ plays. In his Hippolytus, it emerges during the decisive scene when a love-struck Phaedra admits to her nurse that she desires her step-son, Hippolytus. The nurse responds: “Queen, thine affliction, suddenly (ἔξαίφνης) revealed / But now, wrought in me terrible dismay” (434). It surfaces again in Iphigeneia in Tauris during the climactic escape from Tauris of Iphigeneia and her brother Orestes. Here the messenger of king Thoas describes how the ship became abruptly lodged upon the shores of Tauris, thereby temporarily preventing their getaway:

The ship made way, while yet within the bay; but as she cleared its mouth, by fierce surge met, she labored heavily; for suddenly (ἔξαίφνης) swooped a wild gust on the ship, stern-foremost thrusting her (1392-1395).
Finally, ἔξαίφνης appears twice in Euripides’ *Phoenician Women*. It first appears as the messenger is relaying to Jocasta news of the furious battle underway:

To begin with, we fought with bows and thonged javelins, with slings that shoot from far and crashing stones; and as we were conquering, Tydeus and your son suddenly (ἔξαίφνης) cried aloud: “You sons of Danaus, before you are torn to pieces by their attack, why delay to fall upon the gates with all your might, light-armed and cavalry and charioteers?” (1140-1144).

It appears again during the messenger’s report to Creon describing the chaotic aftermath of the death of Eteocles and his brother Polyneices:

Then rushed the foe to arms; but Cadmus’ folk by happy forethought under shield had halted; so we forestalled the Argive host, and fell suddenly (ἔξαίφνης) on them yet unfenced for fight (1466-1469).

As with Aeschylus and Sophocles, the emergence of ἔξαίφνης in Euripides’ tragedies heralds an unfavorable, and generally destructive, consequence. In view of the fact that misfortune and disaster are themselves principal characteristics of Greek tragedy, it is possible, indeed perhaps likely, that the appearance of ἔξαίφνης signifies nothing more than a routine use of the term to designate the oftentimes unexpected and catastrophic nature of change as it relates to human affairs. Nevertheless, ἔξαίφνης emerges in some of the most pivotal dramatic scenes, and evidently its appearance evokes the tragic transformation needed to drive the action forward, heighten emotional response, and engender a cathartic reaction.

**Aristophanes**

The comic playwright Aristophanes, a contemporary of both Socrates and Plato, enjoys a curious relationship to both men. On the one hand his memorable speech in praise of love figures prominently in Plato’s *Symposium* (189a-193e), and the uncharacteristic seriousness of his intent is confirmed by his concluding wish that the others “don’t make a comedy of it” (193d8). On the other hand the *Apology* finds Socrates pointing to Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, where Socrates is
depicted as an unscrupulous charlatan, as the origin of his reputation for atheism and sophistry. Sheehan 2007, 11 contends “Learned disagreement continues as to the nature of the playwright’s attitude towards Socrates and, given the fact that Aristophanes appears as a friend of the philosopher [Socrates] in Plato’s Symposium, it is not necessarily as personally hostile as at first might appear.”

Irrespective of the place Aristophanes occupies within the dialogues and his relationship to Socrates and Plato, ἔξαίφνης appears eleven times in his extant and complete comedies. It is perhaps likely that Aristophanes’ frequent use of the term evidences a deliberate imitation of the tragedians. The aforementioned Clouds features four instances of ἔξαίφνης. The term also appears in the comedies Wasps, Lysistrata, Frogs, and Wealth. All occurrences found in Aristophanes’ works have been reproduced below:

Clouds

Socrates: Clouds turn into anything they want. Thus, if they see a savage with long hair, one of these furry types, like the son of Xenophantus, they mock his obsession by making themselves look like centaurs.

Strepsiades: And what if they look down and see a predator of public funds like Simon, what do they do?

Socrates: To expose his nature they immediately (ἔξαίφνης) turn into wolves (348-352).

Socrates: I’ll teach you from your own person. Have you ever gorged yourself with soup at the Panathenaea and then had an upset stomach, and a sudden (ἔξαίφνης) turmoil sets it all arumble? (386-388)

7 See Apology 18cd1, and 19b4-c1. It stands to reason that Plato’s condemnation of some forms of poetry was, at least in part, due to the misconceptions many Athenians held with respect to Socrates and the way he was depicted in Clouds.

8 ἔξαίφνης also appears in a fragment of the lost comedy Banqueters. This particular fragment (225) is not a complete sentence, and as such, appears untranslatable: ἐθέλον βᾶσις πρὸς ναυτοδίκας ξένον ἔξαίφνης. Likewise, there is another fragment from the lost play Wealth-Gods by the comic poet Cratinus, who along with Aristophanes and Eupolis constitute the “Three of Old Comedy,” that appears untranslatable: “…of life …prophetic …suddenly (ἔξαίφνης)” (41). See Storey 2011, 347-351.

9 The English translations are from Henderson 1998.
Strepsiades: By Zeus, exactly the same thing happened to me one time at the Diasia, when I was cooking a haggis for my relatives and forgot to make a slit. So it bloated up, then suddenly (ἐξαιφνης) it exploded, spattering gore in my eyes and burning my face (410).

Chorus: How momentous it is to lust for villainous business, like this old man: in the grip of this lust, he wants to avoid repaying the money he borrowed. And today for sure, he’ll lay hold of some business that will make this sophist suddenly (ἐξαιφνης) pay dearly for all the wrongful activities he undertook. For I think he’ll soon find what he’s long been asking for, a son grown formidable at arguing views counter to what’s right, so that he can beat anyone he may meet, even if he argues what’s totally bad. But maybe, just maybe, his father will wish his son were mute (1308-1313).

Wasps

Xanthias: Look: first a man, then suddenly (ἐξαιφνης) a plover; isn’t it plain as day that Theorus is up and leaving us and going to the vultures? (49)

Lovecleon: Friends, I’ve been pining all this time, listening to you through this chink. But since I can’t sing, what am I to do? These men are watching me because I’m ever ready to go with you to the voting urns and cause some pain. Ah, great thundering Zeus, turn me right now (ἐξαιφνης) into hot air, like Proxenides or the son of Bluster here, that climbing vine (322-324).

Loathecleon: No, I think the same thing’s happened to him that once happened to Thucydides when he was on trial: his jaws suddenly (ἐξαιφνης) got paralyzed. Move over for me; I’ll present your defense. It is difficult, gentlemen of the jury, to speak on behalf of a slandered dog, but speak I shall. For he’s a good dog, and he chases away the wolves (947-949).

Lysistrata

Cinesias: Yes, vile, vile! O Zeus, Zeus, please hit her like a heap of grain with a great tornado and firestorm, sweeping her up and twirling her into the sky, and then let go and let her fall back down to earth again, to land suddenly (ἐξαιφνης) on the point of my hard-on! (977-978)

Frogs

Dionysus: Anyway, as I was on deck reading Andromeda to myself, a sudden (ἐξαιφνης) longing struck my heart, you can’t imagine how hard (53).

Dionysus: I can’t put it into words, but I’ll try to explain it to you by analogy. Have you ever had a sudden (ἐξαιφνης) craving for minestrone? (62)

Wealth

Blepsidemus: There’s something shady about this merchandise, and I don’t like it. Such very sudden (ἐξαιφνης) wealth combined with trepidation suggests a man who’s up to no good (352-353).
All eleven instances of ἐξαίφνης found in the comedies of Aristophanes are followed by a
dramatic alteration of some sort. In Clouds the billows turn suddenly into wolves, Wasps
describes change into a bird, and then hot air, and Wealth speaks of the abrupt character change
following the unexpected accumulation of riches. Both appearances in Frogs depict the
disruptive onset of an impulsive yearning, while Cinesias in Lysistrata implores Zeus to
“reposition” his intimacy-withholding wife. Furthermore, many appearances have an undertone
of mischievousness that range from comic malice to full-fledged spite. Thus, the striking
transformations coupled with the oftentimes malevolent undercurrent positions Aristophanes
among both his predecessors and contemporaries with respect to his use of ἐξαίφνης as signaling
a destructive change.

The Historians

Herodotus and Thucydides are preeminent among the ancient Greek historians prior to
Plato. The Histories investigates Athens’ wars with Persia and is Herodutus’ only known work,
while Thucydides’ History of the Peloponnesian War documents Greece’s war with Sparta.
Herodotus is not mentioned by name in the dialogues, but Plato was certainly conversant with his
work. In Republic viii a passage from his Histories is quoted to illustrate the plight of a wealthy
man in the advent of an emerging tyranny. Likewise, Thucydides’ influence is evident in
Plato’s dialogues, despite not being referred to by name.  

10 Socrates describes the rich man’s dilemma: “And when a wealthy man sees this and is charged with being an
deny of the people because of his wealth, then as the oracle to Croesus put it, he ‘Flees to the banks of the many
pebbled Hermus, / Neither staying put nor being ashamed of his cowardice’” (Rep. viii, 566c2-5).
11 See, for example, Plato’s Laches, a dialogue that utilizes information from Thucydides’ History of the
Peloponnesian War. For a more in-depth study of Thucydides’ influence as it relates to Plato, see Gerald M. Mara’s
The Civic Conversations between Thucydides and Plato: Classic Political Philosophy and the Limits of Democracy
(2009).
'Εξαίφνης appears only once in Herodotus’ *Histories*, and it emerges at a decisive moment in the concluding Book ix. In short, Alexander the Macedonian king informs the Athenians that the Persians under their general Mardonius are about to strike:

But if this war end as you would wish, then must you take thought how to save me too from slavery, who of my zeal have done so desperate a deed as this for the cause of Hellas, in my desire to declare to you Mardonius’ intent, that so the foreigners may not fall upon you suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) when you do not expect them (*Histories* ix.45).

Herodotus employs ἐξαίφνης to capture the abrupt and harmful consequences of a Persian sneak-attack. Thus, Alexander’s warning allows the Athenians, in concert with the Spartans, to make the necessary strategic adjustments before the Persians can mount an unexpected strike.

Although the historian Thucydides is not mentioned in any of Plato’s dialogues, his *History of the Peloponnesian War* is the most famous account of the war between Athens and Sparta and surely Plato was familiar with this great work. Thucydides employs ἐξαίφνης a total of seven times in his account of the Peloponnesian war, and all of the appearances are as follows:

That year, as was agreed by all, happened to be unusually free from disease so far as regards the other maladies; but if anyone was already ill of any disease all terminated in this. In other cases from no obvious cause, but suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) and while in good health, men were seized first with intense heat of the head, and redness and inflammation of the eyes, and the parts inside the mouth, both the throat and the tongue, immediately became blood-red and exhaled an unnatural and fetid breath (2.49).

When not long afterwards the Athenians arrived and saw the state of affairs, their general delivered their orders, and then, as the Mytilenaeans did not hearken to them, began hostilities. But the Mytilenaeans, being unprepared for war and forced to enter upon it without warning (ἐξαίφνης), merely sailed out a short distance beyond their harbor, as though offering battle; then, when they had been chased to shore by Athenian ships, they made overtures to the generals, wishing, if possible, to secure some sort of reasonable terms and thus get rid of the fleet for the present (3.4).

But the Argives and their allies, on seeing them, took up a position that was steep and difficult of access, and drew up for battle. The Lacedaemonians went against them at once, advancing within a stone’s throw or a javelin’s cast; then one of the older men, seeing that they were going against a stronger place, called out to Agis that he thought to cure one ill with another, meaning that the
motive of his present unseasonable eagerness was to make amends for the culpable retreat from Argos. Agis, then, whether on account of this call, or because it suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) struck him, too, that some other course was better than the one he was following, led his army back again in all haste without coming into conflict (5.65).

And when the Siceliots were already on the march, the Sicels did as the Athenians requested, and setting an ambush and falling suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) upon the Siceliots while they were off their guard, destroyed about eight hundred of them and all the envoys except one, the Corinthian; and he conducted those who made their escape, about fifteen hundred in number, to Syracuse (7.32).

The Syracusan commanders accordingly being won over to this plan, sent a messenger, and the market was prepared, then the Syracusans, suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) rowing astern, sailed back to the city, where they disembarked and at once made their dinner on the spot (7.40).

But suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) the Syracusans manned their ships and again sailed against them; whereupon the Athenians, in great confusion and most of them without food, embarked in disorder and at last with much ado got under way (7.40).

But the Athenians, who were at Sestus with eighteen ships, when their signallers gave them notice and they observed the sudden (ἐξαίφνης) blaze of numerous fires on the hostile shore, realized that the Peloponnesians were entering the straits (8.102).

Thucydides’ various uses of ἐξαίφνης are similar to the previous instantiations by other authors insofar as its appearance signals an abrupt transformation and concomitant harmful result.

For example, the onset of the plague is described as striking “suddenly” (ἐξαίφνης) against men who were in “good health” (2.49), while “without warning” (ἐξαίφνης) the Mytilenaeans face the start of battle (3.4). Furthermore, like Homer, Thucydides employs ἐξαίφνης to exemplify the beginning of an unexpected fire when the arrival of the Spartans is heralded by the advent of “the sudden (ἐξαίφνης) blaze of numerous fires on the hostile shore” (8.102). Here the “sudden blaze of numerous fires” captures something of the chaotic and arresting imagery of imminent combat.12

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12 It is perhaps only coincidental, but Thucydides’ portrayal of the onset of the plague might be interpreted in a similar vein to the Homeric sudden emergence of a raging fire, albeit the internal “fire” of those suffering from the feverish consequences of the disease: “…suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) and while in good health, men were seized first with intense heat of the head, and redness and inflammation of the eyes, and the parts inside the mouth, both the throat and the tongue, immediately became blood-red, and exhaled an unnatural and fetid breath” (2.49).
Thucydides also utilizes ἐξαίφνης in a rather innovative sense when he depicts the Spartan king Agis as being “suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) struck” with an idea (5.65). In brief, Agis decides to revise abruptly his strategy upon realizing that the Spartans’ current engagement against the Athenians was inopportune. Thus Thucydides employs ἐξαίφνης here as a startling flash of insight, and not as portent of harmful and catastrophic change.

The Orators

Isocrates and his student Isaeus are among the most venerated of ancient Greek rhetoricians. Plato does not mention Isaeus in the dialogues, but evidently had some regard for his contemporary, Isocrates. At the conclusion of Phaedrus, Socrates claims Isocrates “can outdo anything that Lysias has accomplished in his speeches; and he also has a nobler character” (279a4-5), while also claiming that “nature… has placed the love of wisdom in his mind” (279a10-b1).

There are two appearances of ἐξαίφνης in the extant works of Isocrates. The first surfaces in his On the Peace:

I have said these things at the outset because in the rest of my discourse I am going to speak without reserve and with complete frankness. For suppose that a stranger from another part of the world were to come to Athens, having had no time to be tainted with our depravity, but brought suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) face to face with what goes on here, would he not think that we are mad and bereft of our senses, seeing that we plume ourselves upon the deeds of our ancestors and think fit to eulogize our city by dwelling upon the achievements of their time and yet act in no respect like them but do the very opposite? (41.4)

The second occurs in his autobiographical Antidosis:

So concerned was he that none of the cities should in the slightest degree suspect him of sinister designs that whenever he intended to take his fleet to any of the cities which had been remiss in their contributions, he sent word to the authorities and announced his coming beforehand, lest his appearance without warning (ἐξαίφνης) in front of their ports might plunge them into disquiet and confusion; and if he happened to harbor his fleet in any place, he would never permit his soldiers to plunder and pillage and sack the people’s houses, but took as great precautions to prevent such an occurrence as owners would take to guard their own possessions; for his mind
was not upon winning for himself the good opinion of his soldiers by such licence, but upon winning for Athens the good opinion of the Hellenes (123.6).

The context of the first appearance of ἐξαιφνης in *On the Peace* illustrates Isocrates’ desire to end the aggressive, hard line tactics employed by the Athenians with respect to foreign policy. Here a “stranger” unfamiliar with the conceit of existing Athenian politicians would be astonished by their arrogance and lack of historical understanding if he were “suddenly” (ἐξαιφνης) made aware of their current political activities.

Isocrates’ other use of ἐξαιφνης appears in his *Antidosis*. In his account of the characteristics of a good general, and using Timotheus as an exemplar of martial nobility, Isocrates describes the measures Timotheus would take to ensure his arrival would not be misconstrued as an act of aggression. Presumably, an arrival “without warning” (ἐξαιφνης) by Timotheus would, as Isocrates indicates, “plunge” the citizenry “into disquiet and confusion.” Consequently, Isocrates’ use of ἐξαιφνης suggests the sort of abrupt transformation with negative consequences that typifies the previous examples by various ancient Greek sources.

Isaeus, a student of Isocrates, and teacher of Demosthenes, employs ἐξαιφνης but once, in a speech written to resolve the dispute over the contested assets of Pyrrhus in his *On the Estate of Pyrrhus*, one of the only eleven extant speeches from Isaeus:

You all know that, when we are proceeding to a deliberate act which necessitates the presence of witnesses, we habitually take with us our closest acquaintances and most intimate friends as witnesses of such acts; but of unforeseen acts carried out on the spur of the moment (ἐξαιφνης), we always call in the testimony of any chance persons (19.7).

Here Isaeus is attempting to demonstrate the improbability of a marriage between the sister of Nicodemus and the deceased Pyrrhus. He cites the requisite use, and varying types, of witnesses to determine the forethought with which an event was planned. In short, the sworn deposition of a random witness to the supposed wedding is indicative of the fraudulent nature of the marriage
since “chance persons” are more likely to be used as witnesses when the act is unexpected and performed “on the spur of the moment” (ἐξαίφνης).

**Xenophon**

Along with Plato and Aristophanes, the gentleman-soldier Xenophon was a contemporary of Socrates who gave a memorable account of his life and activities. While Plato’s Socrates is perhaps the more dramatic and cherished portrayal, Xenophon’s account of Socrates is not without charm and vibrancy.\(^\text{13}\) He wrote four works celebrating the inimitable character of his friend Socrates: *Memorabilia, Apology, Banquet,* and *Economics.* Although Xenophon is nowhere mentioned in any of Plato’s dialogues, surely Plato would be familiar with a competing author in the same genre, e.g., Socratic dialogues, and especially inasmuch as two of his works share the same name.

With a total of seventeen appearances, Xenophon uses ἐξαίφνης more than any author other than Plato.\(^\text{14}\) His *Anabasis,* an account of Xenophon’s command of ten thousand Greek mercenaries fighting an ill-fated war in support of the Persian Cyrus the Younger, features six appearances of ἐξαίφνης:

“For Xenophon,” they went on, “wishes and is urging that as soon as the ships come, we should then say all of a sudden (ἐξαίφνης) to the army: ‘Soldiers, now we see that you are without means either to supply yourselves with provisions on the homeward voyage, or to do anything for your people at home assuming you get back there; but if you wish to pick out some spot in the country that lies round about the Euxine and put to shore wherever you may wish – he who so desires to go back home and he who desires to stay behind – here are your ships, so that you could make a sudden (ἐξαίφνης) attack at whatever point you may wish’” (5.6, 20.1 and 20.7).

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\(^\text{13}\) According to Sheehan 2007, 6 “Xenophon’s depiction of the philosopher was influential for a long time and formed the basis of Francois Charpentier’s *Life of Socrates,* first published in 1650. It was only with the Romantic movement in the late 18\(^{\text{th}}\) century that the more ironic and opaque Socrates found in Plato was embraced instead. Amongst scholars today, there is still a pronounced tendency to underplay the value of Xenophon’s portrayal, failing to recognize that Socrates might have been so complex as to appeal in different ways to different people. Xenophon’s Socrates is similar to Plato’s in his philosophical style, but this comes across in tamer contexts and without the artistry of a literary author like Plato.”

\(^\text{14}\) Of course, we have more of Xenophon’s works than many other authors.
While we were in session outside the camp, we suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) heard a great uproar and shouts of ‘Strike! Strike! Pelt! Pelt!’ and in a moment we saw a crowd of men rushing toward us with stones in their hands and others picking up stones (5.7, 21.1).

The Arcadians, managing to obtain ships from the Heracleots, set sail first, with the intention of making an unexpected (ἐξαίφνης) descent upon the Bithynians and thus securing the greatest possible amount of booty; and they disembarked at Calpe Harbor, about midway of the Thracian coast (6.2, 17.2).

They also fixed upon a hill as the place where all the troops were afterwards to gather; and since their onset was unexpected (ἐξαίφνης), they took many captives and secured a large number of sheep (6.3, 3.2).

It was now past midday, and, having led the army forward, they were engaged in taking provisions from the villages – anything there was to be seen within the limits of their line – when suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) they caught sight of the enemy passing over some hills which lay opposite them, his force consisting of horsemen in large numbers and foot soldiers, all in battle formation; in fact, it was Spithridates and Rhathines, who had been sent out with their army by Pharnabazus (6.5, 7.3).

Xenophon seems to employ ἐξαίφνης in the Anabasis as a way to signify the unpredictable nature of war. In other words, the abrupt manner that circumstances change in battle dictate that a good general must try to account for the sudden and unexpected in order to transform the instability into advantage. What’s more, Xenophon indicates that a combat strategy characterized by sudden and unforeseen troop movements is invaluable.

There are five appearances of ἐξαίφνης in The Art of Horsemanship, Xenophon’s treatise on the selection and training of horses and cavalry troops:

The reason why we recommend this method of mounting also is, that no sooner is the rider mounted than he is quite ready to fight with the enemy on a sudden (ἐξαίφνης), if occasion requires (7, 4.3).

So as soon as the horse appears to have been exercised enough, it is well to let him rest a certain time, and then suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) to put him to his top speed again, of course away from, not towards, other horses, and to pull him up again in the midst of his career as short as possible, and then to turn and start him again from the stand (7, 18.3).

If the horse springs suddenly (ἐξαίφνης), he should lean forward; for so the horse is less likely to slip away and throw the rider off (8, 7.2).
It is also a good plan, in case of a collision between them, for one to pull his adversary towards him and suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) push him back again, since that is the way to dismount him (8, 11.2).

Any sudden (ἐξαίφνης) sign disturbs a spirited horse, just as unexpected sights and sounds and sensations disturb a man (9, 4.1).

Here again one can see that Xenophon appreciates the role that sudden activities might play in a combat environment, while also acknowledging the impulsive movements of a strong-willed horse. In addition to his recommendations for dealing with a spirited steed (e.g., an abrupt motion by the horse can be counteracted by the rider leaning forward), Xenophon also advocates sudden action in order to catch an enemy combatant off guard.

Ἐξαίφνης surfaces three times in Hellenica, Xenophon’s report of the concluding years of the Peloponnesian war and its aftermath:

Callicratidas, however, sailed down upon him suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) and captured ten of his ships, Diomedon escaping with his own ship and another (1.6, 23.2).

Now while they were on the march, the army being by no means in battle formation, since they supposed that the enemy had gone on ahead into the territory of the Ephesians, on a sudden (ἐξαίφνης) they saw scouts on the burial-mounds in front of them; and when they also sent men to the tops of the mounds and towers in their neighborhood, they made out an army drawn up in line of battle where their own road ran – Carians with white shields, the entire Persian force which chanced to be at hand, all the Greek troops which each of the two satraps had, and horsemen in great numbers, those of Tissaphernes upon the right wing and those of Pharnabazus upon the left (3.2, 14.8).

And once, when he was already withdrawing in the direction of his camp, the cavalry of the Thebans, up to that moment invisible, suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) dashed out through the exits which had been made in the stockade, and inasmuch as the peltasts of Agesilaus were going away to dinner or were making their preparations for doing so, while the horsemen were some of them still dismounted and others in the act of mounting, the Thebans charged upon them; and they not only struck down a large amount of peltasts, but among the horsemen Cleas and Epicydidas, who were Spartiatae, one of the Perioeci, Eudicus, and some Theban exiles, such as had not yet mounted their horses (5.4, 39.3).

Yet again, Xenophon’s use of ἐξαίφνης indicates that he might see the term as a way to depict the unexpected changes that emerge in circumstances of war.
There is one appearance of ἐξαίφνης in both *On Hunting*, Xenophon’s treatise concerning
the use of dogs in hunting and related matters, and *Cyropaedia*, his fictionalized account of the
education and upbringing of the Persian king Cyrus the Great. This first passage is from *On
Hunting*, and the second is from *Cyropaedia*:

She will start up suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) and will leave the hounds barking and baying behind her as
she makes off (6, 17.1).

So the two armies drew nearer and nearer, and when they were about four miles apart, the
Assyrians proceeded to encamp in the manner described: their position was completely
surrounded by a trench, but also perfectly visible, while Cyrus took all the cover he could find,
screening himself behind villages and hillocks, in the conviction that the more sudden (ἐξαίφνης)
the disclosure of a hostile force the greater will be the enemy's alarm (3.3, 28.6).

The first appearance from *On Hunting* is a rather ordinary depiction of a hare that “suddenly”
(ἐξαίφνης) scampers from the pursuing hounds. The excerpt from *Cyropaedia* describes Cyrus’
intent to surprise an enemy force with a “sudden” (ἐξαίφνης) emergence from a clandestine
location.

Finally, only one appearance of ἐξαίφνης, from his *Memorabilia*, emerges in Xenophon’s
Socratic writings:

How strange it is,” he [Socrates] said, “that those who want to play the harp or the flute, or to
ride or to get skill in any similar accomplishment, work hard at the art they mean to master, and
not by themselves but under the tuition of the most eminent professors, doing and bearing
anything in their anxiety to do nothing without their teachers’ guidance, just because that is the
only way to become proficient: and yet, among those who want to shine as speakers in the
Assembly and as statesmen, there are some who think that they will be able to do so on a sudden
(ἐξαίφνης), by instinct, without training or study (4.2, 7.1).

Xenophon’s use of ἐξαίφνης in this passage reflects the folly of would-be statesmen who
suppose that despite a lack of “training or study” their natural ability will enable them “on a
sudden” (ἐξαίφνης) to win the respect and admiration of the citizenry.15 Evidently these budding
politicians believe that an instantaneous transformation into accomplished orators is possible

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15 This passage from Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* is reminiscent of Socrates’ initial encounter with a young and ambitious Alcibiades from Plato’s *First Alcibiades*. 
without proper training. In a similar vein, subsequent chapters reveal how Plato’s own use of ἔξαίφνης is comparable to Xenophon’s insofar as a “sudden” (ἔξαίφνης) transformation is preceded by a requisite methodical, step-by-step approach to philosophical training.

**Conclusion**

It is difficult, if not altogether impossible, to state precisely the intent of the aforementioned authors with respect to their usage of ἔξαίφνης. Nevertheless, something approaching the broad brushstrokes of a thematic understanding of the term seems to emerge. Nearly every appearance of ἔξαίφνης in extant Greek literature prior to and contemporaneous with Plato is characterized by the following: (1) an abrupt transformation or change, and (2) ominous consequences resulting from the preceding change. Thus, the appearances of ἔξαίφνης prior to and contemporaneous with Plato demonstrate that the term maintained a menacing implication. In other words, events happening “suddenly” generally produced catastrophic results.

By comparison, subsequent chapters of this study will disclose how Plato’s use of ἔξαίφνης both preserves and modifies previous applications in Greek literature. In short, Plato maintains the element of major change with respect to ἔξαίφνης, but he transforms the foreboding undercurrent that typically accompanies the term with a distinctively positive significance. Often enough Plato’s use of ἔξαίφνης is a sign of enlightenment and illumination of the highest realities. Thus, I shall show how the character and intellectual training exemplifying Plato’s notion of a philosophical education results in a sudden reorientation of the soul. As a consequence of this objective, I shall demonstrate that ἔξαίφνης is vital to grasping both Plato’s philosophical project and the protreptic nature of pedagogy.
Ultimately, I aim to reveal that Plato’s conception of ἐξαιρήθη was transformative with respect to how the term was used in Greek literature by his predecessors, and perhaps determinative for ensuing philosophers. In short, subsequent chapters demonstrate that after Plato, ἐξαιρήθη and its cognates often came to represent the peak of philosophical enlightenment, or divine revelation. In this way I am following Vlastos 1991, 21-44 who argues persuasively that the meaning of “irony” underwent a significant transformation in light of the emergence and popularity of Plato’s Socrates. Vlastos maintains that prior to Socrates, irony simply meant deceit or dissembling, but following Socrates irony “shed completely its disreputable past” and became the “perfect medium for mockery innocent of deceit” (28). Although it might be argued that the shift in the meaning of irony is unintentional on Plato’s part, his modification of ἐξαιρήθη seems quite deliberate. Likewise, I shall demonstrate that following Plato the meaning of ἐξαιρήθη was transformed, and the ominous nature of the term in literature prior to and contemporaneous with Plato is supplanted by a meaning that would forever link “all of a sudden” with an auspicious flash of illumination.
Chapter II - Parmenides I: Love and Work

Part of the adventure of reading and struggling to comprehend Plato’s Parmenides is determining Plato’s intentions. In his Sixth Letter, Plato writes that “playfulness (παιδιᾱ) is the sister of solemnity” and while the authenticity of the Letters is subject to controversy, the sentiment rings true when considering the dual nature and tone of Parmenides (323d2). In many ways Plato’s entire corpus, by way of Socratic irony, aporetic conclusions, dramatic structure, wordplay, myths, allegories, and the like, manifests itself as this cagey interplay. Consequently, this chapter aims to examine and explicate the playful-profound relationship as it emerges in the introductory conversation of Parmenides. In short, I will call attention to the often overlooked ethical underpinnings of Parmenides I. Furthermore I will argue in subsequent chapters that the training of Parmenides harmonizes well with the theory of ideas as it is presented in other Platonic dialogues. Finally, I will demonstrate how the ethical underpinnings of Parmenides I correspond to Plato’s approach to high philosophical matters, and show how this link between the experiential and conceptual plays out within Parmenides and other selected dialogues as

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16 In brief, I am unacquainted with any external evidence that the Letters are counterfeit. Furthermore, as Morrow 1962, 5 points out, Cicero, Plutarch, and the early Church Fathers reference and cite the Letters in their own works, and the Letters have been “generally accepted as genuine until modern times.” Likewise, the Letters are included in both the canons of Thrasyllus and Aristophanes of Byzantium, and corroborated by Diogenes Laertius. See also pp. 200-201 of Nicholas P. White’s Plato On Knowledge and Reality (1976). For an opposing view, see especially pp. 161-165 of Ludwig Edelstein’s Plato’s Seventh Letter (1966). With respect to the Seventh Letter, Irwin 2009, 131 and 158 argues that the “stylistic symmetry between the Letter and the dialogues assures us that the author was not an unskillful forger,” while concluding that “reasonable doubts about the veracity of the author” should dissuade us from employing the Letters. In short, those arguing against authenticity typically point to perceived internal inconsistencies with respect to the Letters and the dialogues when making their case. In contrast, I believe the Letters are authentic, and will endeavor to show that the passages I employ conform to Plato’s dialogues. For example, the aforementioned passage regarding playfulness and solemnity is echoed in Laws 803c-e. See also Republic iv, 425a, and Republic vii, 536e.

17 The Parmenides instantiates a natural break from the introductory conversation, henceforth Parmenides I, and the training exercise of the latter two-thirds of the dialogue, which in accordance with some commentaries I will designate as Parmenides II.
evidenced by Plato’s employing of the Greek term ἐξαιρητικος, frequently translated as “suddenly,” and “all of a sudden,” or as within Parmenides II as “the instant.”

Commentaries on Parmenides customarily partition the dialogue into two principal parts: (1) the introductory conversation and account of the difficulties with respect to participation, and (2) the training (γυμνασθῆνατ) and presentation of the nine hypotheses. Consequently, the discourse between Parmenides and Aristotle that generates the hypotheses is acknowledged widely as the principal exemplar of the training needed to navigate successfully through the perplexities pertaining to participation. Correspondingly, the introductory conversation is understood generally as merely “setting the scene” for the exercise that constitutes the latter two-thirds of Parmenides. Nevertheless, the following interpretation argues that an essential aspect of the training, e.g., the ethical component, begins with Plato’s account of the effort taken to secure a reprise of the original conversation, and emerges with even more clarity as a young and brash Socrates battles the formidable duo of Zeno and Parmenides.

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18 The relationship between ethics and metaphysics is laid bare in Plato’s Seventh Letter: “In short, neither quickness of learning nor a good memory can make a man see when his nature is not akin to the object, for this knowledge never takes root in alien nature; so that no man who is not naturally inclined and akin to justice (δικαίων) and all other forms of beauty (καλά), even though he may be quick at learning and remembering this and that other things, nor any man who, though akin to justice, is slow at learning and forgetful, will ever attain the truth that is attainable about virtue (ἀρετής). Nor about vice (κακίας), either, for these must be learned together, just as the truth (ἀλήθες) and error (ψεῦδος) about any part of being (οὐσίας) must be learned together, through long and earnest labor” (344a2-b3). Likewise, Plato’s remarks in the Seventh Letter with respect to the twofold approach for examining “any part of being” are mirrored in the description of the training from Parmenides: “if you want to be trained more thoroughly (μᾶλλον γυμνασθῆνατ), you must not only hypothesize, if each thing is, and examine the consequences of that hypothesis; you must also hypothesize if the same thing is not” (135e9-136a2).

19 With the notable exception of the Neoplatonists who count nine hypotheses, most commentaries on Parmenides number the hypotheses at eight with the “third” (τρίτον) hypothesis alternately identified as IIA. Generally, the commentators argue that hypothesis IIa is an “insert hypothesis” inseparable from hypotheses I and II. The explication of the hypotheses in a subsequent chapter (Chapter III) identifies nine hypotheses in conformance with a textual analysis irrespective of the various Neoplatonic interpretations.

20 Lynch 1959, 3-6 offers a helpful orientation to the varieties of commentaries on Parmenides by identifying “five major interpretations,” while Turnbull 1998, 189-199 presents a concise summary of both the Neoplatonic interpretation and more recent, influential commentaries.
The training found in *Parmenides* I is the ethical counterpart to the training exercise later demonstrated by Parmenides and his chosen interlocutor Aristotle. The link serving to harmonize the two principal parts of *Parmenides*, and indeed the tie that binds the experiential and the conceptual, is the third hypothesis’ account of “the instant” (τὸ ἐξαίφνης). As stated in the introduction, the third hypothesis of *Parmenides* II is, among other things, the only sustained treatment of ἐξαίφνης in the Platonic corpus.

Put simply, Plato’s conception of ἐξαίφνης in *Parmenides* II is an account of change. Moreover, the thirty-six instances of ἐξαίφνης peppered Plato’s dialogues, commonly translated as “suddenly” or “all of a sudden,” reveal an existential teaching with respect to Plato’s conception of change. Regarding change, the third hypothesis offers a succinct description of the atemporal conditions for the possibility of transformation by way of the examination of “the instant” (ἐξαίφνης), while the various appearances of “suddenly” (ἐξαίφνης) disseminated throughout the dialogues tend to impart the ethical, existential complement to the third hypothesis in the manner of an intense insight, personal transformation, or conversion experience. In its most significant manifestations, ἐξαίφνης signals the moment of participation for budding philosophers, just as “the instant” of the third hypothesis of Parmenides II allows for and facilitates participation among the ideas themselves.21

The characteristics of a sudden transformation experience as depicted by Plato in the ἐξαίφνης passages of *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Seventh Letter*, and others, exemplify the same notions of love and work that constitute the primary themes of Plato’s most impassioned ethical passages. What’s more, these very same themes manifest themselves in the introductory conversation of *Parmenides*. Thus in order to understand the full import of the many instances of

21 The role and function of ἐξαίφνης with respect to participation and the forms is clarified in Chapter III.
ἐξαιρήθη external to Parmenides, and to see with some clarity that these “sudden” appearances are by no means merely coincidental or unrelated, an analysis of the only thematic account of ἐξαιρήθη as it appears in Parmenides II is in order. Consequently, the following analysis will pay special attention to the aforementioned ethical aspects of Parmenides I in order to illustrate the correlations obtaining between Plato’s ethics and the theory of ideas. What’s more, I will offer a modest interpretation of Parmenides as a whole. This interpretation is modest insofar as it relies heavily upon available scholarship, although I will offer a significant innovation with respect to the meaning of the scattered appearances of ἐξαιρήθη throughout the dialogues. Ultimately, the following interpretation of Parmenides is an unavoidable correlate of the primary intent of analyzing Plato’s use of ἐξαιρήθη throughout the dialogues. Nevertheless, I do believe I have discovered a new way of reading the dialogue, and these findings will be presented throughout this chapter and the next with the aim of bringing this interpretation to light.

Introductory Conversation and Characters

Of all the Platonic dialogues, only Parmenides and Symposium are narrated by someone who was absent for the original discussion. Just as Apollodorus relates the conversation of Agathon’s gathering as told to him by Aristodemus (and then later confirmed by Socrates), the Parmenides finds Cephalus narrating the discussion as told to him by Plato’s half-brother Antiphon. Antiphon himself was absent from the original discussion, so his version of the events relies upon the testimony of Zeno’s student, Pythodorus. The dramatic structure of the dialogue’s opening sequence, with its elaborate account of the conversation’s transmission,

22 This surface parallel between Parmenides and Symposium accords with more profound connections to be explored in Chapter VI.
23 Pythodorus is also mentioned in Plato’s First Alcibiades. Socrates cites Pythodorus as one who became wise through his “association” with Zeno. Immediately following this mention, Alcibiades concludes that in order to compete with one who has knowledge, he must “go into training, like an athlete” (First Alcibiades, 119a-b).
recalls the flurry of activity that sets the *Symposium* in motion. Miller 1986, 15 concludes that the complex stage-setting “serves both to warn and prepare us for the difficult, intensely conceptual, and critical labor of thinking through Parmenides’ hypotheses,” while Allen 1984, 61 supposes that Plato manufactures the intricate preamble in order to “produce a sense of remoteness from the conversation.” Whatever Plato’s intentions, the deliberate introduction reverberates with various allusions. Irrespective of any calculated effort to mirror the *Symposium*’s opening and compel the reader to recall the gathering at Agathon’s house, the introduction to the *Parmenides* elicits a comparable desire to discover just what all the excitement is about.

The *Parmenides*’ dramatic date would seem to be no later than 450 B.C.E. Thus, the sheer chronological distance firmly establishes *Parmenides* as a remote event with respect to its dramatic place in time. Furthermore, the narrator’s own separation from the original discussion intensifies the distance, i.e., Cephalus is three steps removed from the actual conversation. That Cephalus states in the opening line that he has traveled to Athens from his “home in Clazomenae” further reinforces the remote and extraordinary circumstances surrounding the dialogue’s inception (126a1). It appears that the conversation committed to memory by Pythodorus and related to Antiphon, who in turn passed it on to Cephalus, is highly significant in at least two ways: (1) it is worthy of being committed to memory, and (2) even decades later the

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24 For a compelling account of the parallels obtaining between the opening sequence of Plato’s *Parmenides* and the historical Parmenides’ poem, see Miller 1986, esp. 15-18. In addition to the apparent connection between Parmenides’ poem and the introductory conversation of the *Parmenides*, most commentaries develop ingenious associations with another Presocratic philosopher, Anaxagoras. Ultimately, these associations are based upon Cephalus’ referring to his home in “Clazomenae,” the birthplace of Anaxagoras. For example, Miller interprets Anaxagoras’ “seeds” as a primitive theory of forms in need of the development provided by Parmenides’ training exercise in the latter two-thirds of the dialogue.

25 Perhaps the early mention of Cephalus’ “home in Clazomenae” is meant to be contrasted with Parmenides and Zeno’s home in Elea, which would be the first of a series of opposites that Plato highlights in the *Parmenides*. In other words, Clazomenae and Elea are to the distant east and west of Athens respectively.
conversation induces the inquisitive to travel a great distance to hear it. “The reader is cautioned from the beginning,” notes Allen 1984, 63 “that he must be prepared to think hard about philosophy.” Accordingly, the purposeful dramatic structure underlying and enhancing Plato’s dialogues is seen here in the *Parmenides* as presumably forewarning the reader that, just as Cephalus and his party expend a great deal of effort to hear a second-hand account of the conversation, so too must the reader labor to understand its meaning.

In a similar vein, Antiphon initially balks at Cephalus’ request to recite the conversation from memory because it is “a lot of work” (πολύ... ἔργον) (*Parmenides*, 127a5). Nevertheless, Antiphon acquiesces, just as Parmenides eventually does upon being called on to demonstrate the “training” (γυμνασθῆναι). And as we shall see, Antiphon’s claim concerning the effort required to relay the conversation is later echoed by Parmenides’ insistence that the “training” (γυμνασθῆναι) needed to realize the truth about the forms and their participants is a “big assignment” (πολύ... ἔργον) (136d1).

Antiphon sets the stage by relating how Pythodorus had described the conversation as taking place during the Great Panathenaea. An aged, but august Parmenides was sixty-five years old, while his “darling” (παιδικά) Zeno was nearly forty (127b4). Both were staying with Pythodorus outside the city wall in Athens. A youthful Socrates, no older than twenty, had come with a number of others to hear Zeno recite from his book defending Parmenides by refuting the proponents of plurality. Parmenides, Pythodorus, and Aristotle entered as Zeno was nearing the end of his presentation.
Zeno’s Treatise

Anitphon reports that Zeno was reading aloud from his treatise defending Parmenides’ One. In short, Zeno’s book supported Parmenides’ One through *reductio ad absurdum* arguments that revealed the untenable consequences of opposing the One by positing many. Thus, if there were a plurality of things, then this plurality would admit of opposing characteristics such as being like and unlike. In other words, the same thing would have contradictory qualities, or opposites. For example, on the one hand this dissertation is like other dissertations insofar as it meets the requirements of academia, while on the other hand it is unlike other dissertations insofar as its subject matter is distinctive. Thus, this dissertation is both like and unlike. Consequently, Zeno’s treatise amounts to showing the rivals of Parmenides’ One that their opposing account of plurality leads to even “more absurd” consequences (128d6). Accordingly, Zeno defends the Parmenidean One by demonstrating the bizarre consequences of accepting the commonplace position of those asserting a plurality of things. Nevertheless, since this dissertation and the diverse multitude of visible things participate in likeness and unlikeness in different respects, this would seem uncomplicated upon reflection, i.e., ultimately Zeno’s treatise does not violate Socrates’ contention from *Republic* iv, often referred to in the secondary literature as Plato’s “principle of opposites”, that no thing “can be, do, or undergo opposites, at the same time, in the same respect, and in relation to the same thing” (436e7-437a1).26

After asking Zeno to recite once more the first hypothesis of the first argument, Socrates confirms that this was Zeno’s intent. Socrates then begins his examination of Zeno’s view:

Is this the point of your arguments – simply to maintain, in opposition to everything that is commonly said, that things are not many? And do you suppose that each of your arguments is

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26 Aristotle describes this, i.e., the principle of non-contradiction, as “the most certain principle of all” in his *Metaphysics* iv.3 1005b12.
proof for this position, so that you think you give as many proofs that things are not many as your book has arguments? Is this what you are saying – or do I misunderstand? (127e8-128a1)

Zeno approves of Socrates’ assessment by remarking that he has understood the substance of the book “splendidly” (128a3). Nevertheless, Socrates begins his refutation of Zeno’s treatise by pointing out that his conclusions are opposed “to everything that is commonly said” about the nature of reality, and are in a way self-refuting since Zeno employs “many proofs” to show that a plurality, or many, does not exist (127e9-12).

Socrates correctly determines that the consequences of Zeno’s book amount to the same as Parmenides’ poem insofar as Zeno concludes that there cannot be many, while Parmenides concludes that all is One. Put another way, the negative consequence of Parmenides’ poem is that there are not many, while the positive consequence of Zeno’s treatise is that all is One.27 In short, Parmenides and Zeno mirror and support one another’s conclusions.

The still “quite young” Socrates is more biting than playful in his assessment of both the treatise and Zeno’s relationship with Parmenides (127c5). “Parmenides,” Socrates declares, “I understand that Zeno wants to be on intimate terms (ἡκεῖοσθαι) with you not only in friendship (φίλια) but also in his book” (128a4-5).28 Furthermore, Socrates claims Zeno “tries to fool us into thinking he is saying something different” from Parmenides, when in actuality the treatise merely confirms Parmenides’ hypothesis that all is One by showing how positing plurality leads to even more absurdities (128a7). Despite Socrates’ indiscretion with respect to Zeno and Parmenides’

27 Though Parmenides and Zeno reach the same conclusion with respect to the one and many, Parmenides takes a more constructive path in claiming all is One, while Zeno offers an opposing destructive method for proving the many are not.

28 A more literal translation, proffered by Miller 1986, 28 has Socrates characterizing Zeno and Parmenides’ relationship as “that other love” (τῇ ἀλλῇ... φίλια).
relationship and Zeno’s motives for writing the treatise, Zeno remains, as Sayre 1996, 64 notes, “tolerant and even friendly.”29 As a point of contrast, Socrates’ conduct suffers in comparison.

Indeed, Zeno admits that the book was written in a “competitive spirit,” but he also claims that he never intended to disguise the work as something other than a settling of scores for those who posit a plurality by demonstrating the absurdity of Parmenides’ One (128d7).30 In fact, according to Zeno, he hadn’t even decided whether the book “should see the light” before someone surreptitiously copied the treatise and disseminated its contents (128e1).31 Zeno corrects Socrates’ assumptions, and in doing so offers a subtle indication that Socrates’ present brashness was once reflected by Zeno’s own competitive spirit. Thus the affable demeanor exemplified by Zeno offers a pertinent contrast to Socrates’ brash disposition, while hinting that Zeno’s youthful boldness was tempered by age and presumably instruction. This contrast allows the reader to witness two opposing manners of conduct, and compels one to examine and judge the behavior of each.

Socrates’ Response to Zeno

Socrates briefly assumes a gentle manner, and concedes that he believes Zeno’s explanation regarding the origins of his treatise. Nevertheless, Socrates soon assumes an elenctic posture32 and questions Zeno about an idea being itself by itself.33 In other words, Socrates

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29 Sayre 1996, 63 refers to Socrates’ “indelicate reference to the amorous relation between Zeno and Parmenides.” As we shall see, erotic love bubbles to the surface again upon Parmenides agreeing to commence the training.
30 Sayre 1996, 64 suggests that on the one hand Zeno’s response is “a kind of apology” for the treatise’s competitive spirit, while on the other hand it also “serves as a gentle reminder... that the contentiousness Socrates now is showing toward Zeno may be traced to youthful indiscretions as well.”
31 Although a young Zeno was once hesitant to reveal the contents of his treatise, the mature Zeno apparently has no qualms about delivering a public reading.
32 Although Socrates assumes an elenctic posture (e.g., he questions, but does not seem to be interested in eliciting an actual response from Zeno), his speech is more of a rhetorical display than a genuine elenchus. “Socrates’ reply to Zeno is the longest uninterrupted speech in the entire dialogue,” notes Sayre 1996, 67 “taking up space in excess of a full Stephanus page. As such, it stands in marked contrast not only with the remarkably succinct arguments in
proffers a promising, but as we shall see, inadequate, theory of ideas. Under Socrates’ conception, the ideas are each separate and unique ones that allow for particulars to assume the property of a given idea through participation. The fact that multiple ideas, including opposing ones such as likeness and unlikeness, are shared by the same participant presents no inherent problem for Socrates. That the same participant would admit of opposing ideas, e.g., Socrates is one when conceived of as an individual, but is many when conceived of as a collection of bodily parts, prompts Socrates to ask: “what’s astonishing (θαυμάστον) about that?” (129a9) The ease with which Socrates counters Zeno’s treatise anticipates the effortlessness of Parmenides’ subsequent rejection of Socrates’ limited understanding of forms. Since Zeno and Parmenides clearly are the philosophic superiors to a young Socrates, it seems safe to suggest that Zeno was well aware of his treatise’s obvious shortcomings. Consequently, if his mature intent with respect to the treatise entails inducing his hearers to think through for themselves about the one and the many, then Zeno has accomplished this mission.

Nevertheless, Socrates reveals his nascent understanding of the ideas when he claims that it would be a “marvel” if someone could disclose how the singular idea of likeness itself could become unlikeness itself, or conversely, show how unlikeness itself becomes likeness itself (129b2). Accordingly, the training that Parmenides initiates in the latter portion of the dialogue reveals what Socrates foreshadows here in the early moments of Parmenides I, i.e., an idea

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33 As Gill and Ryan 1996, 362-363 point out in a footnote to their translation, “itself by itself” (αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτὸ) may mean: (1) separate, or by itself and on its own, or (2) that the idea itself is the cause of its own being.
becoming its opposite. At this point, however, Socrates claims that there is nothing “strange” 
(ἄτοπον) about visible participants admitting of contradictory ideas (129b4).^{34}

Sayre 1996, 67 offers a compelling analysis of Socrates’ “conspicuously prolix” response
to Zeno. Socrates, in Sayre’s view, delivers a discourse that uncharacteristically is “both 
repetitious and disorganized.” No less than five times does Socrates repeat his assertion with 
respect to being astounded if someone were to show how the forms themselves were able to 
admit of opposing properties. His challenge to Zeno amounts to Socrates’ being unimpressed 
with the findings of Zeno’s treatise, while stressing that his admiration could be secured if Zeno 
managed to accomplish the same feat with respect to Socrates’ own conception of the ideas, e.g., 
showing how the ideas themselves admit of opposing properties.

Furthermore, as Sayre 1996, 67 notes, coupled with Socrates’ previous “callous 
disregard” for Zeno and his relationship with Parmenides, the manner that Socrates presents his 
version of the ideas “shows a self-involvement that appears almost excessive.” Socrates’ speech 
is peppered with the first person singular throughout: “The sense conveyed,” thinks Sayre, “is 
that the theory is bound up with his own self-image, and may not yet be ready for impartial 
criticism” (68). Indeed, the portrait Plato paints of an impetuous and youthful Socrates in 
*Parmenides* contrasts with the ironic posture Plato presents in other dialogues. Socrates’ 
behavior in *Parmenides* offers a pointed contrast with the facility Zeno and Parmenides 
demonstrate in conveying their thoughts. “The relative immaturity of Socrates,” concludes Sayre, 
“is a symbol of the immaturity of the theory he represents” (62).

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^{34} As we shall see in the Chapter III’s analysis of the third hypothesis, there is indeed something very “strange” 
(ἄτοπον) about the nature of participation.
Nevertheless, Socrates’ response to Zeno’s treatise clearly has merit. Socrates indicates that the differentiation between perceptible things and the ideas requires a more careful and subtle analysis. Though it is easy to apply the ideas of both one and many to a sensible participant, it is considerably more difficult, yet evidently necessary, to show how one itself could be many.

Socrates appears to refute Zeno’s position by positing a theory of ideas. In essence, Socrates accuses Zeno of confusing an intelligible idea with a visible participant. Thus the difficulties that Zeno draws from the pluralist view dissolve once Zeno accepts that there is a difference between participant and idea. For example, a perceptible thing can be like and unlike in different respects. For Socrates, there is nothing unusual about the conclusions Zeno draws insofar as they apply to perceptible things, yet he makes clear that the ability to apply Zeno’s reasoning to the ideas themselves would be nothing short of amazing.

Ironically, Socrates’ articulation of the theory of ideas results in a similar confusion vis-à-vis the perplexities of positing a plurality. For example, Socrates posits each idea as singular and itself by itself, while at the same time speaking of the idea of many itself as one idea. It would seem that Socrates himself has accomplished unsuspectingly what he claimed would be astonishing: showing how a single idea could admit of opposing properties, e.g., speaking of the many itself as one idea among other ideas. Put another way, just as Zeno proffered “many proofs” in defending Parmenides’ view that all is one, Socrates volunteers the many itself as a single idea. As the ensuing chapter on Parmenides II reveals, there is a sense in which the many itself is indeed many; albeit in a way that avoids the perplexities surrounding self-predication.
Enter Parmenides

Pythodorus told Antiphon that he was thinking to himself that both Parmenides and Zeno must surely be infuriated by Socrates’ conduct. And yet, Pythodorus reports that rather than annoyance, Zeno and Parmenides listened intently to Socrates’ exposition “and often glanced at each other and smiled, as though they admired (ἀγαμένους) him” (130a5-6). Thus when Socrates had finished, Parmenides assumed control of the argument and said, “you are much to be admired (ἀγασθαί) for your keenness for argument!” (130b1) Like Zeno before him, Parmenides displays a friendliness absent from Socrates himself. Consequently, Parmenides appears to be more akin to the mature Socrates of Plato’s “Socratic” dialogues than Socrates himself is as portrayed in the *Parmenides*.35

Parmenides follows his compliment of Socrates with an elenchus of his own. Unlike Socrates, who did not wait for Zeno to answer his questions before posing additional ones, Parmenides questions Socrates in much the same way a mature Socrates interrogates his interlocutors in the Socratic dialogues. In other words, Parmenides reveals how a genuine elenchus ought to be performed. In doing so, Parmenides turns the tables on Socrates in order to elicit the extent of Socrates’ understanding of the ideas.

Parmenides soon discovers that Socrates does indeed think of the ideas as separate and distinct, each one itself by itself. In addition to relational ideas such as likeness and unlikeness, and quantitative ideas such as one and many, Parmenides determines that Socrates’

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35 Socrates is most likely referring to his discussion with Parmenides in *Parmenides* when he says in Plato’s *Theaetetus* that “Parmenides seems to me, in the words of Homer, to be ‘reverend’ and ‘awful’ (δεινός). I met him when I was very young, and he was a very old man; and he seemed to me to have a wholly noble depth” (183e6-184a1). Socrates ostensibly refers to the events of *Parmenides* in another passage from *Theaetetus*: “But I am more of a fiend for exercise than Sciron and Antaeus. I have met with many and many a Heracles and Theseus in my time, mighty men of words; and they have well battered me. But for all that I don’t retire from the field, so terrible a lust (ἔρως δεινός) has come upon me for these exercises (γυμνασίας)” (169b5-c2).
understanding of the forms extends to the ethical ideas: just, beautiful, and good. Nevertheless, when Parmenides inquires about the idea of human being, and elemental ideas such as fire and water, Socrates falters. “Parmenides,” admits Socrates, “I’ve often found myself in doubt (ἀπορία) whether I should talk about those in the same way as the others or differently” (130c3-4). Thus Socrates is perplexed about the pervasiveness of the ideas. And yet, when Parmenides pushes the issue even further in asking about things that “might seem absurd” like hair, mud, and filth, Socrates is quick to reply that it is “too outlandish” to conceive of separately existing ideas for these presumably undignified visible things (130c5-130d5). Parmenides’ elicitation of Socrates’ comprehension of the ideas has traversed the spectrum of possibilities for their instantiation by employing the oppositional dynamic evidenced throughout the dialogue. From beauty to filth, Parmenides has effectively presented the extreme opposites with respect to the potential scope of the ideas.

Socrates confesses that thinking about the ideas extending to mundane perceptible things like mud has caused him trouble in the past, but rather than “fall into some pit of nonsense” he decided that it would be safer to reflect upon the ideas that pose fewer problems (130d7). Consequently, Parmenides determines that Socrates is “still young” and, despite showing promise, “not yet gripped” by philosophy (130e1-2). He claims Socrates will consider the more mundane perceptible things and their relationship to the ideas once his youthful vanity recedes. At present, Socrates “still cares about what people think” (130e4).36 Thus it would appear that

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36 Socrates evidently rid himself of the desire to please the many, as other dialogues, e.g., *Apology*, and Alcibiades himself attest: “If you were to listen to his arguments, at first they’d strike you as totally ridiculous; they’re clothed in words as coarse as the hides worn by the most vulgar satyrs. He’s always going on about pack asses, or blacksmiths, or cobblers, or tanners; he’s always making the same tired old points in the same tired old words. If you are foolish, or simply unfamiliar with him, you’d find it impossible not to laugh at his arguments” (*Symposium*, 221e1-7). Furthermore, the philosophically mature Socrates of the *Republic* describes the true philosophers as those who “love all learning and are not willing to give up any part of it, whether large or small, more valuable or less so” (485b3-4). See also *Hippias Major*, 288c-289a.
Parmenides’ ensuing elenchus is intended both to disabuse Socrates of the common notions regarding the scope of philosophical inquiry and to expose the perplexities involved with respect to the ideas and their participants.

**Parmenides and the Possibilities of Participation**

As previously noted, Parmenides elicits Socrates’ nascent grasp of the ideas, and in doing so reveals that Socrates lacks a comprehensive understanding of the pervasiveness of the ideas. Much like the mature Socrates’ penchant for disclosing the ignorance of his interlocutors, Parmenides manages to do the same thing to a youthful Socrates. Following Socrates’ uncertainty regarding the extent of the ideas, Parmenides inquires about the nature of participation. In other words, Parmenides wants to know how the ideas manifest themselves in sensible, visible participants.

After securing agreement from Socrates that participant things “derive their names” from the relevant ideas, e.g., like participants become like by sharing in the idea of likeness itself, Parmenides asks if the ideas share themselves as parts or wholes, or conversely, whether participant things share the ideas in whole or part (130e6):

So does each thing that gets a share get as its share the form as a whole or a part of it? Or could there be some other means of getting a share apart from these two? “How could there be?” he [Socrates] said (131a5-7).

Thus Parmenides offers three possibilities with respect to participation: (1) by whole, (2) by part, or (3) perhaps by an as yet unknown third way. Socrates’ inability to think of an additional possibility outside of the whole-part dichotomy is reminiscent of his encounter with Diotima so memorably depicted in Plato’s *Symposium*, 202a:

Diotima: Do you really think that, if a thing is not beautiful, it has to be ugly? Socrates: I certainly do.
Diotima: And if a thing’s not wise, it’s ignorant? Or haven’t you found out yet that there’s something in between wisdom and ignorance?
Socrates: What’s that?

The apparent purpose of Diotima’s questioning is to dispel the type of black-and-white thinking that hampers Socrates’ ability to comprehend fully the ideas in Parmenides. In the Symposium, however, the revelation of Socrates’ inadequate conceptual framework results in a swift resolution insofar as Diotima promptly shows that possibilities exist between the extremes (e.g., true opinion lies between wisdom and ignorance) and that ultimately eros is neither mortal nor immortal, but in between gods and humans. In contrast, the disclosure of the possibilities in the Parmenides is neither swift nor obvious, but instead requires the “training” (γυμνασθῆναι) Parmenides demonstrates in Parmenides II. Nevertheless, Socrates’ first attempt at answering Parmenides’ query shows some potential.

Three Attempts

Parmenides elicits three attempts from Socrates with respect to the perplexities involved in participation. Thus far Socrates has demonstrated, at best, a blossoming understanding of the ideas. Yet as the following conversation with Parmenides reveals, the youthful Socrates’ conceptions have not yet reached full bloom. Though all of his answers to Parmenides’ challenge concerning participation fall short of discovering a way out of the difficulties, Socrates manages to generate the fundamental elements of a comprehensive theory of ideas and participation; albeit a deficient and imprecise theory. Consequently, the ensuing chapter on the conceptual training

37 Likewise, in the Second Alcibiades, Socrates turns the tables and employs the same type of questions in discussing the nature of prayer with Alcibiades (see especially 138d-139c).
38 Many commentaries cite Parmenides’ refutation of Socrates with respect to participation as either proof that the theory of ideas is inherently flawed, and that Plato’s account of the forms in Parmenides is playful and destructive, or that Plato is presenting a new ontology related to several presumed late-period dialogues. Turnbull 1998, 4 is emblematic of the latter view: “I think that the critical questioning of Socrates after his response to Zeno is seriously intended and invites emendation of the rationale and doctrine stated in Socrates’ response, roughly, those of Phaedo.”
demonstrated by Parmenides and Aristotle will show how Socrates’ response to Parmenides’ challenge succeeds, at the very least, in spawning essential aspects of participation.  

**Socrates’ First Attempt: The Form as Day**

Socrates posits a promising theory of participation when he likens a single idea to a day that manages to be at many places at one time, and yet still be a single day. For example, the singular idea of beauty is present in many particular things, such as various human beings, but it remains a single, unified idea under Socrates’ conception. Thus the same day (or idea) manifests itself in different places, e.g., Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, while remaining the same day and not becoming separated from itself. Nevertheless, it is unclear whether Socrates is referring to the temporal notion of a day, or daylight. If by day Socrates means the duration of a temporally conceived day, then his conception fails since the temporal day is divided easily into parts, e.g., morning, afternoon, and evening. Consequently, the form/day conception and its concomitant divisibility into parts preclude the notion of the forms as indivisible unities.

Likewise, if by day Socrates intends daylight, then the forms seem to lose their explanatory power. For example, previously Socrates suggested that it was easy to demonstrate that he was both one when conceived individually, but many when he and others were viewed as a collective. Thus Socrates establishes that one participant may share in different, even opposing, ideas. The day analogy, however, fails to account for the diversity of visible things insofar as the possibility of participants sharing in multiple forms is ruled out by imagining a single day. In other words, the uniformity of a single day/idea fails in explaining the multiplicity of visible particulars. If the single day is conceived of as a single form, then ostensibly all the participants

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39 Chapter III demonstrates how the nine hypotheses provide the comprehensive answer to the difficulties engendered by Parmenides’ questioning of Socrates.
would share in just one idea, because it would seem many days (or daylights) are required for something to participate, and thus possess, multiple attributes.

Parmenides swiftly reveals the problem with Socrates’ imagistic account of participation by presenting his own image of an expansive sail that, like Socrates’ day, covers many different people at the same time. Consequently, when visualized as the sail, a single idea becomes divisible when a part of the sail/idea is conceived of as covering one person and another part covers another and so on. In other words, the whole or single sail/idea does not cover each individual, but only that part of the sail/idea which is directly overhead of its participant. Thus Socrates’ conception of the ideas as separate and distinct singularities is proved flawed since an idea conceived of as an indivisible unity may not be separated into component parts, and thus become many. Nevertheless, Parmenides assumes that Socrates’ day analogy is meant to convey the visible perception of physical daylight, while disregarding the alternative possibility with respect to temporality. It would seem that Socrates himself lacks more than a vague conception of what he means by day. In response to Parmenides’ introduction of the sail analogy in lieu of the day analogy, and Parmenides’ desire to know if this is the type of conception, e.g., visible and material, that Socrates’ intends, Socrates can only muster a weak “perhaps” in agreement (131c1).

Because the implicit conclusion of the sail analogy regards the mode of participation determined by sharing in part, Parmenides reveals further absurdities with respect to participation by part when he divides the ideas of the large, the equal, and the small. With respect to largeness, Parmenides concludes that it would appear “unreasonable” (ἄλογον) if each large thing has a share of the large itself which, as a part, is smaller than largeness itself (131d2). Likewise, things participating in equality will have a share of the equal which is less than the
equal itself. Finally the conception of a divisible idea of the small leads to the small itself being larger relative to its part. What’s more, despite the addition of something, e.g., the small, to a sensible participant, the participant becomes not larger, but smaller. It would seem that as long as Socrates insists upon conceiving of ideas as simply themselves, e.g., the small is only small, then his command of the ideas with respect to participation by either whole or part is deficient.

**The Third Man Argument**

The first version of what Aristotle famously refers to as “the third man” argument appears in Parmenides’ next inquiry into the fundamental perplexities surrounding participation and the ideas. He begins by having Socrates imagine various large things and asks if he supposes that one idea, e.g., largeness, pervades all of the large things. After gaining Socrates’ assent, Parmenides compels Socrates to envision both the various large things and the idea of largeness in his soul, or “mind’s eye” (ψυχῇ) (132a7). Now, just as Socrates agreed that the assorted large things share the same character of largeness, the same reasoning would seem to apply to the various large things and the idea of largeness itself when visualized alongside each other. In other words, if the various large things and largeness itself are envisioned together, then this collective will share an idea of largeness. Consequently, an additional idea of largeness will emerge, and each time we envision the various large things and largeness itself along with the additional idea of largeness a new idea of largeness will manifest itself as the idea in which all of the large things (participants and ideas) share. Thus Parmenides concludes that an idea will no longer be one, but “unlimited in multitude” (132b2).

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40 Aristotle addresses the third man argument in his *Metaphysics* (990b17, 1039a2-3, 1059b8, 1079a13) and *Sophistical Refutations* (178b36 and 179a3). For a contemporary examination of the third man argument, see especially Gregory Vlastos 1954, 319-349 “The Third Man Argument in Parmenides”.

43
Socrates’ Second Attempt: The Ideas as Thoughts

Socrates attempts to escape the third man perplexity by proposing that the ideas are thoughts (νόημα). In short, Socrates suggests that ideas as thoughts exist only in soul (ψυχῇ). In conceiving of the ideas in this manner, Socrates manages to differentiate the being of ideas from the being of perceptible things. Socrates evidently believes that the difference between ideas as thoughts relative to the things perceived by sense-perception will preclude the possibility of grouping ideas and things into a collective envisioned by the soul (ψυχῇ). Nevertheless, in thinking of the ideas in a spatiotemporal way, i.e., as located in the soul at a particular time as thoughts, Socrates remains ensnared in a fundamental confusion about the nature of ideas with respect to the distinction obtaining between idea and sensible participant. “What is even worse,” according to Miller 1986, 50 Socrates “makes the ideas depend for their very being on the particular souls, or minds, that think them.” In other words, Socrates seems to have reduced unwittingly the theory of ideas into a pure subjectivity that, in effect, defends a relativistic position, Miller claims, for “how each mind generates meaning for itself” (50).

What’s more, as Parmenides’ questioning indicates, Socrates’ failure to distinguish between thinking and the object of thought, or referent, leaves Socrates’ conception of the forms on shaky ground as well. Ultimately Parmenides offers two equally unsatisfying proposals: (1) either all the participants of a given idea are themselves composed of thoughts by virtue of participation, or (2) despite being composed of thoughts by virtue of participation all participants are un-thought. Not surprisingly, Socrates concludes that neither option is reasonable.

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41 Miller 1986, 54 contends that “Socrates rightly sees that he can block the regress only by undercutting this assimilation of form to thing.”
Socrates’ Third and Final Attempt: The Ideas as Paradigms

Socrates posits a third possibility with respect to ideas and participation after Parmenides’ refutation of ideas as thoughts. “What appears most likely” to Socrates at this point of the dialogue is that the ideas are “patterns” (παραδείγματα) impressed in nature (132d1). In this sense, the participants resemble the ideas as likenesses by virtue of being “modeled on them” (132d3). Construing the ideas as paradigms holds promise insofar as Socrates has removed the inherent subjectivity/relativism of locating the ideas in souls, while evading the material consequences of conceiving of the ideas as “being-in” physical participants whether by part or by whole. Thus conceiving the ideas as originals and having the participants reflect the ideas as images seems to negate the difficulties surrounding participation by whole or part. In other words, one can easily imagine a single original, e.g., Elvis Presley, generating unlimited images in various mediums, e.g., art, cinema, literature, Elvis impersonators, etc. These assorted images both are and are not Elvis Presley. Likewise, the singular idea of beauty may manifest itself in varied instantiations without any single beautiful thing being the idea of beauty itself.

Nevertheless, as Parmenides shows, if the idea is like its participant, then the idea and the participant also share in the idea of likeness. For example, if a particular beautiful thing is an image of beauty itself, then the particular image must be like the paradigmatic original. Likewise, the original must be like the image. Thus, an idea such as beauty itself cannot be properly understood as actually being “itself by itself” and nothing else but beauty, because the idea of beauty must also have a share, or participate in, the idea of likeness. As Parmenides demonstrates, the ideas cannot be both paradigmatic and themselves by themselves since the paradigm proposal necessitates the inclusion of the idea of likeness. Consequently, because the idea of likeness must be like the participant, there must be an additional idea of likeness to

42 See especially Parmenides 132d-133a.
account for all the participants. Thus, once again, Socrates’ proposal leads to an infinite regress or multitude of ideas roughly approximate to the initial third man argument.

**The Separation of Ideas and Participants**

At this point in the dialogue Parmenides reveals some of the grim consequences of thinking the ideas as separate beings themselves by themselves. The primary difficulty of positing the ideas as separate beings concerns their intelligibility:

There are many other reasons, Parmenides said, but the main one is this: suppose someone were to say that if the forms are such as we claim they must be, they cannot even be known. If anyone should raise that objection, you wouldn’t be able to show him that he is wrong, unless the objector happened to be widely experienced (πολλῶν... ἔμπειρος) and not ungifted, and consented to pay attention while in your effort to show him you dealt with many distant considerations. Otherwise, the person who insists that they are necessarily unknowable would remain unconvinced (133b4-133c1).

Socrates’ hesitation to accept this claim prompts Parmenides to explain further. Because it was previously established that the ideas cannot be located in the soul while remaining themselves by themselves, Parmenides concludes that the relations existing between ideas are distinct from the relations existing between participants. In short, since Socrates’ conception of an idea is wedded to the notion of strict separation characterized by the phrase “itself by itself” (αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό) there is seemingly no plausible account of participation.

Parmenides takes the example of the master-slave relationship to reveal how the associations obtaining between ideas and participants are distinguishable. For example, neither a master is the master of the idea of Slavery itself, nor is the slave the slave of the idea of Mastery itself. In short, the relation obtaining between the perceptible master and slave is limited to the realm of sensible particulars, while the ideas of Mastery itself and Slavery itself have their own separate and distinct associations. Likewise, our understanding of knowledge, truth, beauty, and
goodness will be limited to the perceptible world, while their corresponding forms will be equally restricted to the realm of ideas.

Furthermore, an even “more shocking” (δεινότερον) corollary of Socrates’ view of separate ideas results in our isolation from the gods (134c3). In short, because both Socrates and Parmenides agree that the idea of knowledge itself is “much more precise” (ἀκριβέστερον) than knowledge based purely upon sense perception, the only fitting candidates for possessing the idea of knowledge itself are the gods (134c6). Given that the ideas are themselves by themselves, the gods’ knowledge of the ideas would be limited to the ideas themselves. On the one hand human beings will be effectively cut off from the care of the gods, and on the other hand the gods will have no knowledge of human affairs. Parmenides’ presentation of this godless, impoverished state of affairs leads Socrates to conclude that “our argument may be getting too bizarre (θαυμαστός)” (134e5-6). Thus, the “most shocking” (δεινότερον) consequence of thinking the ideas as themselves by themselves is the emergence of a world devoid of divine influence.

“These objections,” claims Parmenides, “and a host of others besides” will naturally follow upon conceiving of the ideas as radically separate beings each one itself by itself (135a). Furthermore, positing the ideas in the youthful Socrates’ manner will not convince anyone of their existence. And yet, Parmenides, like Socrates, affirms the truth of some notion of separate ideas. The difficulty in proving their existence is set forth by Parmenides:

Only a very gifted man (ἀνδρός... εὐφυὸς) can come to know that for each thing there is some kind (γένος), a being itself by itself (αὐτὴ καθ’ αὐτὴν); but only a prodigy (θαυμαστοτέρον) more remarkable still will discover that and be able to teach (διδάξαι) someone else who has sifted all these difficulties thoroughly and critically for himself (135a6-b4).43

43 Parmenides’ language in this section of the dialogue is reminiscent of Plato’s Seventh Letter: “…only then, when reason and knowledge are at the very extremity of human effort, can they illuminate the nature of any object” (344b4-8).
Not only does knowledge of the ideas require a “very gifted man,” but the instruction requires a *wunderkind* (θαυμαστοτέρου) of even “more remarkable” gifts to comprehend and subsequently disseminate this higher knowledge.

The efforts required to know the ideas cannot be evaded, because denying their existence leads to disastrous consequences. In other words, both Socrates and Parmenides agree that the outright rejection of the ideas “will destroy the power of dialectic (διαλέγεσθαι)” (135c2). Thus the denial of enduring ideas robs discourse of its already precarious meaningfulness.44 If participants lack a character that essentially defines their very being, then our only means of knowledge, e.g., communication, discourse, etc., will lose its relative staying power.45 With no abiding essential meaning, words and the things they describe will be altogether ephemeral and lose all lasting significance.

While Socrates correctly grasps the significance of the ideas, he lacks a comprehensive understanding of the way the ideas function with respect to participation. The only remedy, according to Parmenides, is “training” (γυμνασθῆναι). Though he acknowledges that Socrates’ “impulse” (ὁ ῥυμή) for argument is “noble and divine” (καλὴ... καὶ θεία), Parmenides believes that Socrates has too hastily separated the ideas from their participants before having been “properly trained” (γυμνασθῆναι) (135d1-3).46 Once again, Parmenides warns Socrates about the influence of the crowd, and the consequences of succumbing to their dictates: “put your back into it and

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44 The mysterious Eleatic stranger of Plato’s *Sophist* echoes this view: “If we were deprived of that (i.e., speech), we’d be deprived of philosophy – to mention the most important thing. Besides, now we have to agree about what speech is, but we’d be able to say nothing if speech were taken away from us and weren’t anything at all. And it would be taken away if we admitted that there’s no blending of anything with anything else” (260a6-b2).
45 In relating the ideas to names, Socrates claims in Plato’s *Cratylus* that “We are most likely to find correctly given names among those concerned with the things that by nature always are (ἀεὶ ὄντα καὶ πεφυκότα), since it is proper for their names to be given with the greatest care (ἐσπουδάσθαι), and some may even be the work of a more than human power” (397b6-c2).
46 “Because of our defective training,” Plato states in his *Seventh Letter*, “we are not accustomed to look for truth but are satisfied with the first image suggested to us” (343c6-8).
get more training (γύμνασαι μᾶλλον) through something people think useless – what the crowd call idle talk (ἀδολεσχίας). Otherwise, the truth will escape you” (135d4-6). Once more, Parmenides encourages Socrates to disregard the opinions of the many, and practice philosophy with diligence.47

Transition to the Training

Unbeknownst to Socrates, the training Parmenides has in mind was instantiated during the discussion with Zeno. Parmenides was impressed with Socrates’ demand to elevate the conversation into a conceptual realm as opposed to the visible sphere of Zeno’s treatise. Nevertheless, according to Parmenides, proper training requires a more comprehensive approach:

…if you want to be trained more thoroughly (μᾶλλον γυμνασθῆναι), you must not only hypothesize (ὑποτιθέμενον), if each thing is, and examine the consequences of that hypothesis (ὑποθέσεως); you must also hypothesize (ὑποτιθέσθαι) if the same thing is not” (135c9-136a2).

Just as Parmenides’ poem posited the being of the One, or, stated negatively as the many are not, Zeno produced a treatise that accepted, albeit derisively, the contrary view: the one is not, or the many are. Thus the training Parmenides advocates is happening in real time and since the beginning of Antiphon’s account of the conversation. In other words, Parmenides’ poem represents hypothesizing the consequences of all being One, while Zeno’s treatise hypothesizes consequences of the same thing, the all, not being One.

Parmenides explains the training more fully as follows:

Take as an example this hypothesis that Zeno entertained: if many are, what must the consequences be both for the many themselves in relation to themselves and in relation to the one, and for the one in relation to itself and in relation to the many? And, in turn, on the

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47 The notion of training appears in various dialogues and is treated as an essential aspect of philosophical development. For example, the training required of the philosopher-king in Republic vi: “…he must take the longer road and put much effort into learning as into physical training (γυμναζομέω), for otherwise, as we were just saying, he will never reach the goal of the most important subject and the most appropriate one for him to learn” (504c8-d2). See also Socrates’ instruction to the young and ambitious Alcibiades in First Alcibiades: “Get in training first (γύμνασαί πρῶτον), my dear friend, and learn what you need to know before entering politics” (132b1-2).
hypothesis, if many are not, you must again examine what the consequences will be both for the one and for the many in relation to themselves and in relation to each other (136a4-136b1).

What’s more, the training applies to concepts beyond the one and the many to include likeness, motion, rest, generation, destruction, and “whatever you might ever hypothesize as being or as not being or as having any other property, you must examine the consequences for the thing you hypothesize in relation to itself and in relation to each one of the others” (136b7-136c2). The training Parmenides recommends is both comprehensive and prolonged. If one were to “complete the training” (τελέως γυμνασάμενος), however, Parmenides claims that nothing less than “a full view of the truth” (διόψεσθαι τὸ ἁληθὲς) will be achieved (136c7-8).

Perhaps not surprisingly, Socrates chafes at the training’s complexity and protracted nature: “Scarcely manageable, Parmenides, this task you describe!” (136c9) Nonetheless, and despite his obvious doubts about the practicality of Parmenides’ method, Socrates implores him to demonstrate it with a hypothesis of his choosing. After Parmenides declines, citing the enormity of the task and his advanced age, Socrates makes the same request to Zeno. Zeno laughs, and like Parmenides, indicates the trouble of taking on such a “big assignment (ὅσον ἔργον)” (136d6). Furthermore, although the current assemblage of listeners is relatively small, Zeno alludes to the impropriety of making this request in front of a large crowd: “Ordinary people don’t know that without this comprehensive (πάντων διεξόδου) and circuitous (πλάνης) treatment we cannot hit upon the truth (ἀληθεῖ) and gain insight (νοῦν σχεῖ)” (136d9-10). Yet, since the present collection of listeners is small, and presumably sympathetic, Zeno joins Socrates in entreating Parmenides to demonstrate the training.

Evidently it has been quite some time since Parmenides last instantiated the training. Zeno himself desires that Parmenides proceed with the method in order to become Parmenides’ “pupil (διακούσω) again after all this time” (136e3). The others join Socrates and Zeno in
petitioning Parmenides to prove his method. Consequently, Parmenides offers a wistful metaphor which harks back to his celebrated poem by drawing upon the horse imagery he employed there. Parmenides compares himself to the poet Ibycus who likened himself to a horse “forced against his will to compete in love’s (ἔρωτα) game” (137a3-4). All the same, and because as he says, “we are by ourselves” Parmenides agrees to comply.

While considering the possibilities with respect to the beginning of the training exercise, Parmenides makes a request: because he must “play this strenuous game” (πραγματειώδη παιδιάν παίζειν) he asks his listeners if he may “begin with myself and my own hypothesis?” (137b2-3) After securing Zeno’s agreement, Parmenides reveals that the training will not be a monologue, but a dialogue. In order to ensure that his interlocutor both gives the “least trouble” and concurrently “say what he thinks,” Parmenides requests the youngest of the gathering (137b8-9). Aristotle readily agrees to fulfill this function: “I’m ready to play this role for you, Parmenides” (137c1). “Ask (ἔρωτα) away,” obliges Aristotle, “you can count on me to answer” (137c2-3).

Why Aristotle?

The selection of Aristotle as Parmenides’ interlocutor seems rather curious. After all, just a short time ago in the midst of his conversation with Socrates, Parmenides insistently declared that only a “prodigy” (θαυμαστοτέρου) could follow the line of argumentation that constitutes the exercise about to be initiated with Aristotle. As the youngest, and thus least experienced of the gathering, Aristotle is an unlikely choice. Nevertheless, there are reasons to believe that Plato selects Aristotle for the training rather than Parmenides’ stated rationale with respect to

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48 Ibycus was known primarily for his love poems.
49 The Greek ἔρωτα is used in the conclusion of the introductory conversation in two senses: (1) Parmenides uses it to describe “love’s (ἔρωτα) game,” while (2) Aristotle employs it in agreeing to participate in the training, “ask (ἔρωτα) away,” he states. This connection between love and inquiry will be examined further in Chapter VI on Symposium where the double meaning again comes into play.
Aristotle’s youth, potential for trouble-free conversation, and willingness to say what’s on his mind.50

First, in keeping with the underlying thematic concern with opposites that surfaces throughout the dialogue, the juxtaposition of Parmenides and Aristotle serves as another instance of opposites. Other than his relative youth and presumed conversational ease, the only other detail that Plato finds necessary to alert the reader to is Aristotle’s position as “the man who later became one of the Thirty” (127d2). Young Aristotle is a future tyrant. And as a tyrant Aristotle would possess all the vicious characteristics that relegate him to the extreme opposite end of the spectrum in which the philosopher resides in Republic ix.51 The tyrant is the opposite of the philosopher. Consequently, the contrast between the “quite venerable” philosopher Parmenides and the young and future tyrant Aristotle corresponds with previous instantiations of opposites (127b1).

Furthermore, the selection of Aristotle should, as Miller 1986, 78 argues, “predispose the hearer to be suspicious of Aristotle’s responses and to take upon himself the critical inquisitiveness that Socrates would surely have shown.” As with perhaps all of the dialogues, Plato’s Parmenides requires his readers to take a critical approach in evaluating both the arguments and the dramatic structure in order to think through the perplexities for themselves. In this way, the Parmenides itself is a “strenuous game” (πραγματειώδη παιδιάν) in need of diligent

50 “Having been with Aristotle (127d), and heard him discoursing with Socrates (135d),” Polansky 2012, 57 and 78 argues that “Parmenides can be confident that he [Aristotle] will present little resistance and say what he thinks”; the remainder of the dialogue shows that Parmenides’ confidence was warranted insofar as “Aristotle either agrees or asks for clarification, but never objects.” Similarly, Socrates alludes to the conversation of Parmenides when he asks the Visitor in Plato’s Sophist 217c2-8 how he intends to proceed: “When you want to explain something to somebody, do you usually prefer to explain it by yourself in a long speech, or to do it with questions? That’s the way Parmenides did it one time, when he was very old and I was young. He used questions to generate a very fine discussion.” The Visitor, in turn, replies: “It’s easier to do it the second way, Socrates, if you’re talking with someone who’s easy to handle and isn’t a trouble-maker. Otherwise it’s easier to do it alone.”

51 See also the discussion of philosophical character and its propensity for corruption in Republic vi, 495a-500e.
and attentive students. Consequently, by inserting Socrates, or an even better candidate like Zeno, Plato would have in effect deprived the reader of resolving the difficulties on his own.\(^5^2\)

Finally, the choice of Aristotle seems to emphasize a larger point with respect to philosophical pursuits: listening is as important as speaking. In entreating Parmenides to demonstrate the training, Zeno declared that he wished to become Parmenides’ “pupil (διακούσω) again after all this time” (136e4). Though translated by Gill and Ryan as “pupil,” and by Cornford as “sitting at your feet again,” διακούσω is more literally translated as “hearer” in the sense of “hearing through” or from another. Sayre 1996, 16 captures this sense of listening when he translates this passage as: “And so, Parmenides, I join in Socrates’ request, in order that I myself might hear [the lesson] after all these years.” One might suspect that Zeno’s association with Parmenides and familiarity with the training would compel Zeno to assume the active role of interlocutor; especially considering it has been quite some time since Zeno has had the chance to do so. Nonetheless, Zeno desires to hear the training, and Parmenides clearly wishes the same for Socrates. Though Aristotle is placed in the active role of interlocutor, he is as Miller 1986, 78 states “passively affirmative.” Presumably, his role highlights the contrast between a superficial activity that conceals a slavish passivity, and the surface passivity of an actively attuned Socrates and Zeno.

\(^5^2\) What’s more, Plato’s warning concerning “anyone who is seriously studying high matters” is relevant with respect to his decision to place Aristotle in the role of interlocutor. In Plato’s view, “if the author is really serious,” his “book does not contain his best thoughts; they are stored away with the fairest of his possessions” (Seventh Letter, 344c-d). Placing Aristotle in the position of interlocutor allows Socrates, and the readers, to anticipate an inferior dialogue and thus work out the perplexities on their own. In a similar vein, Miller 1986, 10 offers a plausible motivation for the dramatic form and aporetic nature of the dialogues. In short, Miller sees the dialogues as fundamental training tools for the students of Plato’s Academy. “Plato tests his hearers, the Academicians,” argues Miller, “and in good Socratic fashion invites and provokes them to make this penetration for themselves.” See also Seventh Letter, 344b.
Conclusion

*Parmenides* I sets the stage for the conceptual training to follow while offering a subtle, and often overlooked, attendant lesson: the ethical dynamic of philosophical pursuits. This parallel character training is exemplified by diligence and love. Right from the start, *Parmenides* I establishes the industry required for philosophy. Cephalus has traveled a great distance in hopes of hearing a retelling of a conversation from many years ago. His hopes ultimately rest upon the inconceivable strength of Antiphon’s power to recollect. What’s more, the accuracy of Antiphon’s account relies on Pythodorus’ own keen perception and memory. In the end, this recurring theme of “hard work” (πολύ... ἔργον) and commitment to comprehensiveness hints at the devotion required to examine the highest matters. This is why Parmenides encourages Socrates “to put your back into it and get more training” while Socrates is still young. Evidently nothing short of steadfast dedication will suffice.

In addition to diligence and hard work, the introductory conversation is also bracketed by erotic markers. The first instantiations involve Pythodorus’ description of Zeno as Parmenides’ “darling” (παιδικά) and Socrates’ insinuation regarding the nature of their relationship, e.g., “that other love” (τῆ ἀλλῃ... φιλίᾳ), and concludes with a wistful Parmenides contemplating the arduous task of once again playing “love’s (ἔρωτα) game.” The relationship between the erotic and the ethical is examined more fully in Chapter VI on the *Symposium*, but with respect to the matter at hand, we can point to Aristotle’s usage of the same erotically-charged word, ἔρωτα, upon agreeing to participate in the training: “ask (ἔρωτα) away.” Though conventionally understood as a highly abstract and conceptually perplexing examination of the ideas, *Parmenides* is not without erotic energy.53 Evidently an all-inclusive examination of the being

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and non-being of any hypothesis or property demands more than intellectual acuity. It would seem that the task of comprehending the nature of any being, and its concomitant non-being, entails having the love and work ethic needed to stimulate and sustain the inquiry to reach the heights and penetrate Plato’s theory of ideas.

With regard to the rigorous metaphysical training to be realized in Parmenides II, the groundwork for the conceptual framework of an extended analysis into any hypothesis and its opposing consequences is established throughout the introductory conversation of Parmenides I. Parmenides himself admits as much when he indicates the nature of the training (γυμνασθῆναι) he has in mind: “The manner [of training] is just what you heard from Zeno” (136d8). In other words, just as Zeno demonstrated the seemingly absurd consequences of the many, Parmenides claims that proper training requires Zeno’s method with the added corollary of hypothesizing whether the same thing is not. Simply put, the training consists of demonstrating the results of one hypothesis followed by the demonstration of its opposite, or other, including the various relations that obtain between them. For example, Parmenides’ poem posits One, while Zeno’s treatise shrewdly assumes the opposing position: Many. Coupled this way, Parmenides and Zeno instantiate the fundamental oppositional dynamic of the training. What’s more, if their respective intentions are given a conventional accounting, then one can recognize both the profundity of Parmenides’ hypothesis and the playfulness (παιδικά) of his lover’s (παιδικά) treatise.

Consequently, Parmenides I erupts with exemplars of the training dynamic. From the opening sequence’s bringing together in Athens of Elea and Clazomenae (conceived of as either conflicting schools, or opposing geographical locations), to the selection of the future tyrant, and thus extreme opposite of the philosopher, Aristotle, as Parmenides’ interlocutor, Parmenides I

54 Miller 1986, 77 argues that “The key to the riddle is the hearer’s grasp of Parmenides’ conceptual focus and elicitative posture in the first half of the dialogue.”
exhibits the training in dramatic form throughout. Although commentaries on *Parmenides* typically consign the training to the latter part of the dialogue, the oppositional tension that constitutes the training is reflective of *Parmenides* as a whole.
Chapter III – Parmenides II: The Training Exercise

The philosopher – the person who values these things the most – absolutely has to refuse to accept the claim that everything is at rest, either from the defenders of the one or from friends of the many forms. In addition he has to refuse to listen to people who say that that which is changes in every way. He has to be like a child begging for ‘both,’ and say that which is – everything – is both the unchanging and that which changes (Sophist, 249c10-d5).

Introduction

The ensuing analysis of Parmenides II is not an exhaustive treatment of the innumerable issues that emerge from the training exercise. Thus it should not be read as a complete or comprehensive study of the hypotheses; rather, it is a minimal treatment of the relations obtaining between each hypothesis with an emphasis upon the third hypothesis and Plato’s conception of ἐξαιφνης. Nevertheless, I will endeavor to make sense of the whole, while, with the exception of the third hypothesis, limiting the analysis of each part. In this way, I will stay true to the primary aim of discovering why Plato employs ἐξαιφνης throughout the dialogues, and perhaps as a consequence of this objective, facilitate a more palatable reading of the training exercise that constitutes the whole of Parmenides II.

In the introductory conversation Parmenides offered a rough outline of the training demonstrated in Parmenides II. In short, the training consists of hypothesizing both the being and non-being of one and others and the relations that do or do not obtain between one and others with a view toward examining the results of each deduction. The following is Parmenides’ presentation of the approximate structure of the exercise:

“If you like,” said Parmenides, “take as an example this hypothesis that Zeno entertained: if many are, what must the consequences be both for the many themselves in relation to themselves and in relation to the one, and for the one in relation to itself and in relation to the many? And, in turn, on the hypothesis, if many are not, you must again examine what the consequences will be both for the one and for the many in relation to themselves and in relation to each other” (136a4-10).
Ultimately the training exercise finds Parmenides dealing with form-theory and participation, so it echoes the one and many monismpluralism debate that animated Zeno’s treatise. Thus the monismpluralism dispute as it is presented in Parmenides I serves as both a rough approximation and smooth transition for the training demonstrated in Parmenides II. In brief, Parmenides will posit both a one and others throughout the training exercise.

As Parmenides had stated in the introductory conversation, he will begin this “strenuous game” (πραγματειώδη παιδίων) with his own hypothesis (137b2). The selection of his own hypothesis is indicative perhaps of one of Plato’s most consistent thematic concerns: self-examination. Furthermore, as the reader will see, just as Plato had subjected Socrates’ nascent theory of ideas to a thorough refutation via the hands of Parmenides, Parmenides himself will investigate “[his] own hypothesis” (137b3) and demonstrate the unsustainable consequences of the conventional interpretation of a singular one. As Lynch 1959, 56 points out, there are several “outstanding differences” between Plato’s representation of Parmenides’ “own hypothesis” and the one-being as it is presented in the historical Parmenides’ poem. All the same, the Parmenides is clearly dealing with Plato’s theory of ideas, and evidently Plato utilizes Parmenides’ hypothesis as a springboard to shed light on the nature of participation.

Subsequent chapters endeavor to present the relation between self-knowledge, or the “examined life” and ἐξαίφνης with greater precision and clarity.

Among the differences between Plato’s Parmenides and Parmenides’ poem with respect to the one: (1) Plato has Parmenides say that the one is without limit in the first hypothesis, while the poem indicates that the one is limited, (2) the poem seems to identify the one with being, while the first hypothesis excludes the possibility of the one sharing in either being or becoming.

It is perhaps likely that Plato viewed the historical Parmenides as setting forth a prototype of form-theory. Plato refers to him as “Father Parmenides” in the Sophist, and in contrast to other presocratic predecessors, treats Parmenides with great respect.
The First Hypothesis

Parmenides inaugurates the training by inquiring into the nature of the one with an immediate contrast: “If it is one, the one would not be many, would it?” (137c4-5) Thus Parmenides begins the process of stripping away all the characteristics that would in any way deny the singularity of the one.

In the course of the exercise, Parmenides and Aristotle deduce that the one of the first hypothesis: (1) is neither whole nor part, (2) is absent beginning, middle, and end, (3) is nowhere; neither in itself nor in another, (4) is neither at rest nor in motion, (5) is neither the same nor different than itself, (6) neither the same as another nor different than another, (7) is neither like another nor like itself, (8) is neither unlike another nor unlike itself, (9) is neither equal nor unequal to itself or another, (10) is neither greater nor lesser than itself or another, (11) is neither older nor younger than itself or another, (12) is not the same age as itself or another, (13) is neither in time nor has any share in time, and (14) is neither being nor becoming.

Because Parmenides and Aristotle have stripped away a multitude of characteristics, including being and becoming, they are left concluding that the one is neither named nor spoken of, is neither the object of opinion nor knowledge, nor does anything perceive it. Parmenides ends the first hypothesis with a final question: “Is it possible that these things are so for the one?” (142a7) While Aristotle is perhaps wise to be skeptical of the perplexing termination of the first exercise, at first blush it seems as if there is no escaping the paradox of positing a one that ultimately is not. Nonetheless, the brute fact that Parmenides and Aristotle are discussing a one that “is not named or spoken of” belies the surface conclusion of the first hypothesis, and encourages further reflection (142a5). Ultimately the significance of the first hypothesis is
understood only in the light of a complete analysis of the whole exercise, but especially hypotheses two and three. There are some positive conclusions, however, to be drawn from this apparently fallow first hypothesis.

The first hypothesis shows Parmenides addressing one of Socrates’ assumptions regarding the ideas. In *Parmenides* I, Socrates understood the ideas as solitary entities, or discrete and isolated ones. In fact, he claimed that it would be a “marvel” if someone could show him how a single idea embraced its opposite (129b2). Consequently, the first hypothesis of *Parmenides* II reveals how Socrates’ conception of the ideas is flawed. If the ideas are as Socrates conceives them to be, then the ideas are without any being whatsoever. In other words, in order to preserve its strict “oneness,” the one is absent all attributes, including being. Since the one lacks being, it simply cannot be. Thus a one conceived as lacking other or many characteristics is a one that seemingly cannot be conceived of at all. Consequently the first hypothesis implicitly refutes Socrates’ nascent understanding of the ideas as solitary and basicunities, while laying the foundation for the proper, comprehensive way of thinking about the ideas with respect to participation. In short, absent some association with being, no “one” can be.

What’s more, the *neither… nor…* conclusions characterizing the first hypothesis are indicative of a one lacking any relations whatsoever. The most significant implication of a one absent association with other ideas is its complete and utter isolation from us. In other words, if the deductions ensuing from the first hypothesis were the terminus of the training, then the result would make manifest the “shocking” prospects discussed in *Parmenides* I: the absence of knowledge, the total separation of humankind from the gods, and the destruction of dialectic. Without ideas to serve as the touchstones of thinking, and devoid of any hope of even speaking of a one, we “won’t have anywhere to turn [our] thought,” and philosophy itself will be a futile
enterprise (135b10). Nevertheless, the first hypothesis serves a positive function insofar as its negative conclusions point to the necessity of association between the ideas. In other words, lacking some interplay with being, a one, or idea, cannot obtain.

The results of the first hypothesis serve an additional positive function. In short, the implicit lesson of the first hypothesis is that participation is not limited to the idea-participant paradigm, but must extend to the ideas themselves. In other words, in order for a given idea to be an idea, it must in some way participate with other ideas. Thus, despite the seemingly fallow conclusions, the first hypothesis cultivates an understanding of the theory of ideas that dismisses Socrates’ budding view of the forms as stand-alone entities, and fosters an appreciation for a more mature, and well-developed theory of ideas.

The Second Hypothesis

While the first hypothesis considered a one as merely one, only to terminate with a one devoid of all qualities and characteristics, the second hypothesis will consider a one that is, or shares in being. In short, a one with being is characterized by a host of properties and attributes. Thus, the second hypothesis posits a one that participates in time through its association with things in the past, present, and future, and is the object of perception, opinion, and knowledge, while admitting of both name and definition. In contrast to the stark neither... nor... results of the first hypothesis, the second hypothesis elicits conclusions of a both... and... variety. While the first hypothesis excluded any sort of relations obtaining between a one and other ideas, the second hypothesis will begin with the simple notion that a one is, and examine the consequences of this supposition.
Parmenides initiates the second exercise with hope that “another kind of result may come to light” as he and Aristotle begin again by considering the consequences of a one which is, or shares in being (142b2). The difference between the first and second hypothesis is that the first considered a one lacking any relations, while the second considers a one that is, and thus associates with something other than itself, namely being. Thus, the second hypothesis does not nullify the conclusions of the first; it simply assumes a different perspective by supposing a one that shares in being. Moreover, the both... and... conclusions of the second hypothesis are complemented by the same neither... nor... results of the first hypothesis. For example, near the end of the second hypothesis Parmenides says: “To sum up all this, the one itself both is and comes to be older and younger than itself and the others, and it neither is nor comes to be older or younger than itself or the others” (155c3-6). Consequently, Parmenides does not annul the results of the first hypothesis, but marries the negative outcome of the first to the positive conclusions of the second hypothesis. In this way, the reader gets a first glimpse of the interaction between being and non-being that will play out more fully in subsequent hypotheses.

In the course of this exercise, Aristotle and Parmenides deduce that the one of the second hypothesis: (1) is, or has being, (2) is a whole with parts, (3) is both limited and unlimited, (4) is straight or round or both, (5) is both in itself and in others, (6) is both in motion and at rest, (7) is both the same as and different than itself and others, (8) is both like and unlike itself and others, (9) is both equal and unequal to itself and others, (10) is both touching and not touching itself and others, (11) is in time, (12) is both older and younger and not older and younger than itself and others, (13) is both the same age as itself and others, (14) has a past, present, and future, and (15) admits of being an object of perception, opinion, and knowledge.
The inferences drawn from the second hypothesis reveal how the inclusion of being generates a multitude of seemingly opposing characteristics. Nevertheless, none of the characteristics emerging from the positing of a one with being actually violates Plato’s “principle of opposites” from Republic iv. For example, the one of the second hypothesis is both in motion and at rest, but not in the same respect: it is at rest insofar as it is in itself, but in motion insofar as it is in another. Similarly the one of the second hypothesis is both same and different; it is the same as itself, but different from other ideas, while also being different from itself, and the same as other ideas. Consequently, Parmenides has accomplished what Socrates had previously said would be a “marvel” insofar as he has revealed how a single idea embraces its opposite (129b2).

At the conclusion of the second hypothesis, Parmenides and Aristotle agree that there is indeed opinion, perception, and knowledge of a one that is “if in fact even now,” as Parmenides remarks, “we are engaging in all those activities concerning it” (155d7-8). Nevertheless, the predominantly both... and... nature of the second hypothesis has led Aristotle and Parmenides to concur that “all such things as pertain to the others also pertain to the one” (155e2). Thus, while the first hypothesis stripped a one of all attributes and made it ineffable and isolated from itself and others, the second hypothesis has clothed a one with so many characteristics that it becomes indistinguishable from the others. In other words, the deficiency of the first hypothesis’ conception of an inaccessible one is matched by the excess of the second hypothesis insofar as we cannot differentiate ideas, or a one from the others. As a result, the first hypothesis stands as a meditation upon the consequences of a one lacking association with other ideas, while the second hypothesis is a consideration of unlimited association. Thus both the first and second hypotheses make knowledge unattainable insofar as the first hypothesis cuts us off from knowing, while the second hypothesis eliminates the distinction between ideas and thus renders
knowledge suspect. Ironically, the first hypothesis finds Parmenides speaking of a one that could not be spoken of, while the second hypothesis finds him claiming that we can have knowledge of a one that is other.

If we take Parmenides’ conclusions at face value, then there would seem to be no good reason to posit the forms in the first place. In other words, the notion that ideas alone provide an enduring knowledge evaporates if we were to collapse the distinction between various ideas. If an idea is indistinguishable from another idea, then what purpose would the ideas serve? As a result, Parmenides needs to reestablish the distinction, and show how difference emerges.

Finally, there is a curious “thought” experiment within the second hypothesis that recurs throughout the training exercise. Immediately after concluding that the one is “unlimited in multitude,” Parmenides suggests conceiving of the one “in thought (τῇ διάνοιᾳ) alone by itself” in order to see if without sharing in being the one would appear to be merely one or many (143a2-7). After Aristotle determines that it would indeed be one, despite the previous hypothesis’ conclusion to the contrary (i.e., the first hypothesis showed that a one without being cannot even be one), Parmenides argues that “it is not by its being one that the one is different (ἕτερον) from being (οὐσία), nor by its being being that being is other than the one” (143b4-5). The one and being, according to Parmenides, “are different from each other by difference and otherness” and otherness is different from being and oneness (143b6-8). In effect, Parmenides reveals that positing difference is an instantiation of thinking, and as we shall see, he will suggest the same throughout the exercise.
The Third Hypothesis

What is referred to here as the third hypothesis is regularly designated as “hypothesis IIa” or the “insert hypothesis” throughout the secondary literature. Indeed, because of this curious designation the vast majority of commentaries count eight hypotheses rather than nine. Parmenides himself, however, indicates that he and Aristotle will now speak of a one “yet a third (τρίτον) time” (155e4). In the entire course of the training exercise that represents all of Parmenides II, this is the only time that Parmenides numbers a hypothesis. Like most readers of Parmenides, I believe the third hypothesis is, in some sense, inseparable from the first and second hypotheses. Nevertheless, in addition to Parmenides explicitly marking off this hypothesis as the “third” (τρίτον), there is also a sense in which this hypothesis is separable from both the first and the second, and indeed all of the other hypotheses. In short, the language and conceptions that delineate this peculiar hypothesis are found elsewhere in Plato’s dialogues. This, I shall argue, is no accident. Furthermore, I will endeavor to disclose these parallel instantiations of the third hypothesis in subsequent chapters. Thus in contrast to the

58 There are, however, several commentators who designate it as the third hypothesis, perhaps most notably the Neoplatonists, but also fairly contemporary scholars such as Speiser (1937), Liebrucks (1949), and Wahl (1951).
60 Also, it would seem that oftentimes when Plato employs “three” or “third” in the other dialogues, it is at a point of a particular dialogue’s crescendo, or simply, an indication that a significant breakthrough has occurred. For example, one will find a flurry of “threes” and “thirds” in the concluding passages of the Philebus where “reason and intelligence” (νοῦ καὶ φρόνησις) are ranked “third” (τρίτον) in the hierarchy of goods constituting the good life (66b4). See especially Miller 1986, 251 who proffers a collection of “saving thirds” scattered throughout Plato’s dialogues. Furthermore, as Sayre 1996, 241 points out, Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon (1882) has “completing the tale” under the entry for τρίτον. From Aristotle’s On the Heavens: “For, as the Pythagoreans say, the universe and all that is in it is determined by the number three, since beginning and middle and end give the number of the universe, and the number they give is the triad. And so, having taken these three from nature as (so to speak) laws of it, we make further use of the number three in the worship of the Gods. Further, we use the terms in practice in this way. Of two things, or men, we say ‘both’, but not ‘all’: three is the first number to which the term ‘all’ is applied” (268a10-19). For an insightful look at the Pythagorean influence on Plato’s thought, see especially Patrick Lee Miller’s Becoming God: Pure Reason in Early Greek Philosophy (2011).
preponderance of commentaries, but in keeping with the dialogue itself, I shall refer to it as the third hypothesis.⁶¹

What’s more, the third hypothesis is Plato’s only sustained treatment of ἐξαίφνης, or “the instant.” Consequently, in order to determine Plato’s aim with respect to the thirty-six instances in which ἐξαίφνης appears in various dialogues, a careful examination of this brief hypothesis is necessary. Thus, I will reproduce the entire passage (155e3-157b4) with commentary and observations interspersed throughout:

Let’s speak of it yet a third (τρίτον) time. If the 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 both 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 (155e4-156a4).

As indicated by the both... and... and neither... nor... consequences, Parmenides is speaking of both the one that is not of the first hypothesis and the one that is of the second hypothesis. The phrase “and partaking of time” also indicates that we are dealing with the one of the second hypothesis, because the one of the first hypothesis was characterized as having “no share of time, nor is it in any time” (141d3-4). Thus it is appropriate to consider the third hypothesis as a further analysis of the relations obtaining between the first and second hypothesis. “The third attempt is needed,” argues Miller 1986, 113 “because the second has apparently generated internal contradiction: the One of [hypothesis] II is, above all, both one and many, and this means that it is also, as many, not one and as one, not many.” The third hypothesis can be

⁶¹ Cornford 1957, 194 argues that the third hypothesis “has no claim to the status, which many assign to it, of a ninth independent Hypothesis. That would destroy the symmetry of the whole set of Hypotheses.” Nevertheless, I reject Cornford’s view and will show that far from destroying symmetry, counting nine hypotheses enhances the symmetry and clarifies the general structure of the exercise.
viewed as Plato’s attempt to “save” the training, and demonstrate how opposing ideas associate and interact through separation and combination.

Don’t you in fact call getting a share of being ‘coming-to-be’? – I do. – And parting from being ‘ceasing-to-be’? – Most certainly. – Indeed the one, as it seems, when it gets and releases being, comes to be and ceases to be. – Necessarily. – And since it is one and many and comes to be and ceases to be, doesn’t its being many cease to be whenever it comes to be one, and doesn’t its being one cease to be whenever it comes to be many? – Certainly. – Whenever it comes to be one and many, must it not separate and combine? – It certainly must. – Furthermore, whenever it comes to be like and unlike, must it not be made like and unlike? – Yes. – And whenever it comes to be greater and less and equal, must it not increase and decrease and be made equal? – Just so (156a5-b8).

According to Parmenides, the one, by virtue of its capacity to possess and then relinquish being, is able to come into existence and have its existence terminated. Thus, when the one of the first hypothesis really comes to be one, it must combine with being, i.e., be the one of the second hypothesis. This combination of one and being, however, results in the undifferentiated muddle of the one and others which leads to the both... and... consequences of the second hypothesis. Likewise, when the one is separated from being, and thus ceases to be, it reverts back to the one of the first hypothesis which, in turn, results in the neither... nor... outcomes that characterize a one devoid of being. Consequently, in becoming one, it ceases to be many, and in becoming many, it ceases to be one. In other words, as one it is not many, but it is not the one of the first hypothesis, but a hybrid one that synthesizes the absolute non-being of the first hypothesis with the unlimited being of the second hypothesis to produce a form of relative non-being.62

And whenever, being in motion, it comes to a rest, and whenever being at rest, it changes to moving, it must itself, presumably, be in no time at all. – How is that? – It won’t be able to undergo being previously at rest and later in motion or being previously in motion or 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 also

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62 See the discussion between the mysterious “Visitor” and Theaetetus with respect to a type of non-being that is, or difference, as found in Sophist 241d-253a.
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 (156c1-9).

The peculiarities of change begin to emerge as Parmenides employs rest and motion to demonstrate the perplexities surrounding transition from one state to another. Our everyday experience evidences that things do indeed change from rest to motion and vice versa, but because as Parmenides asserts, something must be in either motion or at rest at all times, exactly “when” does this transition occur? Since something must be in either motion or rest at all times, the moment of change would seem to require a suspension of both rest and motion in order to complete the transition. In other words, the change from rest to motion necessitates an end of rest and a beginning of motion, and because a thing cannot be in rest and motion at the same time it seems that change is impossible because there can be no time in which a thing is neither at rest nor in motion. If change cannot occur in time, then it must happen in “no time” at all.

Is there, then, this queer (αὕτωπον) thing in which it might be, just when it changes? – What queer thing? – The instant (τὸ ἐξαιρήσης). The instant (ἐξαιρήσης) seems to signify something such that changing occurs from it to each of two states. For a thing doesn’t change from rest while rest continues, or from motion while motion continues. Rather, this queer (αὕτωπος) creature, the instant (ἐξαιρήσης), 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 this way could it do both. But in changing, it changes at an instant (ἐξαιρήσης), and when it changes, it would be in no time at all, and just then it would be neither in motion nor at rest. – No, it wouldn’t (156d1-156e7).

As Parmenides indicates, it is a “queer” (αὕτωπος) phenomenon which surfaces to make change possible. He identifies this “queer” thing as “the instant” (τὸ ἐξαιρήσης), and argues that the locus of change is this strange intersection that “lurks” between motion and rest. Only then, in this timeless crossroads between rest and motion, could change from one state to another commence. Thus the instant would appear to be a channel of sorts that allows for the conversion of rest to
motion and the transformation of motion to rest. In the instant an idea would be neither in rest nor in motion, and this “queer” timelessness would provide an opening through which the transition from motion to rest could proceed without either rest or motion obtaining since neither state emerges in the instant.63

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 certain states of motion and rest? And then it neither is nor is not, and neither comes to be nor ceases to be? – It seems, at any rate. – Indeed, according to the same argument, when it goes from one to many and from many to one, it is neither one nor many, and neither separates nor combines. And when it goes from like to unlike and from unlike to like, it is neither like nor unlike, nor is it being made like or unlike. And when it goes from small to large and to equal and vice versa, it is neither small nor large nor equal; nor would it be increasing or decreasing or being made equal. – It seems not. – The one, if it is, could undergo all that. – Doubtless (157a1-157b4).

The closing section of the third hypothesis suggests the frequency of the “strange” disruption of temporal continuity brought to fruition by the instant. Beyond motion and rest, the instant allows for the transitions obtaining between being and non-being, one and many, like and unlike, small and large and equal. Thus the fundamental ideas referenced in the concluding section of the third hypothesis point to the sweeping range of the instant’s emergence and concurrent facilitation with respect to all manner of change and transformation. Put simply, the interplay between and among the ideas happens suddenly, in an instant.

63 In contrast to Aristotle’s “now” (νῦν) as presented in his Physics iv.11-13, Plato’s “instant” (ἐξαιρήσεις) stands outside of time. While “the now” is not part of time, it does not stand outside of time in the same way Plato’s “instant” is conceived. In short, “the now” links a given temporal duration and facilitates temporal continuity, and under Aristotle’s linear notion of time a given “now” is essentially a point which divides one time from another while conferring temporal continuity and enabling chronological stability. For example, this “now” segregates the time it takes to read this current sentence from the time required to read previous sentences, while simultaneously providing the beginning of a temporal continuity terminated by this “now.” As a result, Aristotle’s “now” establishes an orderly account of the division and constancy of continuous and linear time. Plato’s “instant,” however, is as Sayre 1996, 248 maintains, a “disruption… that is required for change to take place at all.” Thus, Aristotle’s conception of “the now” facilitates a tidy, structured view of time, while Plato’s “instant” discloses a temporality interrupted and pervaded by timelessness.
The Meaning of the First Three Hypotheses

If the preceding analysis hits the mark, then the following elements of form-theory emerge: (1) participation among the ideas is necessary; the forms cannot be isolated unities, (2) the interplay of ideas requires a source of differentiation in order to distinguish one idea from another, and (3) the instant facilitates the combining and separating of ideas necessary for both association and differentiation. In short, the third hypothesis reveals how the *neither... nor...* one of the first hypothesis combines with the *both... and...* one of the second hypothesis to generate a medium that permits an idea to be both itself and relate to other ideas. Furthermore, the ideas must be constantly entering into and emerging from the *neither... nor...* peculiarity of the instant in order to reflect the *both... and...* condition characterizing participating forms. On the one hand, the ideas are alive and in motion as they interact and participate with one another. On the other hand, the forms are invariable, constant, and unwavering principles of reason. Thus the ideas oscillate between the static *neither... nor...* timelessness of the instant and the various opposing determinations of the *both... and...* conclusions to create a shimmering dynamic that at once flashes with being and a relative form of non-being.

As previously mentioned, most commentators view the first three hypotheses as linked in some way, and several argue that the instant allows for the reappearance of the one of the first hypothesis. For example, both Allen (1983) and Miller (1986) maintain that the *neither... nor...* attributes of the instant indicates a return of the one of the first hypothesis. In contrast, Sayre 1996, 251 argues that since the one of the first hypothesis does not partake of time, it cannot be construed as having emerged in the instant because “the very point of Parmenides’ current

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64 There is an interesting passage in the *Laws* where the Athenian ranks the virtues and claims that the “third” (τρίτον) is the result of a combining: “Wisdom, in turn, is first and leader among the divine goods. Second after intelligence comes a moderate disposition of the soul, and from these two mixed with courage comes justice, in third (τρίτον) place. Courage is fourth” (631c5-631d2).
analysis is that the instant is the nontemporal occasion on which an otherwise temporally existent unity undergoes change.” Also, Sayre contends that unlike the ineffable and unknowable one of the first hypothesis, the one at the instant of change is both spoken of, and known.

Yet the sheer fact that the one of the first hypothesis was indeed spoken of would seem to belie the apparent conclusion to the contrary reached by Parmenides and Aristotle, and evidently shared by Sayre. In other words, Sayre seems to speak, or in this case write, intelligibly of the one of the first hypothesis in denying that it is the one of the instant. Furthermore, in order to do so, Sayre must have some knowledge of the one under scrutiny. Thus to deny that the one of the first hypothesis can be either spoken of or known is to take Parmenides at face value as he says one thing, “it is not named or spoken of” and does another: speaks of this “ineffable” one. Even young Aristotle, after being asked by Parmenides if it is “possible that these things are so for the one?” responds with a revealing suspicion: “I certainly don’t think so” (142a5-8).

Although the one of the first hypothesis fails to partake of time, this lack of temporal standing does not preclude it from sharing in the timeless “time” of the instant. Since the instant emerges in “no time at all”, and renders the ideas which pass through it as featureless *neither... nor...* entities, it would seem that the third hypothesis “saves” the one of the first hypothesis by filtering it through the one that is of the second hypothesis. In doing so, the instant transforms the one of the first hypothesis to a form of non-being that does indeed exist, namely difference. As the third hypothesis clarifies, the first hypothesis is a constant element or component of the second. Furthermore, the third hypothesis discloses how the remaining hypotheses are also in pairs and similarly combined through the instant.
Thus the *neither... nor...* first hypothesis acts as a limit principle insofar as it discloses the limits of thinking an idea as an isolated unity, itself by itself, while the *both... and...* second hypothesis reveals how an unlimited principle facilitates participation among the forms, but removes our ability to distinguish one idea from another. It is the third hypothesis that clarifies how the first two hypotheses work together in allowing an idea to be both what it is and what it is not. Finally, as Parmenides hinted in the second hypothesis and will later confirm in subsequent hypotheses, it is through thinking this difference that the forms first emerge as hallmarks of understanding.

**The Remaining Hypotheses**

The remaining hypotheses are couplets mirroring the *neither... nor..., both... and...* paradigm established by the first and second hypotheses, and the third hypothesis reveals how the principles of limit and unlimitedness combine and separate in all of the remaining pairs. Nevertheless, hypotheses four through nine are not without interesting developments and innovations. The following examination, however, is not meant as an exhaustive analysis of the numerous issues that emerge in the concluding hypotheses of the training exercise. For example, many of the themes investigated in the remaining hypotheses resonate with several of the so-called “late-period” Platonic dialogues such as *Sophist, Statesman, Philebus*, and *Theaetetus*, among others. All the same, with the exception of cases where it appears useful or necessary, it is not my intent to explore these associations. Instead, the focus of this chapter is the relation of all

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65 Socrates explains in the *Philebus* that the mixture of limit and unlimitedness produces a “third (τρίτον) kind” that is “the joint offspring of the other two kinds [i.e., limit and unlimitedness] as a unity” (26d8-9).

66 With regard to the role of the third hypothesis in combining the subsequent pairs of hypotheses, Meinwald 1991, 124 rightly states “Having already provided the arguments that show what conclusions about becoming, perishing, and change follow for anything that is ‘such as we have said,’ Plato relies on us to realize that they can be applied again at various points in the succeeding arguments.”
the hypotheses to the instant in order to prepare for the analysis of the remaining appearances of ἑξαιρής in other dialogues. Thus, in keeping with the aim of this dissertation as a whole, what follows should be read as an overview of the remaining hypotheses in order to discover why the “instant” (ἑξαιρής) appears in some of the most significant passages of Plato’s dialogues.

The Fourth and Fifth Hypotheses

The fourth hypothesis marks a shift from the principal concerns of the previous hypotheses insofar as the fourth explores the consequences for the others, if one is. Accordingly, Parmenides begins by swiftly distinguishing the others from the one: “Well then, since in fact they are other than the one, the others (ἄλλα) are not the one. For if they were, they would not be other than the one” (157b7-9). Nevertheless, Parmenides reasons that the others cannot be “absolutely deprived of the one, but somehow partake (μετέχει) of it” (157c2-3). Thus the fourth hypothesis begins to explore the relationship between the one and others.

In short, because the others have many parts by virtue of their not being one, they must form a whole. A whole is a unity, or one whole. The others, by virtue of being one whole composed of many parts, partake of oneness as a whole. And yet because “each” part is “one” of many parts constituting the whole, the others share in oneness by part too. Thus the others share in the one by both whole and part. Consequently, although Parmenides framed participation as an either whole or part dichotomy in Parmenides I, the fourth hypothesis reveals that participation occurs through both whole and part.

On the one hand, the others participate in the one by whole and part. On the other hand, as other than the one the others are many. Thus the others are somehow both one and many. As many, Parmenides argues that the others must be “unlimited in multitude” (158b8). In brief, prior
to having a share of the one, the others must be devoid of unity, and this lack of unity makes the others an unlimited many.

Parmenides then suggests that we subtract the smallest fraction possible of the multitude, “in thought” (τῇ διανοίᾳ), in order to further validate his claim about the others, as devoid of oneness, being many (158c2). He argues that prior to participation in the one, even the slightest slice of the others as unlimited multitude will be an unlimited multitude itself. Examining the others in this manner, “itself by itself” and “different from the form,” Parmenides claims that the others will always be an unlimited multitude (158c5-6). Taken at face value, Parmenides seems to be making the rather innocuous claim that prior to participating in the one, the others are an amorphous many.

Yet just as the second hypothesis found Parmenides instantiating difference “in thought” (τῇ διανοίᾳ) in order to distinguish otherness from one and being, the fourth hypothesis suggests a similar thought-provoking distinction. Thus, a pattern begins to emerge in the both... and... even-numbered hypotheses. In brief, Parmenides differentiates either the one or others, depending upon the object of the hypothesis, “in thought” (τῇ διανοίᾳ). Again, this pattern manifests itself in all of the even-numbered both... and... hypotheses. Consequently, I will endeavor to reveal the meaning of this curious state of affairs at the conclusion of this chapter.

Furthermore, after the one and others “gain communion with each other… something different comes to be in them” (158d5-6). In other words, by virtue of their participation in a one, the others are no longer unlimited multitudes, but unified wholes with discrete parts. Thus, considered in themselves, the others are an amorphous many, but through participation the
unlimited multitude blends with the limited one of the instant, and this “communion” confers unity, and in a word, coherence.

Thus the fourth hypothesis is characterized by the both... and... paradigm first set forth in the second hypothesis. The others are both limited and unlimited; limited with respect to participating in the one, and unlimited when considered in themselves. And the others are both the same and different, like and unlike, in rest and motion, and admit of all the opposing properties adumbrated in previous hypotheses.

The fifth hypothesis again considers the others, but this time the others are construed as wholly separate and bereft of the one. Thus the fifth hypothesis produces results that follow the neither... nor... pattern. In short, Parmenides claims that since the division between one and others is the most general distinction conceivable, “there is not something else in addition to them that is both other than the one and other than the others, for all things have been mentioned, once the one and the others are mentioned” (159b7-c2). But, is this really the case? For instance, the third hypothesis finds Parmenides arguing that change takes place in a timeless instant characterized by the neither... nor... paradigm. What’s more, the both... and... one of the second hypothesis makes the transition into the others through the medium of the instant. Consequently, while the one changes into the others through the instant, by necessity it would be neither one nor other at the moment of transformation. Thus there is indeed something else, some third thing, in addition to the one and others: “the instant” (τὸ ἐκείνης). Because the neither... nor... hypotheses pertain to the instant, all of the odd hypotheses are really the instant, and thus there is no need for any further instantiations of the third hypothesis.
Nevertheless, young Aristotle fails to recollect the consequences of the third hypothesis, and readily agrees with Parmenides with respect to the one and others being the most fundamental distinction imaginable. Thus, with the others construed as absent communion with a one, the remainder of the fifth hypothesis finds Parmenides stripping away all of the properties which would have obtained through participation. Accordingly, the others are neither one nor many, neither whole nor part, and, in effect, nothing without some form of communion with the one.

Consequently, the fourth and fifth hypotheses mirror the first and second hypotheses insofar as the others require association with the one. While the first hypothesis revealed that a one cannot even be one without relating to other ideas, the fifth hypothesis shows that the others cannot even be others without associating with a one. In a similar vein, the second hypothesis disclosed how a one sharing in being admits of all kinds of opposing characteristics, while the fourth hypothesis reveals a parallel phenomenon with respect to the others and their relationship with the ideas. What’s more, just as the second hypothesis instantiated differentiation “in thought” (τῇ διάνοιᾳ), the fourth hypothesis does the same.

The Sixth and Seventh Hypotheses

The sixth hypothesis instantiates the both... and... paradigm through its consideration of a one which is not. Parmenides quickly establishes the basis of this hypothesis:

What if someone were to say (λέγοι), ‘if largeness is not’ or ‘if smallness is not’ or anything else like that, would it be clear in each case that what he is saying (λέγοι) is not is something different? – Certainly. – So now, too, whenever he says (λέγει), ‘if one is not,’ isn’t it clear that what he says (λέγει) is not is different (ἕτερον) from the others (τῶν ἄλλων), and don’t we recognize what he means? – We do. – So he speaks (λέγει) of something, in the first place, knowable (γνωστόν), and in the second, different (ἕτερον) from the others (τῶν ἄλλων), whenever he says ‘one,’ whether he attaches being or not-being to it; for we still know what thing is said not to be, and that it is different (διάφορον) from the others (τῶν ἄλλων). Isn’t that so? – Necessarily (160c2-d3).
Parmenides is speaking of a type of non-being that paradoxically has some share of being. The most obvious parallel to the sixth hypothesis can be found in Plato's *Sophist*. Curiously, the *Sophist* finds the “Visitor” committing a kind of “patricide” against the historical Parmenides by insisting that “that which is not somehow is,” while in the *Parmenides* Plato has Parmenides himself making this claim. Furthermore, both dialogues ultimately identify this strange kind of non-being as difference. The *Sophist* makes this connection explicitly, while the sixth hypothesis of *Parmenides* implies the very same by making the one that is not both “knowable” (γνωστόν) and “different” (ἕτερον). The sixth hypothesis also follows the “in thought” (τῇ διάνοιᾳ) pattern of the previous even-numbered hypotheses, albeit in a different way. Instead of inducing Aristotle to imagine if smallness is not “in thought,” Parmenides elects to take a more natural course and compels Aristotle to imagine someone who “says” (λέγει) smallness is not. In effect, the result is the same as the previous instantiations of thinking difference, and corresponds to the Visitor’s reasoning from Plato’s *Sophist* which makes “thought (διάνοια) and speech (λόγος) the same” (*Sophist*, 263e3-5).

By virtue of the one that is not being both knowable and different, Parmenides is then able to attach the other properties that approximate the *both... and...* paradigm established by the one that is of the second hypothesis. In due course, Parmenides confirms that being is an essential aspect of the one that is not: “So, if it is not to be, it must have being a not-being as a bond (δεσμόν) 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” (162a4-7). Likewise, non-being is just as essential to the being of one that is, as being is to the one that is not. Put simply, in order for

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67 The discussion between the “Visitor” and Theaetetus with respect to a type of non-being that is, or difference, is found in *Sophist* 241d-253a.
68 *Sophist*, 241d3-8.
69 According to the Visitor, thought is voiceless speech, while speech is simply verbalized thought.
the idea of rest, for example, to be the idea of rest, it must at the same time “not be” motion. Thus, every idea insofar as it is distinct from every other idea must both be and not be. Accordingly, the being of an idea must combine, or blend, with non-being. This relative non-being is, in effect, an intrinsic limitation that allows for the ideas to be distinguishable, intelligible forms. In a word, this relative non-being is difference.

The seventh hypothesis finds Parmenides again exploring the consequences of one that is not in order to discover whether the results “will appear the same… or different” (163c1). In keeping with the alternating *neither... nor..., both... and...* model established by the first two hypotheses, and followed by the fourth and fifth, the conclusions of the seventh hypothesis are indeed “different” from the results of the sixth. As it turns out, young Aristotle reveals once more that he is perhaps ill-suited for Parmenides’ rigorous training exercise. He evidently forgets the consequences of the sixth hypothesis, since when asked by Parmenides if “is not” refers to a one that is “without qualification” devoid of being, Aristotle replies with confidence: “Absolutely without qualification” (163c6-8). In light of the immediately preceding hypothesis’ demonstration of a one that is not that *does* share in being, Aristotle’s ineptitude seems particularly egregious. Given Aristotle’s failure to recollect the manner that being obtains in a one that is not, Parmenides proceeds to strip away all of the attributes that had previously been attached to the one that is not. Consequently, absent participation in being, the one that is not of the seventh hypothesis is subsequently characterized by the *neither... nor...* pattern of a one lacking any being whatsoever.

Thus the sixth and seventh hypotheses demonstrate the importance of a kind of relative non-being or difference. Without difference, the ideas cannot be both what they are and what they are not. In other words, absent this relative non-being the ideas suffer the same fate as the
undifferentiated one of the second hypothesis. Consequently, both being and a relative non-being, or difference, are integral elements of every idea; without a share in being an idea cannot even be an idea, and without difference an idea is indistinguishable from other ideas.

The Eighth and Ninth Hypotheses

The eighth hypothesis considers the attributes the others must have in light of a one that is not. Parmenides continues to follow the established pattern of alternating both... and..., neither... nor... results in the concluding hypotheses of the training exercise. Thus, the eighth hypothesis is characterized by the both... and... paradigm, while the ninth hypothesis is of the neither... nor... variety. Finally, a reappearance of “the instant” (τὸ ἐξαίφνης) links the eighth hypothesis with the third.

Parmenides begins by considering the nature of the others’ otherness in the absence of a one. In other words, what exactly are the others different from since one is not? Because the others must be different from something, and a one is not, Parmenides reasons that the others must be different from each other. Nevertheless, since the one is not, the others are construed once again as multitudes, and thus they are different from each other as multitudes. So, just as the fourth hypothesis considered the others as unlimited multitudes prior to participating in a one that is, the eighth hypothesis similarly views the others as unlimited multitudes in light of a one that is not.

Parmenides then considers the strange nature of the others as multitudes:

But each mass of them, as it seems, is unlimited in multitude, and if you take what seems to be the smallest, in an instant (ἐξαίφνης), just as in a dream (ὕπνῳ), instead of seeming (δόξαντος) to be one, it appears (φαίνεται) many, and instead of very small, immense in relation to the bits chopped from it” (164d1-4).
The language Parmenides employs in this passage indicates that the others of the eighth hypothesis are a principle of sheer unlimitedness. In other words, the others as unlimited multitudes seem to be both one and many or great and small, but the absence of a one that is precludes these others from achieving stability. Consequently, a firm knowledge of the others as others is simply not possible without participation in a one.

What’s more, the return of ἐξαιφνής suggests some connection to the third hypothesis. As previously argued, the instant facilitates change through its status as a timeless neither... nor... conduit of transition. In this way, a type of relative non-being, i.e., difference, permeates the being of the ideas and allows for a given idea to be both what it is and what it is not. In contrast to the instant of the third hypothesis, the eighth hypothesis employs ἐξαιφνής as a both... and... medium in order to accentuate the instability which differentiates the others. In a sense, the instant of the eighth hypothesis is a reverse image of the instant of the third. It is a pure principle of unlimitedness, devoid of any unity or limit. On the one hand the instant confers permanence to a one. On the other hand it imparts volatility to the others. Nevertheless, in both hypotheses the instant functions as a conduit of change.

Because the others have been shown to assume opposing properties, Parmenides indicates how one would distinguish the apparent enduring nature of the others from their true fluctuating character. In short, the others are limited in relation to each other insofar as we can distinguish each multitude, and this fundamental differentiation deceives us into believing that each multitude is one. The others, however, are unlimited, or many, when considered in themselves, or absent a relation to another other. “So every being that you grasp in thought (τῇ διάνοιᾳ) must

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70 As further evidence that the eighth hypothesis is a principle of pure unlimitedness, Lynch 1959, 216 states: “For in no more than sixty-four lines of text, the word ‘seems’ (or ‘appears’ or some other equivalent) occurs no less than twenty-five times.” In other words, the eighth hypothesis demonstrates how, absent limit, the ideas are indistinct.
be chopped up and dispersed,” argues Parmenides, “because surely, without oneness, it would always be grasped as a mass” (165b5-7). Thus the others are both limited and unlimited. We can, however, discern the true nature of the others through an intense analysis of their appearance. The others appear “dimly” (ἀμβλύ) to someone viewing them from a distance, but to a person who sees them “keenly” (στέρεται) from “up close” (νοοῦντι) the others will “each one appear unlimited in multitude” (165c1-2).

Furthermore, Parmenides once again speaks of differentiation emerging “in thought” (τῇ διανοίᾳ).

Finally, if one is not, then the others, in keeping with the both... and... paradigm, assume all manner of opposing properties. Nevertheless, as Parmenides suggests, the acuity of our examination of the others determines whether or not we see the others for what they really are. In other words, the others seem to admit of stability and constancy when we are not thinking sharply, but the perspective changes once we scrutinize the others in a thoughtful and persistent manner. Thus, while the second, fourth, and sixth hypotheses suggest that we instantiate differentiation through thinking or saying, the eighth hypothesis mirrors the third insofar as both show that differentiation and change is an intrinsic characteristic of both ideas and participants. And the recognition of this native capacity for change and transformation is achieved through sustained thinking.

The ninth and final hypothesis recalls the first hypothesis insofar as the training exercise begins and ends with a hypothesis that results in neither... nor... conclusions. The ninth considers once more the nature of the others if one is not, and in contrast to the eighth hypothesis, ultimately concludes that nothing can be without a one that is. For the final time, Parmenides

71 What Gill and Ryan translate as “keenly” and “up close” might be better understood as “to hold firmly within one’s mind.” Cornford translates it as a “closer and keener inspection.” All the same, the sense I think Plato is trying to convey is that the others will appear different to those whose thinking is steadfast and sustained.
reveals that positing a wholly nonexistent one leads to untenable consequences. In short, absent a one that is, the others will be neither one nor many, since as Parmenides argues, “oneness would also be present in things that are many” (165e6-7). Thus Parmenides begins the process of stripping away all of the potential attributes in fulfilling the *neither... nor...* pattern wrought by a one that is not. Simply put, if there is no form, there are no participants, and so Parmenides reasons, “if one is not, nothing is” (166b9-10).

The training terminates with Parmenides reaching a suitably paradoxical conclusion: “Let us then say this – and also that, 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 each other” (166c3-6). Finally, as if to show that Parmenides’ earlier claim with respect to the training exercise resulting in “a full view of the truth” (διόψεσθαι τὸ ἀληθὲς) has been realized, Aristotle ends the dialogue saying, “Very true” (Ἀληθέστατα).

**The General Structure of the Training**

Counting nine rather than eight hypotheses confers the advantage of achieving a clearer view of the configuration and general intent of the training. For example, tallying the hypotheses in this way results in the following schema:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Principle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One (Odd)</td>
<td><em>neither... nor...</em></td>
<td>Limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two (Even)</td>
<td><em>both... and...</em></td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three (Odd)</td>
<td><em>neither... nor...</em></td>
<td>Limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four (Even)</td>
<td><em>both... and...</em></td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five (Odd)</td>
<td><em>neither... nor...</em></td>
<td>Limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six (Even)</td>
<td><em>both... and...</em></td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven (Odd)</td>
<td><em>neither... nor...</em></td>
<td>Limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight (Even)</td>
<td><em>both... and...</em></td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine (Odd)</td>
<td><em>neither... nor...</em></td>
<td>Limit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The schema reveals that each odd-numbered hypothesis results in *neither... nor...* consequences, while every even-numbered hypothesis results in *both... and...* conclusions.\(^{72}\) When construed in this manner, the alternating odd-even arrangement corresponds to a Pythagorean teaching concerning the limit and unlimited principles and succeeding cognates.\(^{73}\) With the instant of the third hypothesis clarifying how the principles of limit and unlimitedness combine and separate, the *Parmenides* harmonizes well with a related instance of blending found in Plato’s *Philebus*.\(^{74}\) Also, the unique standing of the third hypothesis suggests that it is in some sense separable from the other hypotheses, and this strange distinction, evidenced superficially by its being the only numbered hypothesis, permits an equal division of four limited and four unlimited hypotheses with the instant illuminating implicitly the integrated cohesion of the hypotheses understood as pairs.

Understanding the overall structure of the training exercise as a blending of limit and unlimited principles facilitates a further division of the hypotheses into couplets. Each pair is the combination of an odd and even-numbered, limit-unlimited hypothesis. The four couplets are constituted by hypotheses one and two, four and five, six and seven, and eight and nine. As demonstrated by what follows, examining the training in this manner allows for a more efficient analysis and interpretation.

\(^{72}\) No previous interpreter to my knowledge has recognized that insertion of the third hypothesis has the consequence of lining up the odd-numbered hypotheses as *neither... nor...* and the even-numbered hypotheses as *both... and...* deductions. Of course, interpreters have not then attempted to explain this.

\(^{73}\) According to Aristotle’s account, there are ten Pythagorean principles headed by limit and unlimited. What’s more, Aristotle, among others, relays Plato’s familiarity with Pythagorean teachings. See especially *Metaphysics* i.5-6.

\(^{74}\) Socrates claims in the *Philebus* that the mixture of limit and unlimited generates “all sorts of beautiful (καλά) things” (25d-26e).
The Results of the Training

The training exercise reveals, among other things, that participation is necessary for both ideas and participants. Absent association with other ideas, a given idea cannot be. Likewise, without sharing in the ideas, participants are construed as either amorphous masses or altogether nonexistent. Thus, as noted above, Socrates’ nascent understanding of the forms as isolated unities is misconceived. Furthermore, as a consequence of sharing in other ideas, the forms emerge in the training exercise as dynamic entities pulsating with vitality.75

The unlimited interplay of the ideas, however, is tempered and made possible by the strange phenomenon of “the instant” (τὸ ἐξαίφνης). The instant facilitates interaction between the forms and allows the ideas to be both what they are and what they are not, while in the instant being neither what they are nor what they are not. Thus, the instant demonstrates how the limit (neither... nor...) and unlimited (both... and...) principles combine and separate. What’s more, the ideas must constantly enter into, and emerge from, the timeless instant in order to be. When considered from this perspective, the forms are eternal (i.e., timeless) unchanging entities while “in” the instant.

What’s more, every even-numbered, unlimited hypothesis instantiates differentiation “in thought” (τῇ διάνοιᾳ) or speech. This indicates that the mixture of limit and unlimited principles that is clarified by the instant is activated by thinking. Consequently, the locus of participation is the instant, and it draws a parallel to the thinking soul.76

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75 The conception of the forms as animated entities corresponds nicely with the Visitor’s revealing question from the Sophist: “But for heaven’s sake, are we going to be convinced that it’s true that change, life, soul, and intelligence are not present in that which wholly is, and that it neither lives nor thinks, but stays changeless, solemn, and holy, without any understanding (νοῆν)?” (248e7-249a2)

76 In Plato’s Phaedrus, Socrates argues that “Every soul is immortal. That is because whatever is always in motion is immortal” (245c6-7). Thus, like the ideas, the soul is deathless and always moving. Furthermore, Socrates claims in
Additionally, ἐξαίφνης reappears for a final time in the eighth hypothesis and reveals that differentiation is a characteristic of the others themselves in light of a one that is not. In short, though the others seem to be unities to those not looking carefully, for those whose thinking is sustained the others show themselves as they really are: unlimited multitudes. In contrast to previous instantiations, differentiation does not emerge “in thought” in the eighth hypothesis, but is intrinsic to the others as others. This is the unlimited principle as sheer unlimitedness. Consequently, ἐξαίφνης reveals the truth about the one of the first hypothesis by virtue of its clarification as the instant of the third hypothesis, just as ἐξαίφνης discloses the truth about the others, absent a principle of limit.

**Resolving the Initial Difficulties**

Perhaps the best way to demonstrate the effectiveness of the training exercise is by returning to the difficulties first raised by Parmenides in the introductory conversation. In this way, one can see with some clarity that Parmenides II offers resolution to the perplexities of Parmenides I. Successfully resolving the difficulties of Parmenides I might serve to confirm the above interpretation and facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of form-theory and the nature of participation.

The first question posed by Parmenides to Socrates with respect to participation involved the whole-part dilemma. In other words, do the others participate by whole or part? As the introductory conversation revealed, Socrates’ attempt at answering this question was hampered by his understanding of the ideas as isolated unities. For instance, Socrates’ initial conception of

*Philebus* that “it is the goddess herself... who recognizes how excess and the overabundance of our wickedness allow for no limit in our pleasures and their fulfillment, and she therefore imposes law and order as a limit on them. And while you may complain that this ruins them, I by contrast call it their salvation” (26b6-c2). Thus the structure of soul mirrors the mixture of limit and unlimitedness disclosed and clarified by the third hypothesis.
participation was likened to a single day that could be in many places at one time. This notion, however, belies Socrates’ view of the ideas as indivisible unities. Nevertheless, as the first hypothesis made clear, a one absent some association with being and other ideas cannot even be one. Thus, Socrates’ inability to provide a suitable response can be traced back to his flawed conception of the ideas as isolated, indivisible unities. In light of the training exercise though, we discover that the forms participate in each other in various ways, and ultimately establish a paradigm that is mirrored by the participants. Consequently, the fourth hypothesis reveals that the others share in a one that is by both whole and part. For example, since the others are not one, they must be many, and these many parts constitute one whole. Likewise, each part is one part of a whole. As a result, the others participate by both whole and part.

Following Socrates’ first failed attempt at explaining participation, Parmenides introduces what is famously referred to as the “third man argument.” In brief, Parmenides compels Socrates to imagine various large objects and the idea of largeness itself within his soul, and then argues that an additional form of largeness must emerge as a consequence of this thought experiment. In effect, an infinite number of ideas will surface as soon as we place the idea of largeness and various large objects next to each other in thought, and each successive idea will fail to embrace fully this imagined collective and thus necessitate the accumulation of an unlimited multitude of forms. Yet, as we have seen, there can be no form of largeness itself, devoid of association with other ideas. Indeed, in order for largeness to be the form of largeness at all, it must at the same time not be the form of smallness, i.e., largeness must be different than smallness. Thus, every idea associates with a relative kind of non-being, or difference, just as every form must associate with the limit principle, in order to be both what it is and what it is not, or the same as itself and different from other ideas. What’s more, the idea of largeness is
different than various large objects. And because this difference is intrinsic to the original form of largeness, the new form of largeness fails to bring anything new, with respect to explanatory power, to the table.

In order to escape the third man difficulty, Socrates offered a promising theory concerning the nature of the forms. In short, Socrates suggests that the ideas exist as thoughts in the soul.\footnote{Aristotle himself believes that “it was a good idea to call the soul ‘the place of the forms’” (De Anima iii.4, 429a27).} In conceiving of the ideas in this manner, Socrates manages to differentiate the being of ideas from the being of perceptible things, and, in effect, preclude the possibility of grouping ideas and participants into a tidy collective envisioned by the soul. Parmenides seems to refute this conception by arguing that either all the participants of a given idea are themselves composed of thoughts by virtue of participation, or despite being composed of thoughts by virtue of participation all participants are un-thought. Parmenides’ apparent refutation, however, is itself refuted by the training exercise. In short, an idea is different from a participant whether the participant is another idea or a sensible being. Likewise, the idea of one is different from one other object. What’s more, this difference determines the relative inferior status of participants with respect to their being and intelligibility. Thus when during the training Parmenides induces young Aristotle to differentiate an unlimited multitude “in thought,” the multitude partakes of difference and thought, just as the participants in general are dependent upon the forms. Consequently, upon becoming the object of thought, the participants are “informed” by thinking. Furthermore, as McGinley 2011, 126-127 argues, the second prong of Parmenides’ seeming refutation of forms as thoughts hinges upon the notion that participants composed of thoughts would themselves be unthinking. But this should not be a troubling consequence, because
thoughts are the product of thinking. In other words, thoughts don’t think; people do. So Parmenides’ refutation of forms as thoughts is ultimately illusory.

Socrates’ final attempt at explaining participation involved conceiving of the forms as paradigms fixed in nature. In brief, the participants are like the ideas, or are images of the original ideas. Parmenides seems to refute this theory by homing in on the likeness obtaining between participant and form. In other words, Parmenides claims that the ideas cannot be both paradigmatic and themselves by themselves since the paradigm theory necessitates the inclusion of the idea of likeness. Since the idea must be like the participant, there must be an additional idea of likeness to account for all the participants. Thus Parmenides introduces a new version of the “third man argument” in which the infinite emergence of forms is brought on by participation. Parmenides’ refutation, however, is based upon Socrates’ flawed understanding of the forms as isolated, indivisible unities. The training, though, demonstrated that the ideas must associate, or participate with each other, in order to be. Consequently, under the mature version of form-theory presented in the exercise, the supplementary idea of likeness is not grounds for refutation, but perhaps validates the notion of forms as paradigms fixed in nature. In other words, because the ideas associate with each other, they participate in likeness, and just as difference is intrinsic to any idea, so is likeness. Thus, just as the first version of the third man argument dissolved once the interplay between the forms was taken into account, so too does the new version. No further forms are needed to explain the relationship between form and participant because the form of likeness (and un-likeness) is a part of any form. Moreover, the eighth hypothesis suggests that the others would appear one way to those not observing carefully, and differently to those thinking keenly. Thus, the forms are paradigms fixed in nature, and through a focused and sustained thinking, discoverable.
Conclusion

Ultimately, participants share in the ideas by both whole and part, and forms are both thoughts and paradigms fixed in nature. Furthermore, the ideas are interrelated and participate with one another in order to be both what they are and what they are not. The instant facilitates this both... and... dynamic through a timeless neither... nor... disruption of temporal continuity. Thus the forms are animated by transitioning “into” and “out of” the instant, while simultaneously being rendered unchanging eternal beings when considered from the timeless perspective of “the instant” (τὸ ἐξαιρημένον). Consequently, the instant functions as the locus of participation. Any idea as it associates with other ideas keeps entering and leaving the instant. To participate in other forms it in a manner of speaking goes outside itself to another, and thus it “changes” or undergoes a sort of transition from the one of the first to the second hypothesis, only not at different times but eternally. Changeable perceptible things take time while doing their version of this, i.e., becoming other, and they are thus, in the words of Timaeus 37d5, “a moving image of eternity.” The becoming of perceptible things mirrors the being of the forms.

In addition, the participants become “informed” through thinking. For instance, in the fourth hypothesis Parmenides compels Aristotle to consider the others prior to participating in the one that is as unlimited multitudes. He then claims that if we were to slice off the slightest sliver of this unlimited multitude “in thought” (τῇ διάνοιᾳ), this tiny mass would itself be an unlimited multitude. Consequently, by distinguishing a part of the unlimited multitude that is the others without oneness, and despite his claims to the contrary, Parmenides reveals that thinking can divide the multitude and differentiate one part from the unlimited multitude. Even if we maintain, as Parmenides does, that this slice of the multitude is still an unlimited multitude, both the original multitude and the subtracted portion are different from each other and admit, “in
thought,” of being placed side-by-side and next to each other. Thus, in differentiating “one” fragment of the multitude from itself, Parmenides has “informed” the others, and shows that participation is related to thinking.
Chapter IV – Plato’s Seventh Letter: Friendship and Philosophical Education

The analysis of Parmenides revealed that “the instant” (τὸ ἔξαίφνης) functions as the locus of participation. Participation in the instant enables differentiation and thus allows an idea to be both what it is and what it is not. Thus, the Parmenides discloses how participation animates and crystallizes the ideas. What’s more, the eighth hypothesis disclosed that sustained thinking facilitates the instantiation of ideas. Nevertheless, the question remains with respect to how sustained thinking engenders a sufficient grasp of the ideas. Consequently, the following chapter analyzes Plato’s Seventh Letter, specifically the section of the letter often referred to in the secondary literature as the “epistemological digression,” in order to examine the appearance of ἔξαίφνης and demonstrate its connection to Parmenides.78

The Theme of the Seventh Letter

Plato’s Seventh Letter is, among other things, an account of the power and necessity of friendship. In his opening address to “the friends and followers of Dion,” Plato aims to persuade the supporters of the now deceased Dion not to undertake a violent revolt against the Syracuse regime headed by Dionysius II.79 “Plato attempts to dampen the fire of their ambition,” affirms

78 Although Terence Irwin 2009, 158 argues that “reasonable doubts about the veracity of the author” should dissuade us from employing the Letters, I believe there is a strong case to be made for considering the Seventh Letter as a genuine work of Plato. In short, those arguing against authenticity typically point to perceived internal inconsistencies with respect to the Letters and the dialogues when making their case. Yet, when the defenders of the authenticity of the Letters, and the Seventh in particular, point to the many consistencies between the Letters and the dialogues, those arguing against authenticity claim it is the work of a skillful forger. Morrow 1929, 349 sums up the dilemma rather succinctly: “The objectors will have it both ways: if a passage contains Platonic thoughts and phrases, it is borrowed from the dialogues; if not, it is un-Platonic;” furthermore, as Morrow 1962, 5 notes, the Letters have been “generally accepted as genuine until modern times.” Consequently, I believe the Seventh Letter is an authentic work of Plato, and in demonstrating the connection between the appearance of ἔξαίφνης in the Seventh Letter and in Parmenides at the conclusion of this chapter, I present new evidence to this effect.

79 With respect to Plato’s efforts to persuade Dion’s friends against a violent revolt, Lewis 2000, 24 contends: “If we take this rhetorical element with sufficient seriousness, we will see that the content of the letter is fully consistent with the teachings of the political dialogues, a point that tells in favor of the authenticity of the letter.” Lewis furthermore adds that the Seventh Letter “contradicts the popular image of Plato as a proponent of dangerous political utopianism and portrays a more subtle relationship between philosophy and politics” (24).
Lewis 2000, 24, “and direct them to the goods of philosophy, friendship and the life of virtue.” In doing so, Plato offers an autobiographical account of his own political ambitions as a young man and his and Dion’s prior attempts at reforming both Syracuse and the whole of Sicily by instituting the best laws. Following a brief description of the aftermath of the Peloponnesian war and the events leading to the execution of his “friend Socrates” (325b6), Plato reveals that through reflection and maturity he realized that “it was impossible to do anything without friends” (325d1).

Likewise, throughout the letter Plato highlights the role that friendship, both true and false, plays in either securing the good or impeding progress towards the same, with respect to both politics and philosophical education. In fact, Plato points to Dionysius’ jealousy and his desire that Plato “praise him [Dionysius] more than I did Dion and value his friendship (φίλον) more highly,” as instigating the fallout that would lead ultimately to Dion’s exile and eventual demise (330a5-6). For his part, Plato acknowledges that a true friendship would obtain only if Dionysius would accept Plato’s instruction and “discourse about philosophy” (330b1-2).

Dionysius, however, lacked the resilience needed for a philosophical education and was inclined to associate with flatterers and courtesans. Plato attributes his debauchery to his “father’s neglect,” which “resulted in his being without culture and unused to associations appropriate to his position” (332c6-d2). Thus Plato and Dion advised Dionysius to encourage his family and associates “to become friends and partners in the pursuit of virtue (ἀρετήν); but above all to

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80 Morrow 1929, 327 argues that “Historians from Plutarch to Eduard Meyer have made free and confident use of its historical material for reconstructing the history of Syracuse in the fourth century, and therefore may be said to have accepted it as an authentic document.”

81 With regard to the letter’s “rhetorical structure,” Lewis 2000, 25 concludes that “the aim of the letter is protreptic.” In other words, Plato attempts to turn Dion’s associates away from political discord and violence and toward friendship and political concord.

82 Plato later describes the proposed education he wished to impart to Dionysius as an activity characterized by the “constant pursuit of virtue and wisdom” (345b5-6).
become a friend to himself” (332d3-5). Unfortunately, Dionysius did not follow their advice, and soon rumors began swirling about Plato and Dion’s intentions. The associates of Dionysius, perhaps threatened by his friendship with Plato, instigated a conflict by claiming that the purpose of Plato’s philosophical instruction was “to bewitch the mind of Dionysius” and thus allow Dion to seize control of Syracuse and “banish Dionysius from power” (333c2-c5). Nevertheless, Plato defends his actions and intentions as noble, and declares that he “came to the tyrant in order to bring about friendship (φιλίαν), not war” (333d1-2).

All the same, Dionysius believed the rumors and Dion was sent into exile. Upon his return to Syracuse, Plato remarks that Dion sought to usurp Dionysius and to this end was accompanied by “friends whom he had not acquired through philosophy, but by way of that facile comradeship which is the basis of most friendship” (333e1-3). Sadly, Dion was betrayed and ultimately murdered by these false friends, but Plato is quick to point out that these men are not worthy of bringing Athens “into discredit” (334c1). In point of fact, it was another Athenian, namely Plato himself, who honored Athens by becoming “Dion’s friend (φίλος) not through vulgar fellowship (βαναύσου φιλότητος), but through common liberal culture (ἐλευθέρας παιδείας κοινωίαν); and this alone,” according to Plato, “should a sensible man trust, rather than kinship of soul or body” (334b5-7).

Plato offers the friends of Dion the “same advice” he had recommended “twice before” (334c4-5). Thus for “the third (τρίτους) time” he instructs Dion’s associates to place Sicily under the authority of law, rather than the tyranny of men.³³ No doubt drawing upon his own failed

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³³ This section of the Seventh Letter (334c-337e ) finds Plato making reference to “the third” several times: (1) at 334d5 he mentions that his counsel regarding the establishment of a just constitution and the dangers of despotism is the same advice he gave to Dion, Dionysius, and “now for the third time” the friends and relatives of Dion; (2) again at 334d6-7 when he implores his readers to “Listen… in the name of Zeus the Savior, to whom the third libation belongs;” and (3) finally at336c1 he advises Dion’s friends against “saying anything of ill omen,” because this is
experience at reforming Sicily with Dion, Plato acknowledges the hardships one may endure in striving to better one’s community. Nevertheless, Plato affirms that it is “altogether noble and right to suffer whatever may come while aiming at the highest for oneself or one’s city” (334e2-3), and that the friends of Dion “must count it a lesser evil to suffer great wrongs and injustices than to do them” (335a5-6). Thus, in offering his guidance to Dion’s associates Plato himself instantiates that select model of friendship reserved for those with a love of wisdom and a desire for good. Likewise, Lewis 2000, 30 notes that Plato “recounts the basis of his own friendship with Dion, a friendship that he tried to inspire in Dionysius, and the friendship in light of which Dion’s followers should base their own actions.”

As Plato further recollects his time in Sicily, he laments Dionysius’ unwillingness to care for his soul through friendship and philosophical discourse and the missed opportunity of generating a “real union of philosophy and power” (335d2). Particularly painful to Plato is his belief that Syracuse might have been an exemplar to “all mankind” that neither a single person nor a community could flourish absent the “right training” needed to cultivate excellence and pursue wisdom (335d4-7). Evidently Plato envisioned Syracuse as a genuine “beautiful city” with Dionysius as a possible philosopher-king. Unfortunately Plato’s dream of the ideal state failed realization, and yet he advises Dion’s friends and relatives to emulate Dion’s “love for his country and his sober way of living” in order that they might succeed in bringing the rule of law to all of Sicily (336c3-4). No matter the victor of the struggle to rule Syracuse, Plato proposes that those given even a “modicum of right opinion” by the gods will understand that any lingering political conflict and antipathy must be resolved through laws enacted for the “common

“our third trial.” As noted in the previous chapter on Parmenides, the number three surfaces in several notable passages in Plato’s dialogues, and is often accompanied by an appearances of ἐξαιρέσις.
84 Of course, Plato’s plan never came to fruition, and as Lewis 2000, 23 points out, “The name Syracuse has come to stand as an emblem of the problematic relationship between philosophy and politics.”
good” and cultivating a general amity designed to prevent reprisals by those assuming control, whoever they may be (336e2-337a2).\(^85\) Thus, just as the single individual engenders a harmony of soul through self-control and proper training, so too must the rulers of a political community practice restraint and curb excessive passions in order for public concord to obtain.\(^86\)

Prior to leaving Sicily after his second visit to Syracuse, Plato made sure to develop “friendship and hospitality” (ξενίαν καὶ φιλίαν) between Dionysius and Plato’s friend and fellow philosopher, Archytas (338c6-7). Consequently, during the time between his second and third visit to Sicily, Plato began receiving reports from Archytas that Dionysius was once again expressing a desire to study philosophy in earnest. In fact, Archytas and his associates were all convinced of “the marvelous progress Dionysius was making in philosophy” (339b2-3). Plato, however, had serious doubts about the nature of Dionysius’ philosophical development. Nevertheless, according to Plato’s account, “the friendship (φιλίαν) [he] had brought about” between Archytas and Dionysius would be in danger of ending if Plato did not sail back to Sicily in order to guide Dionysius’ philosophical education (339d2). Plato concluded that he “ought not to betray my friends and followers,” so he sailed back to Sicily to preserve the friendship between Dionysius and Archytas, and see if Dionysius’ interest in philosophy was sincere (339e1).\(^87\)

Upon his return to Syracuse, Plato decided to test Dionysius in order to determine if he was really “on fire (πυρός) with philosophy” (340b2). According to Plato, the best way to assess

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\(^85\) Similarly, the primary intent of the *Seventh Letter*, according to Lewis 2000, 33 is “to diffuse the potential for further political violence and to cultivate a more refined political and moral sensibility among Dion’s followers.”

\(^86\) Lewis 2000, 30, argues that Plato introduces “a standard of friendship that transcends the familial and political alliance that would be most familiar to political men, a standard grounded in mutual pursuit of virtue and the practice of philosophy.”

\(^87\) As Lloyd 1990, 163 observes, Plato’s impetus for returning to Syracuse was due largely to Archytas and the Tarentines “insisting that if Plato did not come he would wreck the friendship between Dionysius and them.”
the authenticity of a prospective philosopher is to “picture to such men the extent of the undertaking” (340b7). In other words, a counterfeit philosopher would find the difficulty of such an endeavor too daunting and thus abandon his pursuit of wisdom, while the man possessing a “divine quality” will accept the challenge as if it is “a marvelous quest (ὁδόν... θαυμαστήν) that he must at once enter upon with all earnestness, or life is not worth living” (340c3-5).

Furthermore, the genuine philosopher will regulate and order all of his activities so that this “daily discipline” facilitates and enhances his ability to learn and reason (340d3). According to Plato, disclosing the true and difficult nature of the philosophical life to budding philosophers is a “clear and infallible test” that will separate the wheat from the chaff once it is revealed “how orderly their daily lives must be to suit the subject they are pursuing” (340d8-341a3). Thus Plato relates the cultivation of a resolute character with the prospect of philosophical enlightenment, and rejects those who shun hard work. Consequently, it is at this point of the letter that Plato describes in greater detail the nature of philosophical education, often referred to as “the epistemological digression” or “Plato’s doctrine of illumination” in the secondary literature.

Friendship and Philosophical Education

Plato begins his discussion of philosophical education by revealing the outcome of “the clear and infallible test” that he administered to Dionysius. After disclosing the difficulties of...
both the nature of philosophical pursuits and the self-discipline needed to gain insight into the highest matters, Plato reveals that Dionysius claimed that he was already familiar with the most significant aspects of Plato’s teaching as he had heard them from other sources. Presumably these other sources were Archytas and his associates. What is more, Plato reports that Dionysius may have written a book expounding his supposed knowledge of philosophy and the first and highest principles of nature and submitted it “as his own teaching” (341b3). Although Plato is uncertain with respect to Dionysius’s having written a treatise of this kind, he is aware of “certain others” who have produced similar tracts, “but,” Plato says rather cryptically, “who they are they themselves do not know” (341b5-6). Ultimately it is clear that Dionysius failed Plato’s test, both by disdaining further training and betraying Plato’s friendship by publishing his alleged book.

Nevertheless, Plato is unconcerned about any of these treatises, whether real or supposed. In fact Plato claims that the mere existence of books asserting knowledge of the highest wisdom is itself sufficient proof that these authors know nothing of what they write. Moreover, Plato claims “there is no writing of mine about these matters, nor will there ever be one” (341c5-6). Ultimately it is because “this knowledge” resists conforming to conventional written accounts like Dionysius’ rumored treatise, because it “is not something that can be put into words like other sciences” (341c7-8). Nevertheless, if this knowledge defies standard expression, then one may well wonder how the attainment and transmission of this supreme form of wisdom is possible at all.

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90 In *Timaeus* 53d9-10, Plato claims that the ultimate principles of reality “are known only to the god, and to any man he may hold dear (φίλος).”
Perhaps it is friendship – the kind of friendship that Plato and Dion repeatedly tried to instantiate with Dionysius and that Plato highlights again and again throughout the Seventh Letter – that is crucial. Specifically, it is the give-and-take that exemplifies philosophical friendship that no author, no matter how erudite, can replicate in written form. Moreover, it is through the constant discourse that typifies this friendship that the aim of philosophical training emerges.

Plato describes the training cum friendship as a “true doctrine” (λόγος ἀλήθής) that he has explained previously, but will relate once more so that the friends of Dion will have a better understanding of why no treatise can capture fully the exact nature of philosophical education (342a3). What is more, Plato’s account serves as a possible blueprint for Dion’s friends to cultivate philosophical friendships themselves, while demonstrating how unlikely it would have been for Dionysius to understand these matters in so short a time.

Plato’s true doctrine is a five-part method of philosophical education that discloses how the blending of friendship and philosophy culminates with a conversion experience by means of which one becomes a genuine philosopher. According to Plato, knowledge of “every real being” (τῶν ὅντων ἐκάστῳ) necessitates comprehending the three elements that constitute a cursory understanding of a given object: (1) the name (ὄνομα), (2) the definition (λόγος), and (3) the image (εἴδωλον) (342a5-b1). These three aspects of the doctrine are preliminary insofar as the fourth, (4) knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), emerges only after the name, definition, and image are thoroughly grasped. The fifth and final element of the doctrine is (5) the object itself, which Plato specifies as “the knowable and truly real being” (ὁ γνωστὸν τε καὶ ἀληθῶς ἐστιν ὁν) (342b1-3).
In order to clarify further the doctrine, Plato demonstrates how it works. Using the name “circle” as an example, he states its definition (e.g., “The figure whose extremities are everywhere equidistant from its center.”), and describes the production of its image as something one would simply “draw or rub out” (342b5-c1). Once these three are thoroughly apprehended, the fourth element, knowledge, emerges. Because it differs from the “words or bodily shapes” that characterize the preliminary steps and the circle itself, knowledge must be considered as something “distinct” (ἕτερον) (342c4-5). Consequently, the acquisition of knowledge represents a transition from the external “words or bodily shapes” to the interior realm of the soul. Furthermore, Plato extends the scope of the fourth step to include not only “knowledge” (ἐπιστήμη), but “true opinion” (ἀληθής δόξα), and “mind” (νοῦς), and states that only “mind” (νοῦς) approximates the fifth element’s truly real being in both “kinship and likeness” (συγγενία καὶ ὁμοιότητι) (342d1).91

Following Plato’s illustration, one can see that the true doctrine is a methodical, step-by-step process that generates ascending levels of understanding. For example, the first three steps, name, definition, and image, are the “words or bodily images” that, once thoroughly understood, are united and internalized to engender knowledge. Nevertheless, knowledge is distinct from the “knowable and truly real being” that underlies the entire five-step doctrine, and according to Plato, it is ultimately the “essence” (τὸ τί), and not the “quality” (τὸ ποιόν τι), of the intelligible object that the soul desires (343c1-2). All the same, absent a sufficient comprehension of the name, definition, image, and knowledge of a truly real being, the prospective philosopher “will never fully attain knowledge of the fifth” (342e1-2).

91 As Morrow 1929, 340 detects, “…the parallel between νόησις, the term used in the Republic to denote the highest activity of mind, and νοῦς, which is here said to be nearest the absolute object, is suggestive.” This link between the Seventh Letter and Republic will be explored in the next chapter.
In addition to the difficulties of securing a satisfactory understanding through the name, definition, image, and knowledge, or what Plato refers to as “these four instruments,” the tools for pursuing wisdom are themselves inherently “defective” (φαύλως) or paltry (343b6 and 343d9). Plato returns to his illustration of the circle to demonstrate the inadequacy of the four tools in relation to the truly real being. For example, the name “circle” is, like any designation, subject to change; the definition is itself composed of names, e.g., nouns and verbs, and thus it too is unstable; and no visible image of the circle, regardless of how precise, could ever capture the essence of the intelligible circle. In order to emphasize further their faulty nature, Plato contends, “much more might be said to show that each of these four instruments is unclear (ἀσαφές)” (343b6-7).

Furthermore, the methodical nature of the doctrine would seem to demand extensive deliberation and reflection. Regrettably, however, our “defective training” often consigns us to accept “the first image suggested to us” (343c6-8). On the one hand, because we all share the same deficiencies with respect to both our native abilities and the four instruments, we are generally resourceful enough to “ask and answer without making ourselves ridiculous to one another” (343c8-d1). On the other hand, when “compelled to answer questions or to make explanations” with regard to “the fifth,” the advantage lies with those who seek to refute any account of a truly real and intelligible being (343d2-4). Nevertheless Plato is quick to add that it is “not the soul (ψυχή) of the speaker or writer which is being refuted,” but the means of expression, i.e., the four instruments, “each of which is by nature defective” (343d8-9). In any event, this likely explains Plato’s reluctance to “express his deepest thoughts (τὰ νοεμένα ὑπὸ αὐτοῦ) in words” and appear “completely ignorant” (ἀγνοοῦντων) to those listening.
Consequently, a public exposition, whether written or spoken, of the highest and first principles of reality would expose both the expounder and philosophy itself to contempt and mockery.\(^92\)

If Plato’s doctrine were strictly an intellectual exercise, then its inherent difficulties alone would be considerable. The true doctrine, however, requires more than a sharp intellect:

By the repeated use of all these instruments, ascending and descending to each in turn, it is barely possible for knowledge to be engendered of an object naturally good (εὖ πεφυκότος), in a man naturally good (εὖ πεφυκότι); but if his nature is defective, as is that of most men, for the acquisition of knowledge and the so-called virtues, and if the qualities (ἐξίς τῆς ψυχῆς) he has have been corrupted, then not even Lynceus could make such a man see (343e1-344a2).

Thus if the character of the prospective philosopher is as deeply flawed as the four instruments, then there is no hope of philosophy taking root. A superior soul, however, might compensate for the imperfect means, i.e., the four instruments, by which knowledge is acquired. At the very least, and as Dionysius himself demonstrated, absent a good character the prospect of a philosophical education is doomed to failure.\(^93\)

The basis for possessing a noble soul as a prerequisite for the pursuit of the highest wisdom is related to the excellence of the knowable and truly real being itself. In other words, the superior nature of an intelligible being necessitates that the philosopher approximate the fineness of the truly real by cultivating both an intellect and character of analogous beauty:

In short, neither quickness of learning nor a good memory can make a man see when his nature is not akin to the object, for this knowledge never takes root in an alien nature; so that no man who is not naturally inclined and akin (συγγενείς) to justice (τῶν δικαίων) and all other forms of

\(^92\) On a related note, Morrow 1929, 339 employs the following example to demonstrate how language is often inadequate for conveying complex matters: “A physicist or mathematician who should attempt to explain in non-technical language the general theory of relativity, could easily be made to appear ignorant, so far as common experience is concerned, of what time and space is. But, as Plato says, it is not the mind or knowledge of the speaker that is being shown up, but rather the inadequacies of the medium in which he is trying to impart his knowledge.” Likewise, in Timaeus 28c5-7 Plato claims that “to find the maker and father of the universe is hard enough …to declare him to everyone is impossible.”

\(^93\) Likewise, as Lewis 2000, 34 notes, Plato’s advice to the friends of Dion demonstrates that political success is also doomed to failure absent those who would “pursue study, virtue, and true friendship first.”
excellence (καλά), even though he may be quick at learning and remembering this and that and other things, nor any man who, though akin (συγγενεῖς) to justice, is slow at learning and forgetful, will ever attain the truth that is attainable about virtue (344a2-9).

Thus it seems that in order to comprehend, for example, the idea of temperance, the philosopher must suitably curb his own appetites and foster self-restraint; in other words, he must become temperate. Furthermore, in addition to a firm character, the philosopher must possess intellectual capacities like good memory and proficiency in learning. Consequently, neither intellect nor character alone is adequate – the philosopher needs both.

Likewise, Plato’s true doctrine requires the student to know both virtue and vice, both truth and error. In short, “any part of being (τῆς ὅλης ὄσιας),” affirms Plato, “must be learned together, through long and earnest labor (τριβῆς)” (344b2-3). Thus the all-embracing nature of the doctrine mirrors the comprehensive requirements of the prospective philosopher’s soul, e.g., both superior intellect and character. Having outlined the doctrine’s design and the disposition needed to make progress, Plato explains how it all unfolds:

Only when all of these things – names, definitions, and visual and other perceptions – have been rubbed (τριβόμενα) against one another and tested, pupil and teacher asking and answering (ἐρωτήσεις καὶ ἀποκρίσεις) questions in good will and without envy – only then, when reason (νοῦς) and knowledge are at the very extremity of human effort, can they illuminate (ἐξέλαμψε) the nature of any object (344b4-8).

The beauty of the truly real and knowable being must be approached with a related excellence on the part of the friends engaged in the true doctrine’s method if a comprehensive understanding is

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94 A keen memory and proficiency in learning are perhaps especially crucial with respect to mathematics insofar as a philosopher does not become, e.g., a number or an axiom of geometry, but is able to retain and understand the nature of quantity, structure, space, etc. Likewise, one wouldn’t expect a philosopher to become a given vice in the same way he is related to a particular virtue; presumably character formation is concerned with virtues, and vice must be understood in a different, perhaps strictly intellectual, way.
to be achieved. Thus the “long and earnest labor” demands participants with extraordinary intellectual acuity, tenacity, and goodwill.95

Ultimately, the exceptional virtue needed to implement and progress in the doctrine results in a conversion of sorts insofar as the philosophical friendship generates a life of self-sustained philosophical activity. Plato depicts the shared intensity and central aim of the friendship as follows:

…after long-continued intercourse (συνουσίας) between teacher and pupil in joint pursuit of the subject, suddenly (ἐξαίφνης), like light flashing forth when a fire (πυρός) is kindled, it is born in the soul and straightaway nourishes itself (341c8-d1).96

Thus the comprehensive and prolonged nature of the training cum friendship sparks a conversion experience that elevates the participant to a point beyond the arduous initial struggle to clarify and comprehend a given object to the sudden (ἐξαίφνης) illumination of the object itself.97 On the one hand, it would seem that the sudden insight into the nature of an intelligible being represents a termination point of the “long and earnest labor” characterizing the doctrine’s training regimen.98 On the other hand, the sudden illumination crystallizes the participant’s

95 “What Plato calls illumination,” argues Morrow 1929, 345 “is essential in all real learning; but it is especially important in the apprehension of ultimate realities, in learning ‘the truth and falsehood about the whole of being.’ Here the real learner must be something of a mystic; his soul must possess more than quickness of grasp and tenacity of memory; it must be akin to the object, because of some divine quality which it possesses; and even then it can see this reality only after a long period of preparation.” Miller 2011, 99 maintains that for Plato “the mind is more like a sponge, whose knowledge is an assimilation or reception of reality.” The way that mind is like its object has precursors in Presocratic thought. See especially Aristotle’s De Anima i.2.

96 Socrates employs a similar analogy in Republic iv, 434e4-435a3 in comparing individual justice with political justice: “And if we do this, and compare them side by side, we might well make justice light up as if we were rubbing fire-sticks together. And, when it has come to light, we can get a secure grip on it ourselves.”

97 With regard to the intensive conversation preceding the conversion experience, Morrow 1929, 344 contends, “But dialectic at its best is only a preparation of the mind for an ‘illumination’ (ἐκλαμψις). Without this experience all the preceding labor is in vain.” Sayre 2002, 227 argues that “Plato wrote most of his major dialogues as teaching instruments to guide the attentive reader to the kind of insight of which he spoke in the Seventh Letter.”

98 In a similar vein, psychiatrist Willard Gaylin 2001, 134 writes of how psychological insight is “the product of change rather than the cause of it.” In other words, the long and earnest labor of philosophical education is akin to the work of psychotherapy insofar as both the student of philosophy and the psychotherapeutic client undergo the type of change that facilitates illumination and insight. Furthermore, Gaylin concludes, “Insight is only a step in the journey toward change” (134). Correlatively, philosophical illumination ushers in a new phase of learning.
original desire to pursue wisdom insofar as the enlightenment experience engenders a renewed spirit of inquiry that feeds itself with a burning enthusiasm. In other words, the sudden transformation of the true doctrine’s participant is a culmination of the rigorous examination of name, definition, image, knowledge, and the object itself, while at the same time it represents a new beginning as the participant emerges as “on fire with philosophy” and capable of self-sustained study.\footnote{In the midst of a discussion concerning recollection from \textit{Meno} 81d1-4, Socrates claims that “nothing prevents a man, after recalling one thing only – a process men call learning – from discovering everything else for himself, if he is brave and does not tire of the search.”}

Consequently, the effect of the true doctrine is profoundly experiential. “There is something in this experience,” concurs Morrow 1929, 346 “that goes beyond logic and language.” So, as Plato makes clear throughout the \textit{Seventh Letter}, no sensible author will attempt to render the illumination in written form. Not only because the experience is deeply personal, but also because the static nature of written language precludes an accurate account of this dynamic event. Furthermore, the lion’s share of the true doctrine consists of the “long and earnest labor” exemplifying a philosophical friendship’s pursuit of wisdom, and this activity appears to require friends who are willing to devote extended time together engaging in the give-and-take of earnest conversation. In other words, the true doctrine demands dedication, and no written account, no matter how insightful, can capture the fluid and unpredictable nature of a serious dialogue between friends attempting to “study high matters” (344c1).

The defining feature of the true doctrine is the climactic conversion experience that, strangely enough, happens “suddenly” (ἐξαίφνης), but only after a protracted period of intense reflection and discussion. Although the personal transformation suggested by Plato as the culmination of the doctrine’s technique might be interpreted as a mystical experience, Plato
himself is quick to point out that a written account of the doctrine’s method and aim would inspire some readers with “an exaggerated and foolish elation, as if they had discovered something grand” (341e5-6). Clearly the sudden conversion that is “born in the soul and straightaway nourishes itself” is less a supernatural event and more of a renewal and concomitant intensification of the participant’s original desire to understand. Following the sudden transformation, however, the pupil is capable evidently of practicing philosophy without the aid of a teacher. In fact, Plato affirms that a written account of the highest matters would benefit only “those who could with a little guidance discover the truth by themselves” (341e3-4).

Nevertheless, the sudden transformation would appear to be a breakthrough moment insofar as the participant’s love of wisdom crystallizes into a self-sustaining quest for understanding. Ultimately, however, the true doctrine is a blueprint for the philosophical friendship that Plato and Dion tried in vain to cultivate with Dionysius. And it is this friendship that facilitates the conversion experience.

Following the “epistemological digression,” Plato resumes the narrative with respect to his third visit to Sicily. According to Plato, Dionysius reneged on his promise to allow the exiled Dion to collect revenues and maintain possession of his property in Sicily. Despite Plato’s best efforts, Dionysius sold Dion’s property “on whatever terms and to whomever he pleased” (347e1-2). Consequently, Plato admits with palpable resignation: “This then was the result of my efforts in aid of philosophy and my friends” (347e5-6). As Lewis 2000, 31 observes,

Plato treats the harm to justice and to the reputation of philosophy to be the real harms and downplays purely personal losses, such as his temporary captivity and the death of his friend. It is clear that Plato means to elevate the sensibilities of his correspondents from the level of purely political and personal injustices to something higher, to extend the scope of their own views and thus induce them to see their future choices in light of that standard.
In other words, Plato is using the rhetorical structure of the letter as an occasion to turn Dion’s friends away from violence engendered by particular concerns, and toward a conception of justice that will moderate their passions and elevate their focus to an appropriate level of universality.

Dionysius’ jealousy with regard to Plato’s friendship manifests itself once more following Plato’s conversation with Theodotes, another victim of Dionysius’ broken promises. After confirming his meeting with Theodotes to a messenger of Dionysius, the messenger, on orders from Dionysius, accused Plato of “not doing right in always preferring Dion and Dion’s friends to [Dionysius],” and Plato soon found himself outside of the citadel and living among the mercenaries. (349e3-4). These soldiers, however, viewed Plato with suspicion, and rumors began circulating that Plato’s life was in danger. Accordingly, Plato “sent letters to Archytas and [his] other friends” in order to assist him in leaving Sicily with Dionysius’ blessing.

Upon his return to Greece, Plato met with Dion and gave him an account of all that had transpired regarding both the fate of Dion’s property and Plato’s maltreatment at the hands of Dionysius. At once an enraged Dion began to plot his return to Sicily in hopes of exacting revenge upon Dionysius. Plato was unwilling to return to Sicily as he felt he was too old to participate in warfare, although he did permit Dion to “call upon [his] friends” and seek their help (350c4). For his part, Plato reaffirmed his friendship with Dion in saying, “…I am with you if you ever desire one another’s friendship (φιλίας) and wish to accomplish something good (ἀγαθόν)” (350d3-4). Unfortunately, Dion’s return to Sicily resulted in his death, but Plato’s love and admiration for his friend is obvious as he relates Dion’s motives:
Dion’s purpose, however, with respect to his native city and to the power he sought for himself and his friends (φίλων), was exactly what I should say any moderate man, myself or anyone else, ought to have; such a man would think of enjoying great power and honor only because he is conferring great benefits (351a1-5).

Plato concludes the letter by reminding Dion’s friends of the advice he has given previously, and with the hope that his account clarified the “strange and improbable” (ἄτοπίαν καὶ ἀλογίαν) circumstances that defined his Sicilian adventure (352a3).100

**Conclusion**

The appearance of ἔξαιφνης in heralding the climactic moment of Plato’s presentation of philosophical education in the *Seventh Letter* recalls its emergence as “the instant” (τὸ ἔξαιφνης) in the third hypothesis of *Parmenides*. In both cases, ἔξαιφνης emerges as the locus of participation. In *Parmenides*, the participation is among and between ideas insofar as the instant permits an idea to be both what it is and what it is not. The instant enlivens the ideas and facilitates change. In the *Seventh Letter*, however, Plato employs ἔξαιφνης to illustrate how the “long and earnest labor” of the true doctrine’s method suddenly generates a personal transformation.

This personal transformation, or conversion experience, is brought about after the intensive back-and-forth of “pupil and teacher asking and answering questions in good will and without envy” reaches its climax and illuminates the object under investigation. Just as “long and earnest labor” precedes the “sudden” (ἔξαιφνης) insight in the *Seventh Letter*, the lengthy, complex, and seemingly opposed, first two hypotheses of *Parmenides* pave the way for the third hypothesis and its introduction of “the instant” (τὸ ἔξαιφνης). While the “sudden” illumination

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100 Likewise, as Lewis 2000, 27 notes, Plato advises Dion’s friends to “organize their lives so as to gain self-control and win loyal friends and comrades.”
clarifies the examined object in the *Seventh Letter*, “the instant” of the third hypothesis of *Parmenides* clarifies the consequences of the first and second hypotheses, and illuminates the structure and meaning of the entire training exercise. Consequently, Plato’s use of ἐξαίφνης in both *Parmenides* and the *Seventh Letter* evidences a familiar theme insofar as both cases involve participation, transformation, and illumination.

With respect to the nature of the conversion experience engendered by the true doctrine, it is telling that Plato describes “mind” (νοῦς) as being closest in both “kinship and likeness” to the fifth element of the doctrine, or the knowable and truly real object itself (342d1). The relationship between νοῦς and the intelligible object suggests a shared identity of sorts, and Plato himself seems to demonstrate this close connection in the letter. For example, as Lewis 2000, 31 rightly observes, Plato “writes that great harm had been done to him, though not necessarily the kind we might expect. Plato was first harmed by Dion having been struck down. The harm, however, was tied to Dion’s having been dedicated to furthering justice. Plato treats the damage to justice as a personal harm.” In other words, it would seem that Plato so closely identifies with justice itself that the personal injustices he suffered, e.g., the exile and eventual murder of his friend Dion, Dionysius’ various lies and deceptions, his prolonged captivity, are minimized as he highlights the damage done to justice itself. Evidently the sudden transformation following the “long and earnest labor” of the true doctrine facilitates a glimpse of the knowable and truly real object. Sayre 2004, 263 compares the advent of philosophic insight in the *Seventh Letter* with Socratic midwifery from the *Theaetetus*:

Both contexts contain mention of the need for conversation with a master, for hard work and dedication to the topic, and for critical examination to eliminate obstructive false opinion. And both give central importance to the fact that when philosophic truth is finally brought to light, it comes directly from within the learner’s own mind.
Reaching the plateau of understanding engenders a self-sustaining desire to practice philosophy with a lasting intensity. Thus, just as “the instant” facilitates change and permanence within the realm of the ideas, the true doctrine’s conversion experience transforms the participant by inspiring a lasting love of wisdom.
Chapter V – Republic: Sudden Changes

The previous chapter argued that the appearance of ἐξαίφνης in Plato’s Seventh Letter represented the climactic moment of philosophical education – a moment that triggers a profound personal transformation. Just as the third hypothesis of the Parmenides posited an “instant” (ἐξαίφνης) that permits and facilitates change among the ideas, the Seventh Letter explains how a student of philosophy, after a lengthy and earnest period of philosophical discussion, “all of a sudden” (ἐξαίφνης) transforms and undergoes a conversion experience. A parallel conversion experience is found in the cave-allegory of Plato’s Republic vii, and this passage also features ἐξαίφνης. Consequently, the following chapter addresses all nine appearances of ἐξαίφνης in Republic in order to demonstrate how Plato’s use of the term is consistent with previous instantiations in Parmenides and the Seventh Letter.

Furthermore, this analysis of Republic reveals a more expansive employment of ἐξαίφνης insofar as its emergence in various passages highlights other forms of change, e.g., political and characterological, in addition to the metaphysical and philosophical transformations depicted in Parmenides and Seventh Letter. A full and comprehensive interpretation of Republic, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter, so the following analysis is limited to sections of the dialogue made relevant by the appearance of ἐξαίφνης. Nevertheless, a general notion of the dialogue’s meaning emerges by virtue of the examination of the highly significant contexts in which ἐξαίφνης is found. These focal points represent an intriguing facet of Plato’s significant use of ἐξαίφνης in Republic insofar as they are by and large located in the passages that mark important turning points in the dialogue.

Miller 1986, 18 argues persuasively with respect to the “unmistakable connection” between Parmenides and Republic. See especially pp. 18-25.
Sudden Interruption

The first appearance of ἐξαίφνης occurs at a crucial moment in Republic v when Socrates is prompted by his interlocutors to discuss at length the common possession of wives and children. Republic v is evidently a departure from the trajectory of the dialogue insofar as Book iv seemed to demonstrate that justice was the principal characteristic of a good soul. This interruption mirrors the start of Republic, and is thus a sort of new beginning. In fact, Socrates himself says in mock exasperation, “What an argument you’ve started up again from the very beginning, as it were, about the constitution!” (450a5-8) Consequently, the first appearance of ἐξαίφνης in Republic v is in keeping with Plato’s use of the term in other dialogues as a transformative moment or disruption in the typical course of events.

Because the subject of women and children “raises even more incredulity” than the topics previously discussed, Socrates is hesitant to proceed (450c6). Reminded that he is addressing a friendly audience, Socrates counters that their encouragement is “doing the opposite” insofar as their support only increases his tentativeness (450d6). His apprehension is not due to a “childish” fear of “being laughed at,” rather his concern stems from being “unsure of [him]self” and the possibility that a misconception may “drag [his] friends down” with him (450e2-451a4). Thus Socrates warns his listeners to be careful for fear that he may unintentionally deceive them. Furthermore, by putting his listeners on guard, Socrates is instantiating a type of “intellectual

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102 At the beginning of Republic Socrates is interrupted on his way home by Polemarchus’ slave, who pulled on Socrates’ cloak to get his attention (327a-b). In Book v Polemarchus himself tugs on Adeimantus’ cloak and prompts him to interrupt Socrates just as he is about to discuss the four bad forms of government (449a-b). Thus, this interruption comprises books v-vii, as Socrates doesn’t discuss the inferior characters and governments until book viii.

103 Socrates’ assurance that his hesitancy is not due to fear of being ridiculed resonates with Parmenides 130e4, when the elder Parmenides told a young Socrates that his unwillingness to consider forms for mundane particulars indicated that Socrates “still cares about what people think.” See also Republic v, 452b-e where Socrates argues that women will be required to strip naked and train with the men in the gymnasium, and “we mustn’t fear the various jokes that wits will make about this kind of change” (452b4-5).
gymnastics” in order to prepare them for the more difficult discussion of philosophy to come (Polansky 2012, 158). Reassured by Glaucon, Socrates proceeds to argue that men and women share a common nature, and thus must participate in the same process of education and training.

The crux of the argument centers on the nature of the difference between men and women. Earlier in the dialogue, Socrates and his interlocutors agreed that each citizen “must do his own work in accordance with his nature,” but now Socrates claims, contrary to contemporaneous Greek custom and belief, that women “share in every way of life just as men do” (453b4-5 and 455d8). Socrates wonders if they are contradicting themselves, because the nature of men and women is “so completely separate and distinct” (453c4). Glaucon responds that it isn’t easy to generate a counter-argument “on the spur of the moment” (ἐξαίφνης), and thus ἐξαίφνης makes its first appearance in Republic (453c7).

Following this appearance of ἐξαίφνης, Socrates argues that with the exception of bodily strength, men and women share a common nature and so women must take part in all three elements of the beautiful city. Thus the training and education that the most capable men undergo in preparation for becoming guardians will be the shared with likewise gifted women. The reason most people are unable to understand the true natures of men and women, according to Socrates, is because “they are unable to examine what has been said by dividing it up according to forms,” and thus they “pursue mere verbal contradictions… and have a quarrel rather than a conversation” (454a4-7). Evidently, if the majority were capable of looking to the forms for a proper standard – and this is the first time that the forms are introduced in Republic – then they would understand that the relevant differences between men and women are rather trivial, or merely apparent. So, it is by virtue of looking to the forms as criteria for judgment that
leads Socrates to construct an egalitarian polis based on pertinent similarities and not petty differences.

Ultimately the first occurrence of ἐξαίφνης marks a new beginning in Republic, and transforms the tenor of the dialogue. Thus, its emergence in Book v echoes previous appearances in Parmenides and Seventh Letter insofar as the term marks a transformative moment, or a meaningful interruption in the narrative thread. Consequently, as this sudden digression evolves into the heart of Republic (i.e., the middle books, v-vii), the nature of philosophy vis-à-vis Plato’s theory of ideas assumes an increasingly prominent role.

Three Waves

The second appearance of ἐξαίφνης also occurs in Republic v as Glaucon insists that Socrates provide a detailed account of the controversial issues concerning the common possession of women and children, and the upbringing and education of those offspring. His uncertainty notwithstanding, Socrates is encouraged by Glaucon to proceed and thus attempts to overcome the difficulties that emerge as the “three waves”: (1) The education of women, (2) the begetting and rearing of offspring, and (3) the development of philosopher-kings. As Sedley 2007, 256 states, these are “three especially daring political proposals” and thus Socrates’ trepidation is well-warranted.

The First Wave

With respect to the education of women, Socrates argues that a woman’s generally inferior physical strength does not preclude the type of education that men receive. In fact, Socrates concludes that their egalitarian theory of education is completely natural, while contemporary Athenian practices “seems to be against nature” (456c3). Although he anticipates
that some citizens will snicker at the sight of nude women exercising like men, Socrates claims that their laughter is the result of ignorance: “for it is and always will be the finest saying that the beneficial is beautiful, while the harmful is ugly” (457b2-4).

The Second Wave

Having “escaped one wave of criticism” by demonstrating that male and female guardians must share a common training regimen, Socrates proceeds to embark upon a related, but even more controversial, contention that requires a rigged lottery, eugenics, and state-sponsored parenting (457b6). In short, Socrates argues that all women and children must be construed as common possessions among the guardians, and that offspring of unlawful, private marriages will be afforded no nurturing or state support. The common possession of women and children unites the state by engendering shared responsibilities and eliminating divisiveness. In other words, Socrates is constructing a state characterized by an expansive filial bond, thus ensuring that guardians view each other as family members and not rivals.104 In this way the guardians “will think of the same things as their own, aim at the same goal, and, as far as possible, feel pleasure and pain in unison” (464d2-4). In a similar vein, when Kallipolis finds itself embroiled in war with fellow Greeks as opposed to foreigners, it will limit the destruction and conduct the war with a view toward restoring their natural friendship.105

104 Glaucon later admits without any prompting by Socrates that “the guardians would be excellent fighters against an enemy because they’d be least likely to desert each other, since they know each other as brothers, fathers, and sons, and call each other by those names” (471c8-d1). Glaucon’s admission recalls the opening speech from Plato’s Symposium insofar as Phaedrus argues that “an army made up of lovers” would be unbeatable (Symposium 178e4).

105 According to Socrates, fighting other Greek peoples should be known as “civil war”, while fighting foreigners is “war” in the most destructive, no-holds barred sense of the word. See especially 470c3-d1.
The Third Wave

Glaucon readily admits to all the advantages, including some other benefits not even mentioned by Socrates, of the beautiful city. Nevertheless, he remains skeptical with respect to the likelihood that this hypothetical state could be established in actuality. In fact, he forestalls any further discussion of the city’s virtues, and insists that Socrates demonstrate how it would come into being: “let’s now try to convince ourselves that it is possible and how it is possible, and let the rest go” (471e3-4). Socrates’ reply includes the second appearance of ἐξαίφνης in Republic, and sets the stage for his discussion of the philosopher-kings:

This is a sudden (ἐξαίφνης) attack that you’ve made on my argument, and you show no sympathy (οὐ συγγιγνώσκεις) for my delay. Perhaps you don’t realize that, just as I’ve barely escaped from the first two waves (δύο κύματε) of objections, you’re bringing the third (τρικυμίας) – the biggest and most difficult one – down upon me.106 When you see and hear it, you’ll surely be completely sympathetic (πάνυ συγγνώμην), and recognize that it was, after all, appropriate for me to hesitate and be afraid to state and look into so paradoxical (παράδοξον) a view (472a1-7).

Socrates’ anxiety is perhaps well-warranted as he is about to introduce the notion of philosopher-kings. Before embarking upon that discussion, there are some elements to this section that deserve comment.

In addition to the appearance of ἐξαίφνης in this passage, Socrates’ response to Glaucon resonates with the third hypothesis of Parmenides and “the instant” (τὸ ἐξαίφνης) in several ways: (1) Socrates expresses some trepidation, and the source of his unease lies in the “paradoxical view” (παράδοξον) of his impending introduction of philosopher-kings. The Greek παράδοξον can also be translated as strange, unexpected, and marvelous. This recalls Parmenides’ claim in the third hypothesis of Parmenides that the instant is a “queer” (ἄτοπος)

106 According to Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon, τρικυμίας, or third wave, is a “huge, overwhelming wave” based upon the Greek notion that “every third wave was supposed to be larger than the rest” (715).
occurrence, or a strange and marvelous phenomenon. (2) Socrates begins the passage by remarking that Glaucon has “no sympathy” (οὐ συγγιγνώσκεις) and ends it by predicting that Glaucon will be “completely sympathetic” (πάνυ συγγνώμην) once Socrates begins his discussion of philosopher-kings. This shift from no sympathy to its opposite reflects the conceptual import of the third hypothesis of Parmenides insofar as the instant facilitates change from one state, e.g., rest, to its opposing condition, e.g., motion. What’s more, Socrates’ claim that the third wave is “the biggest and most difficult one” is reminiscent of the introductory conversation of Parmenides and the recurring notion that the training exercise is a “big assignment” and “hard work.”¹⁰⁷ (3) The instant (τὸ ἐξαίφνης) appears in the third (τρίτον) hypothesis of Parmenides, while Glaucon’s “sudden (ἐξαίφνης) attack” instigates the “third [wave]” (τρικυμίας) and the discussion of philosopher-kings. Thus the most significant component of both Parmenides, i.e., the instant, and Republic, i.e., the philosopher-king, are introduced and related by the same constellation of terms.¹⁰⁸

Philosopher-Kings

The emergence of “the instant” (τὸ ἐξαίφνης) signifies the crucial junction and turning point of the training exercise of Parmenides, while the appearance of ἐξαίφνης in the Seventh Letter announces the decisive conversion experience with respect to philosophical education. Not surprisingly, so too does Glaucon’s “sudden (ἐξαίφνης) attack” herald a critical moment in Republic by virtue of Glaucon’s insistence that Socrates move beyond the advantages of the beautiful city and demonstrate its viability, and this prompts Socrates’ introduction of the “paradoxical” idea of philosopher-kings (472e2).

¹⁰⁷ See Chapter II and its analysis of the introductory conversation of Parmenides.
¹⁰⁸ Also worth noting: The appearance of ἐξαίφνης in the Seventh Letter is in the midst of Plato’s account of his third trip to Sicily, and this appearance of ἐξαίφνης in Republic v occurs during the discussion of the third city, i.e., the reformed or purified city, or as C.D.C Reeve 1988, 191 refers to it, “the Third Polis.”
Following the appearance of ἑξαίφνης, the remainder of Republic v serves as a prelude to a more expansive discussion of Plato’s theory of ideas. So Glaucón’s “sudden attack” symbolizes a shift from the preceding discussion and a turning point for the dialogue as a whole. Thus Socrates begins the long and arduous task of explaining how “marriage, the having of wives, and the procreation of children must be governed as far as possible by the old proverb: ‘Friends possess everything in common’” first articulated in Book iv (423c5-424a1).

In the midst of his brief review of their prior discourse, Socrates wonders if his interlocutors will be satisfied with a man who approximates justice or if it is necessary that he demonstrate that “the just man is in no way different from the just itself” (472b6). It is then agreed that their objective was to discover a “model” (παραδείγματος) of justice in order that they might ascertain the nature of both the just man and the unjust man (472c3). Moreover, their investigation would proceed by examining the just and unjust man with respect to their measure of happiness.109

Socrates finally arrives at what he claims is “the greatest wave” and despite his fear of “ridicule and contempt” he presents his interlocutors with his notion of philosophical government (473c5-7).

Until philosophers rule as kings or those who are now called kings and leading men genuinely and adequately philosophize, that is, until political power and philosophy entirely coincide (συμπέσῃ), while the many natures who at present pursue either one exclusively are forcibly prevented from doing so, cities will have no rest from evils, Glaucón, nor, I think, will the human race. And, until this happens, the constitution we’ve been describing in theory will never be born to the fullest extent possible or see the light of the sun (φῶς ἥλιου). It’s because I saw how very paradoxical this statement would be that I hesitated to make it for so long, for it’s hard to face up to the fact that there can be no happiness, either in public or private, in any other city (473c10-e4).

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109 This passage resonates with Parmenides’ method of examining the consequences of a given hypothesis from Parmenides 136a-c.
Although Glaucon is unconvinced of the possibility of philosopher-kings, he agrees to defend Socrates against any derision and to support him with “goodwill” (εὔνοία) and encouragement (474a6).\(^{110}\)

Socrates therefore agrees to describe who the authentic philosophers are, and why they are best qualified to govern the state. A philosopher is a lover of learning analogous to any “erotically inclined man,” whether he is a “lover of boys” (φιλόπαιδα) or a “wine-lover” (φιλοίνους) or an “honor-lover” (φιλοτίμους) (474d-475b) Similar to the other lovers, a philosopher isn’t satisfied with only a part of wisdom, but “desires the whole thing” (475b8). In other words, a lover of wisdom “tries all kinds of learning” (πάντὸς μαθήματος) and is “insatiable” (ἀπλήστως) in his quest for wisdom and virtue (475c6-7).\(^{111}\)

In contrast to philosophers, “the lovers of sights” (φιλοθεάμονες) and other lovers of beautiful sounds, colors, and crafts direct their attention to the multitude of perceptible things that manifest themselves in the visible world of sense perception, but they are “unable to see and embrace the nature of the beautiful itself” (476a-b). Thus, these other lovers have as the object of their desire the participants, but not the form; and in mistaking the image for the reality they exist in a dream-like state, while the philosopher is truly awake and alive to the eternal ideas – the true objects of knowledge (476c-d).

Consequently, the lovers of perceptible participants never rise above the level of opinion because the objects of their affection are always shifting and changing and coming to be, while

\(^{110}\) Glaucon’s pledge is reminiscent of Plato’s characterization from the Seventh Letter 344b6, of the ideal teacher-pupil relationship as “asking and answering questions in good will and without envy.”

\(^{111}\) Ludwig 2007, 218-219 argues that there exists a “mini-Symposium within the Republic” insofar as the former dialogue’s ladder of love is reflected by the lover of boys’ appreciation for “the body parts of many different boys.” In connecting pederasty with philosophy, Ludwig contends that “Just as eroticists love all parts of all boys, young philosophic natures love all branches of learning” (219). The relationship between Republic and Symposium will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.
the philosopher sets his sights on the intelligible objects of knowledge, the eternal forms. What’s more, the philosopher is able to differentiate the participants from the idea, and thus focuses his attention on the truly real and studies the things themselves, and not their images. Thus the philosopher-king is distinctively qualified to steer the ship of state because he models his approach upon what is most real.\(^\text{112}\) Thus, unlike the “lovers of opinion” (φιλοδόξους) the philosopher has the unique capacity to “embrace the thing itself” (τοῦ ἀνω ἐκαστον το ὄν ἀσπαζόμενος), and employ his understanding of the completely knowable in order to direct, organize, and transform society in the right way (480a10-11).

The second appearance of ἐξαιφνης in Republic v marks the moment when philosophy and politics begin to coalesce around the dialogue’s central idea of the philosopher-king.\(^\text{113}\) In other words, Glaucon’s “sudden attack” initiates the line of argumentation that leads directly to the philosopher-king and a more expansive account of Plato’s theory of ideas. It heralds a strange and marvelous time when “political power and philosophy entirely coincide,” and the beautiful city finally enters into “the light of the sun” (473c10-e4).

The Allegory of the Cave

Undoubtedly the most famous passage in Plato’s corpus and arguably the most well known passage in the history of philosophy, the cave-allegory symbolizes the crowning moment of the philosopher-king’s education and the pinnacle of Republic. What’s more, with three appearances of ἐξαιφνης the allegory of the cave reverberates with the third hypothesis of Parmenides and its account of “the instant,” at the same time as it represents an imagistic

\(^{112}\) Blössner 2007, 367 asserts that “‘Philosopher-kings’ are not, properly speaking, kings, because they do not exert power. Instead, they alter ways of thinking.”

\(^{113}\) The passage that introduces the philosopher-king (473c-e) is found in the exact middle of the dialogue.
account of the philosophical education outlined in the *Seventh Letter*. Consequently, the following section demonstrates the parallels obtaining between *Parmenides*, *Seventh Letter*, and *Republic*, and interprets the cave-allegory in light of the appearances of ἐξαίφνης that all three works have in common.

*Republic* vii begins with Socrates’ “strange (ἄτοπον) image” of “strange (ἄτόποις) prisoners” who are held captive in a cave and unaware of the illusions that constitute their reality (515a2). Socrates claims that his tale concerns the “effect of education (παιδείας) and of the lack of it (ἄπαιδευσίας) on our nature,” and perhaps most chillingly, that these “strange” prisoners are “like us” (514a1-2 and 515a2). In short, their lives are spent watching the shadows on the wall controlled by unknown puppeteers who operate clandestinely behind the prisoners’ backs. The shadows are perceived by the unsuspecting prisoners as the only reality, and thus their “knowledge” of this state of affairs is manipulated by the puppeteers who decide which artifacts are to be held in front of the fire in order that their silhouette may be cast upon the wall. These prisoners, argues Socrates, “would in every way believe that the truth (ἀληθὲς) is nothing other than the shadows of those artifacts” (515c1-2).

Socrates then encourages his interlocutors to imagine what it would be like if the prisoners were “released from their bonds and cured of their ignorance” (515c4-5). A prisoner unchained and “suddenly” (ἐξαίφνης) forced to rise and turn his head and “look up toward the light” would at first be “pained and dazzled” at the sight of the objects he knew only as shadows (515c6-7). He would be disoriented and perplexed as he moved closer to the actual objects and further from the shadows that shaped his tenuous understanding of reality. If “asked” (ἐρωτῶν)

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\[114\] In addition to its three appearances in the cave-allegory, this is the third time that ἐξαίφνης appears in the *Republic* as a whole.
about the nature of these shadow-casting artifacts, he would “be at a loss” (ἀπορεῖν) and opine that the shadows on the cave wall were far more real than the actual objects (515d4-6). Likewise, if the prisoner were now compelled to look at the light itself, the fire that illuminates the artifacts, he would try to run away and return to the shadows that he would maintain are most real.

Nevertheless, if the prisoner was prevented from revisiting his former life, and forced up the “rough, steep path” out of the cave and into the sunlight, he would be “pained and irritated” at his perceived mistreatment (515e5-7). And “at first” (ἐξαίφνης) the prisoner would be unable to see the natural objects illuminated by the sun itself (516a3). He would have to start slowly and methodically by examining the shadows and images as they appeared as reflections in water, and eventually the prisoner could study the things in the night sky like the stars and the moon. Finally, the prisoner would be able to see “the sun itself” (ἀλλὰ ὁ τὸν καθ’ ὁτὸν) and he could then see how the sun directs and “governs everything in the visible world” (516b4-8). In due course he would comprehend that the sun is the cause of all things.

Sooner or later he would recollect his former home within the cave, and remember what counted for wisdom there and he would be “happy for the change” (ἐυδαιμονίζειν τῆς μεταβολῆς) and feel compassion for his fellow prisoners (516c5). Compelled by pity, the man would return to the cave. Nevertheless, coming “suddenly” (ἐξαίφνης) out of the dazzling radiance of true sunshine his eyes would be “filled with darkness” (516e3-4). As the “perpetual prisoners” competed for honors in naming and predicting the shadows on the wall, his vision would remain weak as his eyes adjusted to the darkness of the cave (517a1). His inability to recognize the shadows would subject him to contempt and scorn, because the other prisoners would conclude that his departure from the cave had ruined his vision. Furthermore, the
prisoners would presume that leaving the cave was harmful and dangerous, and they would kill anyone who attempted to free them and lead them upward out of the cave.

Socrates concludes his tale by stating that the cave-allegory “must be fitted together” with his prior account of the divided-line. Thus, the allegory of the cave is an imagistic account of the divided-line’s stages of knowledge and the objects appropriate to each level of understanding (517b1).115 Ultimately, it is “the form of the good” (τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἴδεα) that is the final thing to be seen, and according to Socrates, “it is reached only with difficulty” (517b7-8).116 “The goal of philosophy may therefore be characterized,” according to Miller 2011, 111 “as the assimilation of the philosopher’s thinking to this Good: the perfect purification of his thought.” Once the idea of the good has been grasped, it will be acknowledged as the source of all that is “correct and beautiful” (ὁρθῶν τε καὶ καλῶν), and generates both the light and its source in the visible realm, while in the intelligible realm it confers “truth and understanding” (ἀλήθειαν καὶ οὖν) (517c1-4).117 Consequently, anyone desiring to “act sensibly” (ἐμφρῶς πρᾶξειν) in any circumstance must be compelled to grasp the nature of the good (517c4).118

115 As Morrow 1929, 340 observes, “…the parallel between νόησις, the term used in the Republic to denote the highest activity of mind, and νοῦς, which is here [i.e., the Seventh Letter] said to be nearest the absolute object, is suggestive.” Thus it seems as though the cave-allegory is a poetic reprise of both the divided-line and the prosaic account put forth in the Seventh Letter with respect to the extremities of human reason. The fact that both works feature prominent appearances of ἐξαίφνης in the midst of an illumination experience suggest that philosophical understanding is the product of methodical study, sudden insight, and interiorization of the idea. Miller 2011, 111 argues that “Philosophy, according to Plato, encourages him to eschew dianoia in favor of non-representational noēsis, a direct assimilation to the Forms, and ultimately to their rational order.”

116 Socrates’ claim that the idea of the good “is reached only with difficulty” mirrors both Parmenides and Seventh Letter insofar as both works consistently affirm the hard work and difficult nature of philosophical education.

117 Keyt 2006, 197 claims “gazing at things in the sky symbolizes apprehending the Forms.” Keyt’s contention refers primarily to the “Ship of State” simile, but he argues further that “the image of the sky and stars and wind links the Ship of State with the Sun and the Cave and thus with the central metaphysical ideas of the Republic.” What’s more, the education of the philosophers as delineated in Book vii briefly has astronomy as the “third” (τρίτην) subject studied before it is usurped by solid geometry because it is more fitting to study the “third (τρίτην) dimension” right after the second (Republic vii, 527c-528b).

118 As Lear 2006, 36 concludes “the allegory of the Cave facilitates a Socratic movement from being ignorant, yet ignorant of one’s ignorance, to being ignorant but aware that one is ignorant. And insofar as ordinary life is like a
The allegory of the cave mirrors the third hypothesis of *Parmenides* and the epistemological digression of Plato’s *Seventh Letter* in several ways. While the cave-allegory introduces a “strange (ἄτοπον) image” of “strange (ἄτόπους) prisoners,” the third hypothesis presents a “queer (ἄτοπον) thing” and “queer (ἄτοπος) creature” identified by Parmenides as “the instant” (ἐξαίφνης). Likewise, ἔξαίφνης emerges three times in sections of the allegory of the cave: (1) When the prisoner is “suddenly” (ἔξαίφνης) freed from his chains, (2) as the prisoner first exits the cave and is described as needing time “at first” (ἔξαίφνης) to adjust his eyes to the sunlight, and (3) upon his return to the cave coming “suddenly” (ἔξαίφνης) out of the light and once again his eyes are filled with the cave’s darkness. Finally, just as “the instant” facilitates metaphysical change with respect to the forms as they eternally go “in” and “out” of this timeless crossroads in *Parmenides*, ἔξαίφνης in the cave-allegory heralds the various changes the prisoner undergoes as he leaves and re-enters the cave.

With respect to the *Seventh Letter*, ἔξαίφνης marks the moment when the long and strenuous process of philosophical education reaches its climax in a sudden illumination of the form itself. Similarly, in the allegory of the cave ἔξαίφνης signals the sudden liberation of the prisoner and brackets his vision of the form of the good.\(^\text{119}\) What’s more, Plato’s account of the difficult and methodical nature of philosophical education (i.e., “the long and earnest labor”) in the *Seventh Letter* is reflected in a more poetic form in the cave-allegory insofar as the prisoner suffers a painful and painstaking climb up the “rough, steep path” out of the cave. Finally, the account of philosophical education in the *Seventh Letter* emerges as an interruption of the main

dream, then as we move toward Socratic ignorance, we begin to wake up.” In speaking about epistemology in general, Polanyi 2009, 21 similarly affirms that “true knowledge of a theory can be established only after it has been interiorized and extensively used to interpret experience.”
\(^\text{119}\) Although, we might question the fact, as this dissertation’s director, Dr. Ron Polansky does, that it “brackets” rather than simply is the vision of the good.
body of the letter, just as the cave-allegory is situated within an extended digression that began in Book v with the first appearance of ἐξαίφνης.120

**The Third Constitution**

*Republic* viii is a return to the line of argumentation that was interrupted by the interlocutors’ desire for an expansive account of women and children. This digression constitutes the middle books, i.e., v-vii, of *Republic*. Thus it is perhaps not surprising that ἐξαίφνης emerges in Book viii as a cryptic signal that the argumentation of books i-iv has resumed, while the term also serves as a marker for a personal and political change. In the midst of his account of the degeneration of political systems, Socrates describes both the erosion of government and character as an aristocracy changes to a timarchy that then transforms into an oligarchy.

In brief, the son of an aristocrat is torn between his father’s desire that he nourish his intellect and the encouragement of others to cultivate the appetitive part of his soul. Conflicted, the son “settles in the middle and surrenders rule over himself to the middle-part – the victory-loving and spirited part – and becomes a proud and honor-loving man” (550b1-6). This son represents the degeneration from aristocracy to timarchy and thus “the second constitution and the second man” (550c1).

Eventually, the citizens of a timarchy begin valuing wealth more than virtue, and this political system deteriorates into an oligarchy. The oligarchy, in turn, is the first political system to admit “the greatest of all evils” by allowing citizens to sell all of their property and yet remain in the city (552a3-4). In addition to fostering an untenable political environment characterized by excessively wealthy and extremely poor citizens, ultimately this system would create a class of

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120 The *Seventh Letter*’s interruption is often called “the epistemological digression” in the secondary literature.
criminal and beggar drones who sap the city of its resources while offering nothing in return but crime and indolence.\textsuperscript{121}

The man who most resembles the oligarchic city experiences an abrupt transformation when he “suddenly” (ἐξαίφνης) sees his honor-loving father subjected to false accusations and unjustly convicted: “He had held a generalship or some other high office, was brought to court by false witnesses, and was either put to death or exiled or was disenfranchised and had all his property confiscated” (553a9-b4). The son of the timocratic father is humiliated by his poverty, and sets about acquiring wealth and “immediately drives from the throne in his own soul the honor-loving and spirited part that ruled there” (553b7-8). Consequently, the appetitive part of his soul assumes command, and enslaves both the rational and spirited elements. In this way, his unbridled greed becomes the driving force in his life, and his character mirrors the oligarchic constitution by valuing money above all else.\textsuperscript{122}

The last appearance of ἐξαίφνης prior to Book viii was in the cave-allegory when the prisoner’s eyes were “suddenly” (ἐξαίφνης) filled with darkness upon his return to the cave. Accordingly it appears that the oligarchic constitution is the first of the degenerate forms of government to be enveloped fully by the darkness of vice, and thus the emergence of ἐξαίφνης in Book viii recalls the cave and its shadowy images. In a similar vein, the oligarchic character possesses a simulacrum of virtue, because of a relative self-restraint motivated by greed.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{121} Polansky 2012, 293 identifies “three great faults” with the oligarchic constitution: (1) Wealth is a questionable qualification for ruling, (2) the inevitable conflict between rich and poor leads to a divided city, and (3) the oligarchy is the first constitution that facilitates the emergence of drones.

\textsuperscript{122} Evidently the appetitive soul has three principal desires corresponding to the oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical constitutions: (1) money, (2) freedom, and (3) power. Perhaps these desires are in themselves unlimited and in need of limit.

\textsuperscript{123} Likewise, in \textit{Phaedo} 68d-69d Socrates distinguishes those who practice true virtue from those who “master certain pleasures because they are mastered by others” (69a1-2). Similarly, the oligarch in \textit{Republic} viii appears “more respectable than many, but the true virtue of a single-minded and harmonious soul escapes him” because his
Three Characters

Following the discussion of tyrannical character traits, Republic ix finds Socrates giving an account of the three basic character types and their corresponding degrees of happiness. In short, Glaucon and Socrates agree that each element of the tripartite soul has a corresponding pleasure. Thus, the man whose appetitive part dominates yearns for bodily pleasures and wealth, while the man whose activities are commandeered by the spirited part strives for honor, respect, and success. The third character type discussed is the philosophic, and the pleasures that define his life are the pleasures of learning that accompany the desire for truth. Consequently, Socrates argues that there are “three primary kinds of people” differentiated by their pursuit of the “three forms of pleasure” (581c3-6).

Presumably each character type believes that his life is most pleasant, so Socrates contends that we must judge the three lives by employing the three tools of “experience, reason, and argument” in order to discern what character type is indeed most pleasurable (582a4). Because the philosopher has of necessity experienced the pleasures of the honor-lover and money-maker, while the other two character types have no familiarity with the pleasures of learning, the philosophic type will be most capable of using the three tools to judge the most pleasant life. Having experienced all three pleasures, the philosopher’s contention that his life is most pleasant carries the most weight. Thus, his argument – “and argument is a philosopher’s tool most of all” – rings true (582d10). Socrates and Glaucon conclude this line of reasoning by ranking the honor-lover’s life second in pleasure, while the pleasures of the profit-lover’s life come in last.

other vices are held in check not by persuasive argument, “but by compulsion and fear, trembling for his other possessions” (554a-e).

124 In a similar vein, Aristotle in his Nicomachean Ethics asserts that “people quite reasonably reach their conception of the good, i.e., of happiness, from the lives they lead” (1095b14-15).
Having presented “two proofs in a row” that the just life is superior to and more pleasurable than the life characterized by injustice, Socrates proceeds to the third proof (583b1). In dramatic style, Socrates testifies that the “third (τρίτον) is dedicated in Olympic fashion to Olympian Zeus the Savior” (583b2-3). Ultimately this third proof entails the proper conception of pure pleasures and the distinction between true and false pleasures.

In brief, Socrates argues that most people conceive of pleasure as the cessation of pain, and pain as the cessation of pleasure. Consequently, the majority confuses the neutral state as either pleasure or pain, and thus they are unable to distinguish properly the intermediate state between pleasure and pain. Strangely, the intermediate condition is neither pleasure nor pain, but it can seem to be both pleasure and pain. According to Socrates, however, there are pleasures that don’t arise from the negation of pain, and these are the true and pure pleasures. “The pleasures of smell are especially good examples to take note of,” argues Socrates, “they suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) become very intense without being preceded by pain, and when they cease they leave no pain behind. But there are plenty of other examples as well” (584b5-8). Thus, this state of instant pleasure described by Socrates is not a change from pain to pleasure, but from the neutral, intermediate condition to the state of pleasure. Similarly, pain is not necessarily the mere negation of pleasure.

The keystone of Socrates’ argument is being itself. In other words, bodily pleasures like eating are exemplified by ceaseless change vis-à-vis the emptiness and fullness that characterize

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125 As previously noted in Chapter 3, Miller 1986, 251 proffers a collection of “saving thirds” scattered throughout Plato’s dialogues.
126 Socrates compares false or impure pleasures to a “shadow-painting” (ἐσκιγραφημένη τις), thus connecting the pleasures of non-philosophers with the prisoners’ condition from the cave-allegory (583b5). Likewise, Polansky 2012, 324 suggests that false pleasures “end up looking like the pleasures of someone in the cave who never can get out of it.”
127 Socrates’ construal of the intermediate state between pleasure and pain as a neither... nor, both... and is reminiscent of Parmenides’ account of “the instant” from the third hypothesis of Parmenides. See especially Chapter III of this dissertation.
the activity, while the pleasures of learning, if properly pursued, are satisfied only by things that are “always the same, immortal, and true” (585c1). The pleasure of contemplating the pure being of the ideas is the best and most true, because it is also the most real. Consequently, the instant intensity of pleasures of smell is roughly analogous to the sudden illumination that crowns the philosophical education outlined in the *Seventh Letter*. To put it another way, philosophical training prior to the sudden illumination experience is not a condition of ignorance, but an intermediate state between ignorance and understanding just as the sudden pleasures associated with the sense of smell are not preceded by pain. Thus the appearance of ἐξαίφνης in *Republic* ix substantiates Socrates’ argument with respect to pure pleasures, and links this purity to thinking about the forms.¹²⁸

**The Myth of Er**

The final two appearances of ἐξαίφνης occur in *Republic* x and its concluding fable, the myth of Er. The myth is about a “brave Pamphylian man called Er” (Ἡρός), whose corpse was among the dead retrieved from the battlefield “ten days” after the fighting that resulted in his death (614b3). Unlike the other corpses, Er’s body was “still quite fresh” as preparations were made for a proper funeral (614b5). As he was placed on the funeral pyre on the “twelfth day”¹²⁹ following his death, he awoke and told the tale of how his soul left his body and travelled to a “marvelous place” (τόπον... δαμόνιον) (614b7-c1). Ultimately the myth is a testament to the just nature of the universe, and the importance of character with respect to one’s destiny; and as

¹²⁸ On a related note, Socrates argues in the *Theaetetus* that “a man becomes like God when he becomes just and pure with understanding” (176b2-3). Likewise in *Republic* x Socrates claims that “the gods never neglect anyone who eagerly wishes to become just and who makes himself as much like a god as a human can by adopting a virtuous way of life” (613a6-9).

¹²⁹ Thus, consistent with the ancient Greek way of counting, i.e., the Greeks counted both the first and last member of a series, Er awoke on the third day after his body was discovered.
Polansky 2012, 367 suggests, the myth is provided to “those who need an edifying tale to fortify their commitment to justice.”

Er described the “world beyond” as a place with two openings in the earth and two in the heavens (614b8). In between these chasms sat judges who determined where the souls should go. The judges informed Er that he would be a “messenger to human beings” about all that he would see and hear in this place (614d2). Er told of how the judges employed a tenfold scale that established the length of a particular soul’s punishment or reward depending upon the soul’s good or bad deeds.

For extraordinary acts of virtue, or heinous lives of vice, even greater awards or punishments were meted out. For instance, a Pamphylian tyrant named Ardiaeus who committed both patricide and fratricide, along with other “impious deeds,” paid a particularly steep price for his unjust life. An unknown person tells the story, relayed by Er, of Ardiaeus’ punishment:

When we came near the opening on our way out, after all our sufferings were over, we suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) saw him [Ardiaeus] together with some others, pretty well all of whom were tyrants (although there were also some private individuals among them who had committed great crimes). They thought that they were ready to go up, but the opening wouldn’t let them through, for it roared whenever one of these incurably wicked people or anyone else who hadn’t paid a sufficient penalty tried to go up. And there were savage men, all fiery to look at, who were standing by, and when they heard the roar, they grabbed some of these criminals and led them away, but they bound the feet, hands, and head of Ardiaeus and the others, threw them down, and flayed them. Then they dragged them out of the way, lacerating them on thorn bushes, and telling every passer-by that they were to be thrown into Tartarus, and explaining why they were being treated in this way (615d3-616a4).

This unknown soul told Er that everyone feared the roar as they approached the judges, and were immediately comforted when greeted with silence. With respect to the appearance of ἐξαίφνης in connection with the tyrant’s punishment, it seems to recall the previous occurrence in Book ix. In

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130 Er’s name and his role as a “messenger to human beings” recalls Diotima’s conception of eros from Symposium 202e-203a.
other words, in Book ix ἐξαίφνης heralds the emergence of a pure pleasure of smell, unmixed with any pain, while in the myth of Er the first appearance of the term follows the unknown soul’s release from pain insofar as he states that “all our sufferings were over.” Thus, no longer in pain, and evidently in the intermediate, neutral condition, the soul describes the sudden nature of the tyrant’s punishment, and is presumably pleased by this instantiation of divine justice. Perhaps his account is also meant to comfort readers who question why some of the worst criminals escape punishment on earth, as it turns out that there is no escape from justice in the afterlife.

Following several days in the meadow, each group took a journey and four days later the souls arrived at a place “where they could look down from above on a straight column of light that stretched over the whole of heaven and earth” (616b4-5). On the sixth day they arrived at the light itself and saw how the universe is bound by the light and made to revolve by “the spindle of Necessity” (616c2-3). There the three Fates, the daughters of Necessity, Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos sat and turned the spindle. The souls were made to approach Lachesis and choose the “daemon or guardian spirit” that would accompany them throughout their earthly existence (617d7). All varieties of animal and human life were present, and it was up to each individual soul to make the best choice.

According to Socrates, it is at this point “that a human being faces the greatest danger of all,” because absent knowledge of how best to discern the good life from the bad we are doomed to a life of misery and unhappiness (618b7-8). In short, our chief consideration should be whether a particular facet of life, e.g., wealth, beauty, and fame, is conducive to justice or injustice. What’s more, “we must go down to Hades holding with adamantine belief” that a just life is above all most essential (618e3-4). Without a firm belief in the value of virtue and justice
we will be “dazzled” by false goods and “do irreparable evils, and suffer even worse ones” (619a2). Thus, it is imperative that we know how to “choose the mean in such lives and how to avoid either of the extremes,” because by virtue of this moderate path a “human being becomes happiest” (619a3-b1).

As it turns out, the souls departing heaven and entering earth often selected the worse lives, because they were “untrained in suffering” and their virtue was a result of habit, and not philosophy (619d2). Er reported that it was astonishing to see the souls select their lives as it was at times “pitiful, funny, and surprising to watch” (620a1). As Polansky 2012, 372 notes “this indicates that the spectacle is tragic, comic, and philosophical.” For example, Odysseus chose the life of a “private individual,” presumably having been purged of the honor-loving character that beset his previous life (620c5).

After their selections were assigned by Lachesis, confirmed by Clotho, and made destiny by Atropos, the souls were led to the “River of Unheeding” where they were forced to drink from its waters and fell asleep (621a2). Following a “clap of thunder and an earthquake” the souls were carried away and like “shooting stars” were brought to the moment of their birth (621a6-b2). It was then that Er “suddenly” (ἐξαίφνης) awoke and found himself on the funeral pyre (621b4).  

Socrates concludes the dialogue by hoping that Glaucon will be persuaded by Er’s tale, so that they can make a “good crossing of the River of Forgetfulness” and “always hold to the

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131 This confluence of comedy, tragedy, and philosophy will be explored in a subsequent chapter on Symposium.
132 Er’s sudden awareness to the significance of justice as he returns to life recalls Socrates earlier comparison in Republic v, 476c-d to the lovers of sight and sounds as being asleep and living in a dream-like state, while philosophers were truly awake and alive to the eternal ideas.
upward path, practicing justice in every way” (621c1-4). In this way, claims Socrates, “we’ll be friends both to ourselves and to the gods,” and “we’ll do well and be happy” (621c4-d3).

Ultimately the “marvelous place” described by Er is comparable to the “queer thing” Parmenides names “the instant” in the third hypothesis of *Parmenides*. Just as the ideas eternally enter and exit “the instant,” human beings seem to mimic this activity with respect to this “marvelous place” by continuously entering into and departing the underworld. Furthermore, the long, methodical nature of philosophical training delineated by Plato in the *Seventh Letter* and crowned by an instant illumination is analogous to the possibility of living philosophically and becoming privy to a host of sudden rewards in this life and the next.

**Conclusion**

Plato employs ἐξαίφνης throughout *Republic* to accentuate the nature of change and insight. In this way, he utilizes the term in ways consistent with that of *Parmenides* and the *Seventh Letter*. Moreover, as Yunis 2007, 4 contends “Plato’s overarching purpose in writing the *Republic* was to effect a change in his readers similar to the change that Glaucon and Adeimantus undergo at Socrates’ hands in the fictional world of the dialogue.” Likewise, from philosopher-kings and the cave-allegory to the myth of Er, the *Republic* is peppered throughout with sudden transformations and narrative disruptions as Socrates’ conception of justice modifies the individual, political, and cosmic spheres. The nine appearances of ἐξαίφνης in *Republic* catalyze some of the most dramatic alterations in thought and action that a true expression of

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133 “Plato’s aim in the *Republic* is to demonstrate that we do have a reason to be just in all circumstances,” argues Singpurwalla 2006, 263 “for being just is always in our best interest.”

134 In a similar vein, the two appearances of ἐξαίφνης in the myth of Er signify the opposing conditions of life and death insofar as the first occurrence heralds the tyrant’s death, while the second appearance marks the moment that Er returns to life. Likewise, “the instant” of the third hypothesis of *Parmenides* facilitates change with respect to the forms of motion and rest and other opposites.
justice demands, just as the instantiations previously examined in *Parmenides* and *Seventh Letter* highlight the essential need for sudden changes.
Chapter VI – Symposium: Philosophical ἔρως

The preceding chapter’s analysis of Republic demonstrated that Plato employs ἐξαίφνης as both a diacritical mark, i.e., when the term appears the relevant passage assumes an added exegetical significance, and a symbol for the illumination experience that represents the peak of philosophical education. This conclusion corresponds with the analyses of Parmenides and Seventh Letter insofar as ἐξαίφνης surfaces in parallel contexts. These prior analyses revealed that Plato’s use of the term is quite consistent and of critical importance with respect to achieving a comprehensive understanding of the ideas, participation, and Plato’s notion of philosophical education. Consequently, the following chapter considers the four instances of ἐξαίφνης appearing in Plato’s encomium to love (ἔρως), Symposium, in order to demonstrate how ἐξαίφνης mirrors the previously examined instantiations and is the key to understanding the structure and meaning of the dialogue.

Both the Symposium and Parmenides exhibit a similar structure. In addition to sharing several appearances of ἐξαίφνης, the Symposium and Parmenides are the only dialogues in Plato’s entire corpus that include a narrator who was not present at the original conversation.135 What’s more, both dialogues feature prominent introductory conversations followed by distinguishable sections – hypotheses in Parmenides and speeches in Symposium – that combine to form each dialogue’s full meaning and import. Although these common elements are rather superficial, the ensuing chapter reveals an even deeper, more profound bond between these two dialogues.

135 Also, the Symposium is explicitly erotic, while the Parmenides exhibits a subtext that, according to Gordon 2010, 261 is “highly erotically charged.” Furthermore, Gordon argues that “Both dialogues underscore the super-human challenge involved in taking up erotic desires and pursuing them to their objective fulfillment” (279). In Parmenides the challenge is emphasized by repeated instances of the phrase “hard work” (πολὺ ἔργον), and as Gordon recognizes, “Diotima also explicitly characterizes the task of catching sight of the immortal beautiful as erotic toiling or hard work, πόνοι, at Symposium 210e” (278). Finally, both Parmenides and Symposium feature a youthful Socrates being instructed by someone wiser.
dialogues. Nevertheless, a fairly comprehensive analysis is required in order to exhibit this connection between Parmenides and Symposium and the vital role ἐξαίφνης plays with respect to the meaning of ἐρως and Plato’s theory of ideas. Thus, the following chapter examines the four appearances of ἐξαίφνης in Symposium in order to demonstrate how Plato’s use of the term corresponds with previously examined appearances in Seventh Letter, Republic, and especially Parmenides.

**Introductory Conversation**

The Symposium opens with a conversation already in progress. An unnamed someone asks Apollodorus to tell the story of Agathon’s banquet. Apollodorus is well-equipped to relay the events of that night because he had just told Glaucón about it the day before. Glaucón had heard a muddled account from someone who had it told to them by Phoenix. Ultimately the source of all these versions is Socrates’s devotee, Aristodemus. Apollodorus, who has followed Socrates earnestly for nearly “three” (τρία) years, has gotten the story from Aristodemus and confirmed it with Socrates (172c5).

Apollodorus assures his unnamed interlocutor that he would be happy to relay the events of that night, because his “greatest pleasure comes from philosophical conversation” (173c3-4). What’s more, Apollodorus claims that he finds “all other talk” boring and insignificant

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136 Apollodorus means “gift from Apollo.” Thus, Apollodorus’s account of the speeches on love could be construed as a gift from the gods, just as Diotima claims that love is the spiritual messenger by virtue of which mortals are given commands and receive “gifts” from the gods (Symposium 202e6). What’s more, his nickname, “the maniac” is related to Diotima’s native land Mantinea insofar as both terms are indicative of prophecy and divination.

137 Plato’s half-brother Glaucón appears in three dialogues: Republic, Parmenides, and Symposium – all of which feature significant appearances of ἐξαίφνης.

138 According to Apollodorus, Aristodemus was “obsessed with Socrates – one of the worst cases at that time” (173b4-5). Thus, the dialogue is bookended by two men who are infatuated with Socrates, Aristodemus and Alcibiades respectively.

139 Apollodorus’s eagerness to speak stands in stark contrast to Antiphon’s reluctance from the introductory conversation of Parmenides. According to Cephalus, “he balked at first,” because it was “a lot of work” (127a5).
“maniac,” claiming that Apollodorus is “always furious with everyone” except Socrates (173d9-10). Apollodorus responds rather ironically, “it’s perfectly obvious why I have these views about us all: it’s simply because I’m a maniac, and I’m raving!” (173e1-3)

Socrates and Aristodemus

Apollodorus commences his account of Agathon’s dinner party from the “very beginning” just as Aristodemus had told it to him (174a1). Upon meeting Socrates that day, Aristodemus noticed that he was freshly bathed and wearing “fancy sandals” and these two “very unusual events” prompts him to ask Socrates why he was “looking so good” (καλός) (174a3-5). Having missed Agathon’s victory celebration the day prior for winning best tragedy, Socrates informs Aristodemus that he is headed to Agathon’s now. And because he is “going to the house of a good-looking (καλός) man,” Socrates wants to look his “best” (καλόν) (174a9).140

Socrates asks Aristodemus to accompany him, even though he was not invited, and they begin walking to Agathon’s house.141 Nevertheless, Aristodemus is worried about arriving at Agathon’s as an uninvited guest, and Socrates assures him by saying, “we’ll think about what to say” as they make their way towards Agathon’s house (174d2). True to his word, Socrates “began to think about something” and urged Aristodemus to proceed without him. Upon his

Moreover, it is “keen philosophers” who seek an account of Socrates’s conversation with Zeno and Parmenides in Parmenides, while it is “rich businessmen” who want to know about Socrates and the speeches made concerning love in Symposium (Parmenides 126b8 and Symposium 173c5). Thus, both dialogues feature speakers and listeners with opposing qualities.

140 As Nehamas and Woodruff note in their translation of Symposium in Plato 1997 (Cooper ed.), the name Agathon means “Goodman” or good (460). Thus Socrates wants to look good, or beautiful, because he is going to the house of the good. As reported by Diogenes Laertius 1969, 110 the rather curious subtitle for the Symposium is “On the Good”. In other words, one might expect the subtitle of Symposium to be “On Love,” just as the other subtitles, e.g., the subtitle for Parmenides is listed as “On Ideas”, are fairly obvious identifications of the subject matter.

141 Socrates’ breach of etiquette here is reminiscent of his behavior during the introductory conversation of Parmenides.
arrival at Agathon’s house, alone and uninvited, Aristodemus found himself in an uncomfortable predicament. Fortunately, a gracious Agathon welcomed him with open arms, and declared that he “looked all over for [Aristodemus] yesterday” in order to invite him to the evening’s banquet.142

After Aristodemus takes a seat on the couch with Eryximachus, a slave reports to Agathon that Socrates is standing on the neighbor’s porch, evidently still lost in thought. “How strange (ἄτοπον)” remarked Agathon, and he insisted that the slave bring him in but he withdrew this command upon being assured by Aristodemus that Socrates had done the same thing in the past (175a9). “Every now and then he just goes off like that and stands motionless,” explained Aristodemus.143

Halfway through the meal Socrates arrives and Agathon, who “was all alone on the farthest couch,” beckons Socrates to lie down next to him (175c7). Following some playful banter concerning the extent of each other’s wisdom, Agathon insists that “Dionysus will soon enough be the judge of our claims to wisdom!” (176a1).144

Following dinner and the completion of the ceremonial practices associated with the symposium, Pausanias recommends that the participants moderate their drinking this evening because many are still suffering from the previous night’s celebration.145 Eryximachus agrees, and remarks that it was fortunate for himself, Aristodemus, and Phaedrus that the “large-capacity

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142 If we count the day Agathon wins the prize for best tragedy as one day, and the next day’s celebration as day two, then the Symposium is being held on the third day – counting in the style of ancient Greece – after Agathon’s victory.
143 Alcibiades reports that Socrates had acted in the exact same manner during a military campaign. See Symposium 220c-d.
144 As the god of wine and drunkenness, Agathon’s reference to Dionysus foreshadows Alcibiades’s raucous entrance and awarding of the crown of laurels near the end of the dialogue.
145 See Garland 2008, 95-102 for the role symposia played in various aspects of ancient Greek life.
drinkers are already exhausted” (176c1-3). According to Apollodorus, “they all agreed not to get drunk that evening; they decided to drink only as much as pleased them” (176e1-2). So Eryximachus proposed that they spend the night together quietly engaged in sober conversation.

Speaking on behalf of Phaedrus, the youngest participant, Eryximachus suggests that the each member of the banquet “give as good a speech in praise of Love as he is capable of giving, in proper order from left to right” (177d3-4). Phaedrus’s idea springs from the absence of hymns praising love (177b1-2). In other words, the poets compose songs of praise for comparatively insignificant things like salt, but avoid the topic of love. Thus Eryximachus proposes that Phaedrus, being the “father of our subject, speak first in praise of love (177d5).

In a curious departure from his usual disposition with respect to his supposed wisdom, Socrates asks rhetorically, “How could I vote ‘No,’ when the only thing I say I understand is the art of love (τὰ ἐρωτικά)? (177d6-e1). The group agrees with Socrates and encourages Phaedrus to begin with the first speech in praise of love. According to Apollodorus, Aristodemus “couldn’t remember exactly what everyone said” and Apollodorus himself had forgotten some of what he was told by Aristodemus, but he promises the unnamed interlocutor that he will share the most memorable and significant details (178a2).

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146 Thus, Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, and Aristodemus are the small-capacity drinkers, while Aristophanes and Agathon are the large-capacity drinkers. Eryximachus doesn’t include Socrates in this account because “he [Socrates] can drink or not, and will be satisfied whatever we do” (176c4-5). So, the first three speeches are by the small-capacity drinkers, and the remaining speeches are by the large-capacity drinkers and Socrates.

147 Reeve 2006, xix-xx argues that “the claim is a nontrivial play on words facilitated by the fact that the noun eros (“love”) and the verb erotan (“to ask questions”) seem to be etymologically connected — something explicitly mentioned in the Cratylus (398c5-e5). Socrates knows about the art of love in that — but just insofar as — he knows how to ask questions, how to converse elenctically.” Thus Socrates could be construed as saying that he knows about the art of questioning. The Greek ἐρώτα is also used in this dual sense during the introductory conversation of Parmenides when (1) Parmenides uses it to describe “love’s (ἐρώτα) game,” and (2) as Aristotle agrees to participate in the training by saying, “ask (ἐρώτα) away” (137a3 and 137c2). Coincidentally, all three dialogues, e.g., Cratylus, Symposium, and Parmenides, feature appearances of ἐξαίφνης.
Phaedrus

As the beloved of Eryximachus, Phaedrus emphasizes and elevates the role of the beloved to divine status. He begins his speech by claiming that Love (Ἐρως) is a “great god, wonderful (θαυμαστός) in many ways” (178a6). Furthermore, he declares that Love is “one of the most ancient gods” citing the poetry of Hesiod, Acusilaus, and the poetic philosophy of Parmenides (178b).148

According to Phaedrus, there is a “certain guidance” that everyone needs in order to live a virtuous and happy life (178c4). Love fulfills the function of guiding principle by imparting a sense of “shame” (αἰσχύνην) and “pride” (φιλοτιμίαν) so that we may steer clear of ignoble activities and be encouraged to perform good deeds (178d2-3). Absent pride and shame, humans are unable to achieve noble and grand things. If it were possible to assemble “an army made up of lovers and the boys they love,” the guidance provided by shame and pride would enable them to “conquer all the world,” according to Phaedrus (178e4-179a2). Thus, Love inspires humans to be “brave” as the heroes depicted in epic poetry, and the “eager courage of love wins highest honors from the gods” (179b1 and 179d2-3).

Phaedrus concludes his speech by referencing Achilles and Patroclus from Homer’s Iliad. According to Phaedrus, Achilles is honored more highly by the gods because as Patroclus’s beloved, he demonstrated supreme courage and ultimately sacrificed his life for his fallen

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148 In light of the fact that the Symposium and Parmenides share several common features, it is fitting that the first speech makes reference to the poem of Parmenides. Mourelatos 2008, 162 contends that “It is probably no accident that Parmenides is among the first of the theorists of Eros mentioned in the Symposium; and it certainly is no accident that the listing of the attributes of the καλόν, ‘the beautiful,’ in Diotima’s speech resembles Parmenides B8.”
lover. What’s more, the gods “are more generous with a loved one (ὁ ἐρώμενος) who cherishes his lover (τὸν ἐραστήν), than with a lover who cherishes the boy he loves” (180b2-4). Even the lover’s “god-like” eminence is due to being “inspired by a god,” his beloved (180b4-5). Consequently, of all the gods Love is the most important with respect to enabling men to “gain virtue and blessedness” (εὐδαιμονίας) (180b8).

**Pausanias**

“If Love himself were simple,” claims Pausanias, then Phaedrus’ speech would have been well-executed (180c6). Thus Pausanias, the lover of Agathon, begins his presentation with a more complex notion of love. His claim rests on the “well-known fact” that the goddess Aphrodite and Love are always found together (180d5). And because there are two goddesses designated as “Aphrodite” – one known as Heavenly Aphrodite and the other as Common Aphrodite – then it follows that there are two types of Love. “Love is,” Pausanias claims, “like everything else: complex” (183d5).

Both goddesses desire beauty. Common Aphrodite is concerned with loving the body, or the appearance of beauty, while Heavenly Aphrodite loves the soul, or the locus of true beauty. Consequently, Pausanias argues that “Love is not in himself noble and worthy of praise” (181a7-8). Love is only praiseworthy when it stirs us with noble sentiments and leads to honorable activities; otherwise Love is ignoble and blameworthy. Common Aphrodite manifests itself as the indiscriminate desire to complete the “sexual act,” because Common Aphrodite “partakes of the nature both of the female and the male” (181b5-181c2). In contrast, Heavenly Aphrodite

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149 Phaedrus argues that Achilles was the beloved as opposed to the lover because he “was more beautiful than Patroclus, more beautiful than all the heroes, and still beardless” (180a7-8).
springs from a “purely male” lineage, and thus delights in the strength and intellect that characterize beautiful young men (181c4).

Love is only worthy of praise when it gives rise to noble sentiments, and likewise it is worthy of blame when it engenders base desires. Consequently, the common lover departs as soon as his beloved’s beauty fades, while the true lover “loves the right sort of character (ἡθοὺς), and remains its lover for life, attached as he is to something that is permanent (μονίμῳ)” (183e6-184a1). As long as the lover has good intentions and seeks love in order to cultivate virtue and wisdom, he participates in the heavenly kind of love. Likewise, even if a beloved is misled by a deceitful lover, “it is noble for him to have been deceived,” because he has revealed his own character, and proved that he would do anything for the sake of excellence (185b1-2). Pausanias concludes his speech by declaring Love’s value as “immeasurable,” because he persuades both the lover and the beloved “to make virtue their central concern” (185b8-185c2).

First Interlude

“When Pausanias finally came to a pause (Παυσανίου δὲ παυσάμενου),” Apollodorus reports that Aristophanes was set to speak next (185c5). The comic playwright, however, had a severe case of the hiccups, and petitioned Eryximachus to either cure his hiccups or present the next speech. Foreshadowing the essence of his speech, Eryximachus claims that he will “do both” (185d4). Consequently, he proffers three potential cures for Aristophanes’ hiccups: (1) holding his breath, (2) a lengthy gargle, or (3) tickling the nose in order to induce sneezing. Aristophanes pledges to follow the doctor’s orders, and Eryximachus takes his place.

Allen 1991, 20 offers a multilayered reading of this strange interlude:

150 In other words, Eryximachus’s speech will posit that the physician must know “both” kinds of love: the heavenly and the common.
The story of Aristophanes’ hiccups, the most famous hiccups in literature, performs a variety of dramatic functions at once. It provides comic relief; it calls attention to the drinking habits of Aristophanes and the medical lore of Eryximachus; it emphasizes the importance of the speech of Aristophanes by mentioning it and deferring it, thereby increasing expectancy and dramatic tension. At a subliminal level, it reminds us once again of the brooding presence that haunts the Symposium, the presence of Dionysus, the wine-god, whom Agathon has prayed in aid as a judge.

Whatever the meaning of this interlude, it is noteworthy that Plato highlights the curious events surrounding the third speech, especially in light of the connection between Parmenides and Symposium. In other words, just as the third hypothesis of Parmenides is the only one that Parmenides explicitly numbers, Aristophanes’ unexpected bout of hiccups likewise calls our attention to the third speech of Symposium.¹⁵¹

Eryximachus

Eryximachus, the physician and lover of Phaedrus, begins like Pausanias before him by picking up the thread of the previous speech and elaborating upon it. His principal notion is that “Love does not occur only in the human soul,” but pervades the entire universe and “directs everything that occurs” (186a3-186b3). Similar to Phaedrus emphasizing the beloved, and Pausanias highlighting the lover, Eryximachus gives “pride of place to [his] own profession” and examines the nature of love from his experience as a physician-scientist (186b6). Consequently, Eryximachus speaks of the “radical dissimilarity” occurring among diseased and healthy bodies as a physiological manifestation of the common and heavenly kinds of love (186b8). The physician must be knowledgeable with respect to both kinds of love so that he may identify both the type that needs to be encouraged and the kind that must be rejected. Thus the competent

¹⁵¹ Parmenides indicates that he will speak of a one “yet a third (τρίτον) time” (155e4). Again, this is the only time that Parmenides numbers a hypothesis throughout the training exercise of the Parmenides. Furthermore, according to Thrasyllus’s tetralogical structuring of Plato’s dialogues, the Symposium is the third dialogue in the third tetralogy: Parmenides, Philebus, Symposium, and Phaedrus. Finally, in light of this possible link between the third hypothesis and the third speech, the director of this dissertation, Ronald Polansky, once referred to “the instant” as a “metaphysical hiccup.”
doctor is able to “transform” bodily desires in order to “effect a reconciliation and establish mutual love between the most basic bodily elements” (186d5-8). In fact, Eryximachus claims that Asclepius, the patron god of healing, founded medicine when he discovered how “to produce concord and love between such opposites” (186e2-3).

Various other disciplines, such as farming, gymnastics, and music are guided by “the god of Love” as well (187a1). Eryximachus cites Heraclitus, just as his beloved Phaedrus had quoted Parmenides, in order to demonstrate how discord may lead to a harmony of opposites. Furthermore, the two species of love are noticeable in seasonal differences, and when “their mixture is temperate, so is the climate” (188a5). Likewise, divination and its objective, the “interaction between men and gods,” is governed by Love, and our aim in this regard is to instantiate “the orderly kind of Love” (188c2-6). In short, love permeates and pervades the entire cosmos, and as Eryximachus had proclaimed at the start, “directs everything that occurs.”

Eryximachus completes his speech by praising the ubiquity and grandeur of Love. In a final flourish, he claims that the power of Love is at its height when directed “toward the good (περὶ τἀγαθό),” because it confers “happiness” (εὐδαιμονίαν) and all manner of gifts for gods and mortals alike (188d6-7).

Second Interlude

Upon finishing his speech, Eryximachus proclaims that it is now Aristophanes’s duty to “complete the argument” – just as the previous speakers had elaborated upon the earlier speeches.

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152 Eryximachus begrudgingly admits that this is what the poets say concerning Asclepius, and he is inclined to believe them – “this time” (186e4).
153 It is noteworthy that these two philosophers, i.e., Parmenides and Heraclitus, commonly interpreted as holding opposite views, are referenced by the opposing sides of an erotic relationship, the beloved Phaedrus and his lover Eryximachus.
– unless Aristophanes had a “different approach” in mind (188e3-4). Although Aristophanes ultimately will take a “different approach,” the argument is, in a sense, complete. Put simply, the first three speeches examined the nature of love from the standpoint of the beloved, the lover, and the cosmic perspective respectively. Thus, it would seem that a fairly wide-ranging treatment of love has been achieved.

What’s more, recalling Aristotle’s Pythagorean account of “three” and its significance with respect to “the universe and all that is in it” from On the Heavens,\textsuperscript{154} and the meaning of the first three hypotheses of Parmenides,\textsuperscript{155} then it seems that the essence of the Symposium is condensed in the first three speeches. In other words, the first three speeches examined the beloved, the lover, and the cosmos; it would appear that the subject has been exhausted.

As it turns out, Aristophanes does take a “different approach” with his speech in praise of love, and shows that the topic has not been exhausted. Moreover, he hints at the nature of the remaining speeches when he reveals that his hiccups have been cured by virtue of the sneeze treatment.\textsuperscript{156} “Makes me wonder (θαυμάζειν) whether the ‘orderly sort of Love’ in the body calls for the sounds and itchings that constitute a sneeze,” states Aristophanes, “because the hiccups stopped immediately (εὐθύς) when I applied the Sneeze Treatment” (189a4-6). In other words, the previous speeches demonstrated a fairly lucid and rational approach to love, while the remaining speeches exhibit, in varying degrees, a suprarational approach. In effect, the remaining

\textsuperscript{154} From Aristotle’s On the Heavens: “For, as the Pythagoreans say, the universe and all that is in it is determined by the number three, since beginning and middle and end give the number of the universe, and the number they give is the triad. And so, having taken these three from nature as (so to speak) laws of it, we make further use of the number three in the worship of the Gods. Further, we use the terms in practice in this way. Of two things, or men, we say ‘both’, but not ‘all’: three is the first number to which the term ‘all’ is applied” (268a10-19).

\textsuperscript{155} See Chapter III for the analysis of the first three hypotheses of Parmenides.

\textsuperscript{156} The sneeze treatment was the third cure offered by Eryximachus.
speeches exceed the bounds of reason and represent a “cure” called for by the “orderly sort of Love” highlighted by both Pausanias and Eryximachus.\textsuperscript{157}

Furthermore, Aristophanes makes it clear both before and after his speech that his account of love is not a laughing matter. Prior to his speech the comic playwright admits that he is concerned about saying something “ridiculous,” although if he were to say something “funny” it would be “pure profit” as it “comes with the territory of [his] Muse” (189b4-6). At his speech’s conclusion he begs his listeners, “don’t make a comedy of it,” and “don’t… turn this speech into a comedy” (193d8 and 193c1).

\textbf{Aristophanes}

Aristophanes prefaces his speech by boldly proclaiming that “people have entirely missed the power of Love,” because if humans really understood love, then the best sacrifices would be offered in the finest temples (189c4). He begins by describing the original nature of humankind. In the beginning there were “three kinds of human beings” comprising male homosexual, female homosexual, and a “third” (τρίτον), a combination of male and female, or “androgy nous” (189d8-e4).

These first “humans” had a rounded shape with four arms, four legs, and two faces and two sets of genitalia. They were powerful and hubristic enough to make an attempt at usurping the gods, and thus Zeus punished them by dividing and making them two. This penalty, however, led to many deaths as the halves were stricken with sorrow and stopped eating as they longed to return to their former wholeness. A merciful Zeus created sexual intercourse by rearranging their genitalia, and the halves found some solace in the temporary embrace of sexual intimacy. Thus

\textsuperscript{157} In fact, Aristophanes claims, “indeed I do have in mind a different approach to speaking than the one the two of you used, you [Eryximachus] and Pausanias” (189c2-3).
Aristophanes claims that “this… is the source of our desire to love each other. Love is born into every human being; it calls back the halves of our original nature together; it tries to make one out of two and heal the wound of human nature” (191d14).

Ultimately it is not “mere sex” that draws us to one another, but it is the soul’s unfathomable yearning that Aristophanes says is similar to an oracle because “it has a sense of what it wants, and like an oracle (μαντεύεται) it hides behind a riddle” (192c6-d3). In other words, lovers ache unknowingly for a restoration of their original unity. Thus he concludes that “Love is the name for our pursuit of wholeness (ὅλοι), for our desire to be complete (ホールου)” (192e12-193a1).

Nevertheless, this erotic quest for wholeness seems destined to fail. While Aristophanes advises us to “keep order before the gods” and “to treat the gods with all due reverence,” our piety is no guarantee of success (193a4-b1). Consequently, he claims that “Love does the best that can be done for the time being” by pulling us toward our other halves (193d2-3). And by virtue of piety and proper reverence to the gods, Love promises hope for the future insofar as we may one day be restored to our original unity, “and by healing us, he will make us blessed and happy” (193d5-6). Regrettably, our original nature led us to make an attempt at replacing the gods, so it seems doubtful that the gods would ever facilitate our reconciliation. Thus, the comic playwright Aristophanes presents a tragic account of love that leaves him pleading with his listeners: “don’t make a comedy of it” (193d8).

Agathon

Agathon, the prize-winning tragedian whose home is the setting of the Symposium, begins his speech by indicating that he will praise Love first, and extol his many gifts to
humankind second. According to Agathon, Love is “happiest” of all the gods because he is “the most beautiful and the best” (195a7-8). His great beauty is due to his eternal youthfulness, and he dwells especially with young people. Just as Homer claims that “Mischief” is subtle and soft, Agathon maintains that Love is “delicate” because he inhabits the “softest” places: “the characters… [and] souls, of gods and men” (195d1-e6). Thus, Love is delicate because he strolls along what “is softest in the softest places” (196a1). What’s more, Love has “extraordinarily good looks” and retains a “fluid, supple shape” that allows him to embrace beautiful souls undetected (196a3-7).

Love’s virtue is unsurpassed, and he neither does wrong nor is any wrong done to him. He possesses the four cardinal virtues, i.e., justice, moderation, bravery, and wisdom. His wisdom is especially powerful, because once touched by love, “anyone becomes a poet” (196e3). Love inspires creativity and is skilled in all of the arts. Furthermore, “love of beauty” settles disputes among the gods, and by virtue of Love’s birth “all goods came to gods and men alike through love of beauty” (197b6-c2).

Agathon concludes his speech by instantiating Love’s creative impulse and speaking poetically of the serenity and concord bestowed by Love. In contrast to Aristophanes’s speech, and his desire that the others “don’t make a comedy of it,” the tragic playwright claims that his speech should be “dedicated to the god, part of it in fun (παιδιᾶς), part of it moderately serious (σπουδῆς)” (197e6-198a1).

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158 Agathon lists the four cardinal virtues in the opposite order as they appear in the locus classicus of Republic iv.
Socrates

Following Agathon’s discourse, Socrates praises the “beauty and variety” of his speech (198b3). In keeping with his ironic disposition, Socrates confesses that it was foolish “to say that I was a master of the art of love, when I knew nothing whatever of this business” (198d2-3). He then chastises the other speakers for having merely attached an array of superlatives to Love, without regard for the truth of the matter. Thus, Socrates claims that he will tell the “truth” about Love by dispensing with flowery language (199b2). What’s more, Socrates affirms that he will be speaking in his accustomed manner “so as not to give you a reason to laugh at me” (199b2-4).

After securing permission from Phaedrus, Socrates begins questioning Agathon about the nature of Love. His questions prompt Agathon to admit that Love is a desire for something that one does not possess. Ultimately Socrates’s questions lead to the following conclusion: Because it needs beauty and goodness, Love is neither beautiful nor good, but desires both goodness and beauty.

Socrates then introduces “a woman from Mantinea, Diotima” who he claims taught him about the “art of love” (τὰ ἔρωτικά) (201d2-5). According to Socrates, she questions him just as he had questioned Agathon. Contrary to popular opinion, she persuades Socrates that Love is not a god, but a spirit – mediating between gods and humans. She claims that he who is “wise” in

159 Nevertheless, Socrates restricts his admiration for Agathon’s speech to the conclusion: “The other parts may not have been so wonderful (θαυμαστά), but that at the end! Who would not be struck dumb on hearing the beauty of the words and phrases?” (198b3-5). Evidently Socrates is referring to the burst of poetic creativity that concludes Agathon’s speech. Because of the Gorgias-like rhetorical tricks that Agathon uses in his poetic conclusion, a reader of this dissertation, Patrick Lee Miller, refers to it as a “Gorgasm”.
160 Gordon 2010, 276 links eros with the type of thinking that generates hypotheses in Parmenides: “Humans pursue the objects of eros through a combination of a lack, awareness of that lack, and a desire to remedy that lack. These same qualities lie behind hypothetical reasoning.”
161 According to Nails 2002, 137 “there is a current and widespread assumption that Diotima is the one named character Plato certainly invented.”
the ways of love is “a man of the spirit (δαιμόνιος ἀνήρ),” while other forms of wisdom make a man “merely a mechanic” (βάναυσος) (203a4-6).

Concerning the birth of Love, Diotima contends that Love was conceived on the day that Aphrodite, i.e., the goddess of beauty, was born, and so he is “by nature a lover of beauty” (203c4-5). Moreover, he is a product of his parents’ qualities, so he is always deprived like his mother Penia, and always resourceful like his father Poros. Thus Love is neither completely impoverished nor is he wealthy. Likewise, he is neither ignorant nor wise, but a “lover of wisdom,” always scheming “after the beautiful and the good (τοῖς καλοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς)” (203d5-7).

Diotima argues that Socrates’ misguided notions about Love stem from his belief that “Love was being loved, rather than being a lover” (204c4). Socrates had confused Love with the object of its desire, e.g., beauty and goodness, and by mistaking the subject and object Socrates was unable to grasp the significance of the active form of loving. And the purpose of loving, as Diotima argues, is the possession of goodness and beauty in order to be “happy” (εὐδαιμόν) (205a1). Thus the poetic, creative impulse is an instantiation of love, and “every desire for good things or for happiness is ‘the supreme and treacherous love’ in everyone” (205d2-4). Ultimately “love is wanting to possess the good forever (ὁ ἔρως τοῦ ἀγαθὸν αὐτῷ εἶναι ἀεί),” and lovers seek to obtain this immortal prize by “giving birth in beauty (τόκος ἐν καλῷ)” (206a11-b7).

Diotima claims that everyone is “pregnant” in both body and soul, and that love does not merely desire beauty, but ultimately seeks “reproduction and birth in beauty” in order to participate in the mortal version of immortality: procreation (206c2 and 206e5). Bodily

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162 Gordon 2010, 276 compares the training exercise of Parmenides with the nature of eros: “Hypothetical reasoning, like eros, entails discontented recognition of one’s ignorance and a desire to fill a need. Hypothetical reasoning is thus one discursive mode of the erotic individual.”
pregnancy generates a new kind to replace the old, whether it is a child, or different aspects of bodily renewal and degeneration. Likewise, pregnancy of the soul reflects the same phenomenon as thoughts, sentiments, and wishes are always in flux by virtue of coming to be and passing away. What’s “stranger” (ἀτοπώτερον) than all this, according to Diotima, is “that we are never the same [emphasis mine] even in respect of our knowledge” because knowing shares in the constant flux that characterizes mortal life (207e5-208a2). Consequently, “studying” (μελετᾶν) preserves knowledge through memory “so that it seems to be the same,” and in this manner humans approximate the eternal nature of the divine (208a4-7).

While those that are pregnant in body give birth to children and attain some measure of “immortality and remembrance and happiness,” those that are pregnant in soul give birth to “wisdom and the rest of virtue” (208e5-209a4). If a young man pregnant in soul has the “luck” to find another soul that is “beautiful and noble and well-formed,” he will “instantly teem with ideas and arguments about virtue” (209b6-c2). Conversation with another virtuous soul engenders new and excellent ideas that are “more beautiful and more immortal” than any mortal offspring, and these parents maintain “a firmer bond of friendship (φιλίαν βεβαιοτέραν)” than their bodily counterparts (209c8-d1).

Diotima concludes her account of the true nature of love by revealing “the final and highest mystery” (210a3). According to Diotima, when the “leader leads aright” (ὁρθῶς ἡγηται ὁ ἡγοϋμένος) the lover desires one body and gives birth to beautiful ideas, that lead him to

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163 According to Liddell and Scott 1993, 432 the Greek word μελετᾶν translated here as “studying” could also be translated as practicing, exercising, and training.
164 In his Seventh Letter, Plato describes the proposed education he wished to impart to Dionysius as an activity characterized by the “constant pursuit of virtue and wisdom” (345b5-6).
165 In language reminiscent of First Alcibiades 134b-135e, Diotima says that “moderation and justice” is the “greatest and most beautiful part of wisdom” because these virtues deal with household management and statesmanship (209a6-b1).
acknowledge the beauty of all bodies (210a7). He then realizes that beautiful souls possess even more beauty than bodies, and that the beauty of these souls is due to the laws and customs of the city. His gaze will then be drawn to many kinds of knowledge that make the customs and laws beautiful. Recognizing the “beauty of knowledge” itself, he is inspired to give birth to “many gloriously beautiful ideas and theories, in unstinting love of wisdom” (210d1-6). In linking the Symposium with Parmenides, Gordon 2010 278 maintains, “Diotima thus conveys a lesson consistent with Parmenides’ instruction, that what we do for love is not easy, yet with the proper zeal and effort, we can take on those tasks.”

At this point Diotima instructs Socrates to listen closely as she is about to reveal the purpose to those who have been guided thus far in “matters of love” (τὰ ἐρωτικά) (210e4).166 The true lover, who “in the right order and correctly,” has grasped beautiful things will “all of a sudden” (ἐξαίφνης) catch a glimpse of something “wonderfully beautiful in its nature (θαυμαστὸν τὴν φύσιν καλόν)”: Beauty itself (210e6-211a1).167 Unlike beautiful things, Beauty itself always is, and in phrasing reminiscent of the training exercise of Parmenides, Diotima claims Beauty itself “neither comes to be nor passes away, neither waxes nor wanes” (211a2-3).168 Beauty itself is “always one in form” and unconditionally beautiful, and “not anywhere” as it is remains “itself by itself with itself” (αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό) (211b1-3). Thus the student of love begins with beautiful things, and “using them like rising stairs,” ascends to Beauty itself and

166 In relating the hypotheses of Parmenides with “the final and highest mystery” of love, Gordon 2010, 277 argues that “Diotima’s own account of erotic fulfillment is itself a hypothesis. Her description of the person who might succeed in grasping the idealized objects of eros is expressed in conditional or hypothetical terms, relying on the optative mood and several ‘if’ clauses.” See especially Symposium 211d1-212b1.

167 Allen 1991, 82, links the sudden revelation of Beauty itself with ancient Greek religious practices: “Beauty itself… is revealed to the lover ‘suddenly,’ ‘in an instant,’ in an act of intellectual intuition, as the sacred objects of the mystery religions were suddenly revealed to the eyes of the worshippers in a blaze of light.”

168 In fact, the conceptual framework and language that Diotima employs to describe Beauty itself in Symposium 211a2-b5 mirrors the training exercise of Parmenides. Miller 1986, 194 affirms that “there is a distinctly Parmenidean cast to Diotima’s account of the Beautiful.”

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finally “he comes to know just what it is to be beautiful (γνώσις αὐτὸ τελευταίον ὁ ἔστι καλόν)” (211c4-8). Thus Diotima’s account of love and the Beautiful ends with the revelation that the student of love becomes virtually the same as the object of his desire, Beauty itself. “If any human being could become immortal,” Diotima concludes, then it would be him “who has given birth to true virtue and nourished it (τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετὴν ἀληθὴ καὶ θεραπεύμενῳ ὑπάρχει)” (212a8-212b1).

Socrates closes his speech by saying that “human nature can find no better workmate for acquiring this [i.e., true virtue and immortality] than Love” (212b3-4). And this is why he honors and praises “the rites of love” (τὰ ἐρωτικά) with “special diligence” (διαφερόντως ἀσκῶ) and commends the “power and courage” (τὴν δύναμιν καὶ ἀνδρείαν) of love as best he can (212b6-7).

Alcibiades

As the assembled guests cheered loudly for Socrates, “all of a sudden” (ἐξαίφνης) a drunken Alcibiades arrived in the courtyard (212c6-7). He was shouting and “demanded to see Agathon at once” (212d4-5). Alcibiades had come to lay a wreath atop Agathon’s head, praising him for being the “cleverest and best looking man in town” (212e9-213a1). As Alcibiades

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169 Rosen 1999, xx maintains that “the vision of the beautiful itself seems to have as a direct consequence, not speeches, but true instances of virtue, or what one may fairly call a beautiful soul.”

170 Plato employs analogous language in his Seventh Letter: “…after long-continued intercourse between teacher and pupil in joint pursuit of the subject, suddenly (ἐξαίφνης), like light flashing forth when a fire is kindled, it is born in the soul and straightaway nourishes (τρέφει) itself” (341c8-d1). In a similar vein, Miller 2011, 110 argues that the soul desires “acquaintance with rational order. Its ultimate goal is a purifying assimilation in this life as well as the next. This order is none other than the Good, so that such purification cannot leave the soul’s practical life unchanged.”

171 Gordon 2010, 285 claims that “Erotically speaking, we can (and do) desire what we do not (and cannot) know. Both Symposium and Parmenides present evidence of human desire for objects beyond our experience or understanding. Whatever our human limitations are, the dialogues indicate that eros urges us beyond them.” What’s more, Gordon insists that the emphasis upon training in Parmenides is consistent with erotic nature of humankind: “This is why training is needed, and rigorous training at that. The erotic condition demands it. We must endeavor to capture what lies beyond our limitations because our desires lead us there. But following those desires is difficult and lifelong, and success or fulfillment is uncertain” (285).
proceeded to sit down, Agathon graciously affirmed that the “three” (τρίτων) of them could recline together on the couch; prompting Alcibiades to ask, “who’s the third (τρίτος)?” (213b5-7).

Unbeknownst to Alcibiades, Socrates was sitting with Agathon. A surprised Alcibiades angrily claimed that Socrates routinely did this to him: “all of a sudden (ἐξαίφνης) you’ll turn up out of nowhere where I least expect you!” (213c2-3) Exasperated by his presence, Alcibiades claims that Socrates always manages to sit next to “the most handsome (τῷ καλλίστῳ) man in the room!” (213c6).

Soon Eryximachus informs Alcibiades of the evening’s encomia of ἔρως, but the intoxicated Alcibiades thought it unfair to compete with the clear-headed speeches of the others. Thus Eryximachus suggests that Alcibiades present a speech in praise of Socrates, and he consents.172 Like Socrates before him, Alcibiades claims that he shall “only tell the truth” (214e8). He urges the others to stop and correct him if he says “anything that’s not true” (214e12).173 Because of his condition, Alcibiades admits that it will be difficult to offer a “smooth and orderly” analysis of Socrates’s “bizarreness” (ἀτοπίαν) (215a4). Nevertheless, following the paradigm established by Agathon and reproduced by Socrates, Alcibiades describes first the nature of Socrates and then his effects.

According to Alcibiades, Socrates is like a Silenus doll because his coarse exterior features hide an inner beauty, just as the interior of a Silenus doll is “full of tiny statues of the

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172 In Plato’s Laws, the Athenian claims that he has investigated symposia extensively, and that “most of them were mismanaged.” He further states: “I have never seen or heard of one that was properly conducted throughout” (639e1-4).
173 No one interrupts or corrects Alcibiades during his speech.
gods” (ἅγαλματα) (215b4-5). His arguments enrapture his listeners and cause them to be “transported, completely possessed” (215d4). Although he seems to be infatuated by the beauty of boys, Alcibiades claims that Socrates’s entire life is just “a game of irony” and that he despises things like wealth, fame, and physical beauty that most people believe are of the utmost importance (216e4). Once when Socrates dropped the veil of irony and became “really serious (σπουδάσαντος),” Alcibiades caught “a glimpse of the figures he keeps hidden within” (216e5-217a1). These figures, according to Alcibiades, “were so godlike – so bright and beautiful, so utterly amazing” (217a1-2). Consequently, he too became entranced by Socrates’ charms, and was compelled to follow him.

Alcibiades proceeds to describe his failed attempts at consummating his relationship with Socrates through sexual intercourse, and the wonder of having shared in the “madness, the Bacchic frenzy of philosophy” (218b3). He also gives an account of Socrates’ heroic exploits in battle, and declares that he is utterly “unique” (θαύματος), and “so bizarre” (τὴν ἄτοπιαν) and that he must be compared to unworldly beings like “Silenus and the satyrs” (221c4-d6).

Although Socrates employs the same common examples and constantly rehashes the same well-worn arguments, his ideas are “truly worthy of a god, bursting with figures of virtue inside,” and are of supreme significance for anyone who desires “to become a truly good man” (222a3-6).

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174 Silenus is the tutor of Dionysus, just as Socrates acted as a tutor to Alcibiades. Furthermore, earlier in the dialogue Agathon stated that “Dionysus will soon enough be the judge of our claims to wisdom!” (176a1). Thus it seems that Agathon foreshadowed Alcibiades’s entrance as Dionysus, the god of wine and drunkenness. Finally, Dionysus is also recognized as the god of epiphanies, so the three instances of ἐξαιρήσεις that accompany Alcibiades’s appearance suggest that something akin to the aforementioned appearances of ἐξαιρήσεις in the Seventh Letter and Republic is operative here. In other words, one might expect to experience a sudden leap of understanding in this section.

175 “This picture is not an image of pregnancy, with Socrates giving birth to the little figures within himself,” argues Edmonds III 2000, 275 “but rather an image of beauty hidden beneath the ugly, ridiculous exterior.”
Alcibiades concludes his tribute to Socrates with a warning to Agathon: “he presents himself as your lover, and, before you know it, you’re in love with him yourself!” (222b4-5).

**Closing Moments**

Alcibiades’s speech incited “a lot of laughter” as it was clear to the guests that he was still very much infatuated with Socrates (222c2). Straight away Socrates chided Alcibiades for trying to “make trouble” between himself and Agathon (222d1). “Agathon, my dear friend,” implored Socrates, “don’t let him [Alcibiades] get away with it: let no one come between us!” (222d4-5). For his part, Agathon agreed with Socrates, noticing that upon his entrance Alcibiades “literally came between us here on the couch” (222e1-2). Nevertheless, Agathon assures Socrates that he is “coming right over to lie down next to you” (222e3-4). While Agathon moved closer to Socrates, “all of a sudden” (ἐξαίφνης) an intoxicated crowd entered the house and “everyone was made to start drinking again in no particular order” (223b6).

According to Apollodorus, Aristodemus fell asleep soon after Phaedrus, Eryximachus and some others had left for the night. He awoke right before dawn and saw Agathon, Aristophanes, and Socrates taking turns drinking wine from a large cup that they passed to each other “from left to right” (223d2). Although he couldn’t recount the exact nature of their conversation, Aristodemus said that Socrates was trying to demonstrate that a talented author

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176 The role reversal with respect to the lover-beloved paradigm that Alcibiades laments here is found throughout the *Symposium*. Edmonds III 2000, details its pervasiveness. See especially pp. 277-281. Furthermore, Edmonds III 2000, 270 argues “The role reversals that Socrates manipulates in his relations with Alcibiades, Agathon, and the rest all have the effect of making him not only the model of Eros the lover, barefoot, scheming, and homeless, but also of the beloved, the beautiful one in contact with whom these young men might bring forth the progeny of their souls. Socrates thus plays both roles in the relations with the young men whom he so confuses by reversing the expected roles of ἐραστής and ἐρώμενος.”

177 Rosen 1999, 325 notes “the phrase ‘left to right’ suggests that Aristophanes is now between Agathon and Socrates.” In keeping with the substance of Aristophanes’s speech, this arrangement implies that Agathon and Socrates are the two halves constituting a singular whole. The nature of this reunion is explored further below.
should be skilled in both tragic and comic plays.\textsuperscript{178} Just as Socrates was about to wrap up his argument, Aristophanes and Agathon fell asleep. After helping them to bed, Socrates made his way to the Lyceum, “washed up,” and spent the day as he normally did; only going home to rest as evening approached.

**The General Structure of Symposium**

The seven speeches that constitute the *Symposium* exhibit a pattern that mirrors the training exercise of *Parmenides*. For example, just as the third hypothesis of *Parmenides* links the properly paired hypotheses, the third speech of *Symposium*, i.e., Eryximachus’s speech, binds the appropriately corresponding speeches. The general blueprint for the speech-portion of the dialogue is revealed in the first three accounts. Phaedrus offers what Pausanias brands as a “simple” speech, while he himself introduces a “complex” notion of love (180c6 and 183d5). Eryximachus then follows with a speech extolling the science of medicine, and the necessity of knowing “the two species of Love” (1867). Thus, Eryximachus’s speech, the dialogue’s third, unites the first two accounts of love, just as he credits Asclepius for founding the profession of medicine “when he learned how to produce concord and love between… opposites” (186e2-3). By coalescing and further elaborating on the ideas put forth by Phaedrus and Pausanias, Eryximachus’s speech becomes the decisive factor for interpreting the remainder of the dialogue. In other words, the conceptual framework that Eryximachus’s speech establishes – reconciliation and harmony of opposites – is the same as the third hypothesis of *Parmenides*. Just as “the instant” (τὸ ἔξαίφνης) of the third hypothesis links the properly paired remaining hypotheses, so

\textsuperscript{178} As a reader of this dissertation, Patrick Lee Miller, relayed to me, “Plato alone in antiquity fulfills Socrates’ criterion of the true poet who writes both comedy and tragedy.” This confluence of comedy and tragedy also resonates with “the myth of Er,” insofar as Er reported that the selection of lives by the soul was at times “pitiful, funny, and surprising to watch” (620a1). With respect to this passage from *Republic* x, Polansky 2012, 372 notes: “this indicates that the spectacle is tragic, comic, and philosophical.” Both the climactic “myth of Er” from *Republic* x and the closing moments of *Symposium* feature appearances of ἔξαίφνης.
Aristophanes breaks from the preceding speeches by virtue of taking a “different approach” than the others (189c2-3). His “different approach” amounts to the introduction of the suprarational, first evidenced by his “wonder” that the “orderly sort of Love” called for a decidedly disorderly cure for his hiccups: the sneeze treatment (189a4-5). That Aristophanes speaks fourth instead of third as the seating arrangement demands, is further evidence of the disorder that he introduces. What’s more, the comic poet delivers a speech that concludes with him saying “don’t make a comedy of it”; thus offering more evidence that his speech, at least the substance of it, is rather unexpected, or out of order (193d8). The tragic poet Agathon speaks next, and he concludes by admitting that his fanciful and flowery discourse was partly “in fun” (197e6). He also offers a touch of the suprarational when he is “suddenly struck by a need to say something in poetic meter” (197c5-6). The speeches of Aristophanes and Agathon are naturally linked by their profession as poets, and further linked at the end of the dialogue by Socrates, who according to Aristodemus, claimed persuasively that “the skillful tragic dramatist should also be a comic poet” (223d6-7).

The speeches of Socrates and Alcibiades are related by virtue of their insistence that they will tell the truth. Following Agathon’s speech, Socrates disdainfully notes that one “should tell the truth” when delivering a speech and that the speaker ought to “select the most beautiful truths and arrange them most suitably” (198d4-7). What’s more, he announces that he will “tell the truth” in his own way, and declares that the others will “hear the truth about Love” (199b2-5).

Furthermore, Eryximachus introduces order to the banquet insofar as he: (1) recommends, by way of Phaedrus, the topic of the speeches, (2) advises against over-drinking, and (3) tries to re-establish order after Alcibiades’s raucous entrance. Reeve 2006, 142 refers to the “order… established by Eryximachus in his role as master of ceremonies.”

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Likewise, the drunken Alcibiades insists that he will “only tell the truth” about Socrates (214e8). In fact, he encourages the others to make sure he is truthful: “If I say anything that’s not true, you can just interrupt, if you want, and correct me; at worst, there’ll be mistakes in my speech, not lies” (214e12-215a1). Furthermore, in the midst of his encomium to Socrates he maintains that he will “tell the whole truth” and he concludes his speech with everyone laughing at his “frankness” (217b2 and 222c2).

In brief, the first two speeches delivered by Phaedrus and Pausanias present a simple and complex account of love, while the third speech, given by Eryximachus, demonstrates the necessity of both. Consequently, the third speech combines the first two and argues for the cosmic significance of the concord of opposites.\(^\text{180}\) Aristophanes and Agathon present tragic and comic accounts of love respectively, while Socrates argues at the conclusion of Symposium that “the skillful tragic dramatist should also be a comic poet” (223d6-7). It appears that these two speeches must be combined as well, and ostensibly this is why the comic poet Aristophanes delivers a tragic speech while the tragic poet Agathon delivers a comic speech. Finally, Socrates and Alcibiades’ speeches are linked by their repeated avowals that they will tell the truth.

Moreover, Socrates and Alcibiades are also related by the appearance of ἐξαιρησις in both speeches. Yet, it is not simply the mere appearance of ἐξαιρησις that connects these concluding speeches. In order to demonstrate the profound connection obtaining between the speeches of Socrates and Alcibiades, an analysis of all four appearances of the term is required.

\(^{180}\) The third hypothesis of Parmenides, i.e., “the instant,” facilitates a harmony of opposites among the ideas by virtue of combination. What’s more, there is an interesting passage in the Laws where the Athenian ranks the virtues and claims that the “third” (τρίτον) is the result of a combining: “Wisdom, in turn, is first and leader among the divine goods. Second after intelligence comes a moderate disposition of the soul, and from these two mixed with courage comes justice, in third (τρίτον) place. Courage is fourth” (631c5-631d2).
Conclusion

The first appearance of ἐξαίφνης in Symposium emerges right before Diotima reveals the goal of all Loving. She insists that Socrates “pay attention” (τὸν νοῦν προσέχειν) as she proceeds to disclose how “all of a sudden” (ἐξαίφνης) the properly guided lover will “catch sight” (κατόψεται) of something “wonderfully beautiful” (θαυμαστὸν... καλὸν) (210e3-7). Gordon 2010, 281 connects this appearance of ἐξαίφνης in Symposium with the third hypothesis of Parmenides:

In the Symposium, the lover, who is temporal, in motion and becoming, communes in the ‘instant’ with Beauty itself, a form of being that is atemporal and at rest. In both dialogues, Plato uses exaiphnes to imagine the joining of the absolute unlike, and in both dialogues, eros provides the energy for attraction between them.

Diotima’s “sudden” revelation of Beauty itself also evokes the cave-allegory and the unchained prisoner who is “suddenly” (ἐξαίφνης) forced to rise and turn his head and “look up toward the light” (Republic 515c6-7). What’s more, in the climactic account of philosophical education from the Seventh Letter, Plato describes how a student “suddenly” (ἐξαίφνης) reaches the illumination experience that sustains his education because “like light flashing forth when a fire is kindled, it is born in the soul and straightaway nourishes (τρέφει) itself” (Seventh Letter 341c8-d1). Furthermore, just as Plato speaks of a conversion experience that “nourishes (τρέφει) itself,” Diotima describes one who has “given birth to true virtue and nourished (θρεψαμένῳ) it” as being in touch with true Beauty (212a8).

The second appearance of ἐξαίφνης heralds Alcibiades’s rowdy entrance. “All of a sudden” (ἐξαίφνης) Alcibiades and his drunken friends arrive and he “demanded (κελεύοντος) to see Agathon (Ἀγάθωνα) at once” (212c6-7 and 212d5). Alcibiades’ “sudden” arrival coupled

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181 Miller 2011, 99 contends that “when a philosopher knows a Form... he must somehow become identified with it.”
with his strident insistence that he see Agathon suggests a disorderly version of Diotima’s account of the “final and highest mystery” of the rites of love (210a3). In other words, Alcibiades demands to see Agathon, whose name means “good”; and goodness is identified, or at the very least closely related, with beauty throughout Socrates’s speech. What’s more, Alcibiades claims that Agathon is “the most handsome (τῷ καλλίστῳ) man in the room” (213c6). Thus Alcibiades is demanding to see Beauty itself (i.e., the Good), but in a frenzied, chaotic manner that belies Diotima’s instruction with respect to Beauty itself being seen by “the man… who has beheld beautiful things in the right order and correctly” (210e4-5). Alcibiades’ reckless approach is in direct contrast to Diotima’s methodical ascent to Beauty itself.

Gordon 2010, 280 relates these first two appearances of ἐξαίφνης in explaining the connection between an illuminating insight and the sudden nature of sexual enchantment:

By linking the sudden flash of the erotic enlightenment of the lover in noetic consummation with the momentous arrival of Socrates’ beloved, the Symposium indicates the manner in which eros takes hold of us is exaiphnes – all of a sudden.

Gordon also links the Symposium and Parmenides vis-à-vis the shared appearances of ἐξαίφνης:

In eros we experience as closely as perhaps is humanly possible this ‘instant’, as Symposium indicates. When the embodied lover connects to Beauty itself, the lover is transported out of time while in time. In the ‘instant’ we embrace the strange (atopos) neither... nor.... The lover, like the metaphysician, relies on the instant, the sudden flash of noetic insight that cannot be captured within the categories of our experience (281).

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182 For example, Socrates argues at 201c7 that “good things are beautiful” (τὰ δὲ ἄγαθὰ καλὰ), and Diotima clarified her preliminary argument at 204e2-3 by directing Socrates to put “‘good’ in place of ‘beautiful’” (τοῦ καλοῦ τὸ ἄγαθο) in order that he could come to understand that the possession of good things results in happiness. Allen 1991, 88 affirms “Virtue - ἀρετή is the abstract noun of which ἄγαθος is the adjective – is goodness; and Beauty and Goodness are equivalent.” Gerson 2006, 63 connects the vision of Beauty itself with the Good of Republic vi: “Thus, the ultimate vision would seem to correspond to the top section of the top half of the divided line where cognition is of the Forms in the light of the first principle of all, the Idea of the good.”
Gordon’s analysis, however, is limited to first two appearances of ἐξαιφνης in Symposium, and she does not explain why the term surfaces twice more.183 Thus, while Gordon’s understanding of how the term is employed corresponds well with the “sudden” insights of Seventh Letter and Republic, the Symposium offers a more complex rendering of ἐξαιφνης.184

The third appearance of ἐξαιφνης accompanies Alcibiades’s startled response upon learning that Socrates was present at the banquet. Following his inquiry with respect to the “third” (τρίτος) person on the couch, he exclaims: “All of a sudden (ἐξαιφνης) you’ll [i.e., Socrates] turn up out of nowhere where I least expect you!” (213c2-3). Socrates’s “sudden” emergence again evokes Diotima’s account of the highest mystery of Love and the attendant vision of the Beautiful. Moreover, Alcibiades’s speech in praise of Socrates employs language that is reminiscent of Diotima’s description of Beauty itself. In other words, Alcibiades’s depiction of Socrates is an account of a virtual vision of the Beautiful, with Socrates, and not Agathon, emerging as Beauty itself.

For example, Diotima speaks of “catching sight” (κατόψεταί) of something “wonderfully beautiful” (θαυμαστὸν... καλὸν), while Alcibiades tells of catching a “glimpse” (ἐώρακεν) of Socrates’s godlike virtues and describes them as exceedingly “beautiful, so utterly amazing (πάγκαλα καὶ θαυμαστά)” (210e3-7 and 216e6-217a2). What’s more, Alcibiades claims with respect to Socrates that, “You can’t imagine how little he cares whether a person is beautiful, or rich, or famous in any other way that most people admire” (216d9-e2). Likewise, Diotima claimed that upon seeing Beauty itself, “it won’t occur to you to measure beauty by gold or clothing or beautiful boys and youths” (211d4-5). Diotima also contends that he who is in touch

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183 To be fair, Gordon’s article is concerned primarily with the erotic underpinnings of Parmenides, and not a comprehensive analysis of ἐξαιφνης in Symposium.
184 Gordon does not mention any other appearance of ἐξαιφνης outside of Parmenides and Symposium.
with Beauty itself is worthy of the love of the gods and “has given birth to true virtue and nourished it,” just as Alcibiades describes Socrates’s arguments as “truly worthy of a god, bursting with figures of virtue (ἀγάλματ’ ἀρετής) inside” (212a8 and 222a3-4).

Perhaps the most convincing support that Socrates is a proxy for Beauty itself is found in Alcibiades’s account of his various attempts to seduce Socrates.¹⁸⁵ For instance, he prefaces his remarks by instructing those gathered to “pay attention” (προσέχετε τὸν νοῦν), just as Diotima had called for Socrates to “pay attention” (τὸν νοῦν προσέχειν) before disclosing the vision of Beauty itself (217b3 and 210e3). What’s more, after Alcibiades candidly offers both his body and possessions to his only “worthy lover,” Socrates responds:

Dear Alcibiades, if you are right in what you say about me, you are already more accomplished than you think. If I really have in me the power to make you a better man, then you can see in me a beauty that is really beyond description (ἀμήχανόν τοι κάλλος) and makes your own remarkable good looks pale in comparison. But, then, is this a fair exchange that you propose? You seem to me to want more than your proper share: you offer me the merest appearance of beauty, and in return you want the thing itself (ἀλήθειαν καλῶν), ‘gold in exchange for bronze’ (218e1-219a1).

By dismissing Alcibiades’s advances with a rather blunt assessment vis-à-vis his own true beauty (ἀλήθειαν καλῶν), and Alcibiades’s merely apparent beauty, Socrates reveals himself as the stand-in for Beauty itself. His words are reminiscent of Diotima’s when she speaks of the student of love giving birth “not to images of virtue,” but generating “true virtue, because he is in touch with true Beauty” (ἀλλὰ ἀλήθη, ἀντε τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἐφαπτομένῳ) (212a7). In a similar vein, Alcibiades confirms that Socrates’s arguments, “bursting with figures of virtues inside,” are invaluable for anyone desiring to be a “truly good man (τῷ... καλῷ καγαθῷ) (22a4-6).¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Much to his own chagrin, Alcibiades tells of the role-reversal that characterizes his efforts: “So what I did was to invite him for dinner, as if I were his lover and he my young prey!” (217c7-218a1).
¹⁸⁶ Likewise, Edmonds III, 266 argues: “In the Symposium, Plato depicts his teacher not as the progenitor and begetter of ideas upon beautiful youths but as Socrates the Beautiful, the beloved who assists as a midwife at the labor of the fertile young men, helping them bring their spiritual progeny to light.”
The final appearance of ἔξαιφνης in Symposium occurs when Agathon returns to his former place alongside Socrates. Alcibiades’s unexpected visit had displaced Agathon from his seat next to Socrates, and at the conclusion of his speech Socrates exclaims that Alcibiades’s intent was “to make trouble between Agathon and me!” (222d1-2). Agathon concurs: “I’m beginning to think you’re right; isn’t it proof of that that he literally came between us here on the couch? Why would he do this if he weren’t set on separating us? But he won’t get away with it; I’m coming right over to lie down next to you” (222e1-4). In other words, Alcibiades had separated the Good (i.e., Agathon) from the Beautiful (i.e., Socrates). While Agathon returned to his original position alongside Socrates, “all of a sudden” (ἔξαιφνης) another crowd of drunken revelers crashed the party and everyone resumed drinking “in no particular order” (οὐκέτι ἐν κόσμῳ) (223b3-6).

The fourth appearance of ἔξαιφνης signals the reunification of goodness and beauty, i.e., Agathon and Socrates. Furthermore, it reveals that Alcibiades’s fatal flaw is his propensity to separate beauty from goodness. Although celebrated for his legendary physical beauty, Alcibiades admits that Socrates makes him feel “deeply ashamed” for his ethical failings and his “desire to please the crowd” (216b7-c2). In contrast to Alcibiades’s external beauty and internal ugliness, Socrates looks like a “statue of Silenus” but inside he is “full of tiny statues of the gods” that are “so bright and beautiful, so utterly amazing” (215b1-2 and217a1-2).

Consequently, Alcibiades’s inability to cultivate virtue, or develop a beautiful soul, costs him Agathon, i.e. the good, who abandons him to reunite with Socrates, i.e. the beautiful.

187 In Plato’s Alcibiades, Socrates tells Alcibiades: “And that is my greatest fear, that a love of the common people might corrupt you” (132a2-3). Landy 2007, 68 describes Alcibiades’s predicament: “While his reason informs him of his duty, the irrational parts of his soul (drives toward sex on the one hand, glory on the other) sing a different, and louder, song.”
Alcibiades’s speech illustrates how much he differs from Socrates, and in doing so, it discloses both the true and false ways of pursuing goodness and beauty. Similarly, Plato writes in his *Seventh Letter* that virtue and vice “must be learned together, just as the truth and error about any part of being must be learned together” (*Seventh Letter* 344b1-3). Consequently, the three appearances of ἐξαιρήσεις that accompany Alcibiades’s arrival, discovery of Socrates, and departure, represent an earthy complement to Diotima’s divine account of the “sudden” vision of the Beautiful. In other words, Alcibiades exemplifies the converse of Diotima’s insistence that the lover ascend to Beauty itself “in the right order and correctly.” For example, his “sudden” entrance is marked by his drunken demand to see Agathon immediately. He then proceeds to sit between and thus separate Agathon (i.e., the Good) from Socrates (i.e., the Beautiful), who he shrilly proclaims is constantly appearing out of nowhere “all of a sudden.” Finally, his “sudden” departure is concurrent with Agathon’s return to his rightful place alongside Socrates, or the bringing back together of goodness and beauty.188 Thus, Alcibiades’ behavior stands in stark contrast to Diotima’s account of an orderly ascent.

Nevertheless, Alcibiades’s speech also reveals how Socrates personifies the virtues needed to transform one’s soul into something truly beautiful. When Agathon moves closer to Socrates at the end of the *Symposium*, it demonstrates how the cultivation of a beautiful soul brings forth the good. Furthermore, Socrates undermines the lover-beloved paradigm by virtue of his penchant for assuming both roles, or as Alcibiades laments, he “presents himself as your

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188 Reeve 2006, 145 interprets the four appearances of ἐξαιρήσεις as heralding prospective ends of love. “What suddenly turns up in each case is a candidate object of love: the beautiful itself for the philosopher’s love; Alcibiades for Socrates’; Socrates for Alcibiades’. As for the crowd (pampollos) of revelers, they are the object that successfully competes with Socrates for Alcibiades’ love, since it is to ‘the honors of the crowd (ton pollon)’ that Alcibiades caves in when not by Socrates’ side.”
lover, and, before you know it, you’re in love with him yourself!” (222b4-5). In contrast to typical ancient Greek pederasty, the philosophical version of ἔρως is characterized by a more balanced, egalitarian approach insofar as its participants may play both roles. Likewise Edmonds III 2000, 283 argues “But just as Eros in Diotima’s myth fluctuates between mortal and immortal, living and dead, empty and full, needy and satisfied (or is paradoxically both at once), so the philosophic lovers must be both ἐραστής and ἐρώμενος, lover and beloved.” While “the instant” (τὸ ἐξαίφνης) of the third hypothesis of Parmenides serves as the strange intersection between, e.g., motion and rest, while itself being neither in motion nor at rest, the philosophical ἔρως of Symposium facilitates the “sudden” harmony of opposites that continually transforms the cunning lover into the beautiful beloved and back again.

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189 For further examples of Socrates changing from lover to beloved, see Alcibiades 135d7-10, and Charmides 176d1-4.
Chapter VII – Ἐξαίφνης in Plato’s Dialogues and Beyond

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, Plato’s use of ἐξαίφνης is fairly consistent insofar as its appearance signifies (1) the interiorization of an idea, following a prolonged training period, and (2) a revelatory moment in the dialogues that introduce the ideas. The tacit basis for the numerous appearances of ἐξαίφνης is Plato’s only sustained account of the term as “the instant” (τὸ ἐξαίφνης) from the third hypothesis of Parmenides.190 The third hypothesis disclosed that the ideas are interrelated and participate with one another in order to be both what they are and what they are not. The instant facilitates this both... and... dynamic through a timeless neither... nor... disruption of temporal continuity. Thus the instant functions as the locus of participation.

Up until now, however, the analysis has been limited to the most conspicuous appearances of ἐξαίφνης in Parmenides, Seventh Letter, Republic, and Symposium, and thus the comparatively minor role that ἐξαίφνης plays in other dialogues has been neglected. In addition to functioning as a marker for a revelatory moment, or the internalization of an idea, ἐξαίφνης also appears to signify (3) the emergence of a suprarational event. Consequently, the following chapter examines ἐξαίφνης in Cratylus, Theaetetus, Statesman, Gorgias, Theages, and Laws in order to complete a comprehensive review of the term in Plato’s dialogues. Furthermore, a brief survey of ἐξαίφνης in works following the dialogues will demonstrate that subsequent thinkers employed ἐξαίφνης in ways that bear a striking similarity to Plato’s treatment.

190 See Chapter III of this dissertation.
Ἐξαίφνης in Theages

The topic of Plato’s *Theages* is wisdom. And yet, despite its distinguished subject matter, the dialogue seems to attract very little contemporary scholarly attention. Presumably this is due to its disputed authenticity. Nevertheless, Pangle 1987, 147 maintains that “The authenticity of the *Theages*, as a work of Plato, was never questioned – as far as we know – in antiquity.” Although the ancients may have been convinced that the work was a genuine Platonic dialogue, modern scholars tend to doubt its standing because their reading of *Theages* often conflicts with their understanding of Plato’s philosophical project. Nevertheless, the dialogue’s dubious status among contemporary scholars might be mitigated, to some slight extent, if it is demonstrated that the appearance of ἐξαίφνης in *Theages* corresponds to Plato’s use of the term in other dialogues.

The dialogue depicts a meeting between a concerned gentleman-farmer named Demodocus and Socrates. His concern stems from his son’s ambition “to become wise” (σοφός γενέσθαι) (121d1). While in the city seeking a tutor for his son, Theages, Demodocus spots Socrates “at just the right moment” and asks him for advice (122a6). Socrates questions

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191 With respect to *Theages*, Cooper 1997, 628 concludes “The arguments against Plato being the author are circumstantial but convincing enough that there is virtual unanimity among modern scholars on the issue.” Friedlander 1977, 153 contends “Anybody who today tries to find – however tentatively – a place for this strange dialogue, the *Theages*, in the total body of Plato’s works must expect to be charged with being uncritical. But before one talks about a ‘private oracle’ with which Socrates seems to be endowed here in entirely un-Platonic fashion, one should recall what is found at the end of *Phaedrus* and at the beginning of the *Theaetetus.*” Pangle 1987, 147 argues “*Theages*, properly read, not only fits together with, but throws indispensible light on, the portrait of the Socratic way of life provided by the other Platonic dialogues (above all the *Gorgias, Theaetetus, Symposium, Republic, Laches, and Laws*).” Coincidentally, with the sole exception of the *Laches*, all the dialogues that Pangle identifies as relating to *Theages* feature appearances of ἐξαίφνης. Pangle, however, never mentions ἐξαίφνης in either his interpretation of the dialogue’s meaning or its relationship to other Platonic works.

192 “As Plato would have it,” explains Pangle 1987, 152 “Socrates appears to the old farmer-statesman as a trustworthy intermediary between the citizen-farmers and the not altogether reputable, but by no means simply corrupt, sophists.”
Theages and discovers that he equates becoming wise with the ability to rule. Furthermore, Theages has heard reports of Socrates’ conversations with other Athenians, and believes that he will make an excellent tutor. Socrates balks at instructing Theages, and claims “I know virtually nothing, except a certain small subject – love (τὸν ἐρωτικὸν), although on this subject, I’m thought to be amazing (δεινός), better than anyone else, past or present” (128b4-6). Nevertheless, Theages has heard stories of young men who made remarkable improvements after associating with Socrates, and insists that Socrates become his teacher.

The dialogue then takes a rather unusual turn as Socrates proceeds to give an account of his spiritual sign (δαιμόνιον); and the various anecdotes that he recounts in this concluding section of Theages are topped by an appearance of ἐξαίφνης that seems rather incidental. In short, he tells several stories of his guardian spirit’s preventative power and the often fatal consequences for those who failed to heed its commands. Sometimes his δαιμόνιον voices resistance to a potential associate, and at other times it does not thwart an association but the relationship bears no fruit. Nevertheless, those friendships that have both the silent blessing and support of the δαιμόνιον achieve “rapid progress” (παραχρῆμα ἐπιδιδόσιν) (130a1). Of those who make progress, some are graced with a “secure and permanent” (βέβαιον ἔχουσι καὶ παραμόνιμον) improvement, while others realize “wonderful progress” (θαυμάσιον ἐπιδιδόσιν) when they are with Socrates, but lose what they have achieved after they part ways with him (130a3-5). For example, Socrates reports that an associate of his named Aristides found himself

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193 Theages discloses that he would like “to become a tyrant, over all people if possible”; later he admits: “Or perhaps even become a god” (125e9-126a2). Nietzsche 1968, 503 paraphrases this passage in his Will to Power, “In Plato’s Theages it is written: ‘Each one of us would like to be master over all men, if possible, and best of all God.’ This attitude must exist again.” The name “Theages” means either “god revering” or “god envying.” See especially Pangle 1987, 153.

194 Socrates famously repeats this claim in Symposium 177d. See Chapter VI of this dissertation.

195 Theages is mentioned in Republic vi as someone who might otherwise be drawn away from philosophy if not for a “physical illness” that prevented him from engaging in politics (496b5-c1).
in a “ridiculous” (καταγελάστως) predicament after parting company with Socrates (130b10). Evidently Aristides was a skillful conversationalist when he was with Socrates, but upon withdrawing from their association he had become inept and thus avoided discussions altogether.

Aristides’ quandary prompted Socrates to ask, “Did you lose your ability all of a sudden (ἐξαίφνης) or little by little?” (130c7). Aristides answered that his capacity for argument did not diminish suddenly, but “little by little” (130c8). At first blush, the emergence of ἐξαίφνης in Socrates’ question seems rather inconsequential, and far from the demonstrably significant appearances of the term in e.g., Parmenides, Seventh Letter, Republic, and Symposium. Nevertheless, when evaluated with Socrates’ prior statements with respect to those whose improvement is “secure and permanent,” the correspondence with previous manifestations of the term begins to come into view.

The “secure and permanent” progress made by some of Socrates’ associates is reminiscent of Plato’s remarks from his Seventh Letter. Here Plato writes of the prolonged and comprehensive discussions between pupil and teacher that climaxes with a “sudden” (ἐξαίφνης) illumination experience (341c9). The culmination of this philosophical training is none other than a sudden enlightenment that “is born in the soul and straightaway nourishes itself” (341d1). In other words, a successful education facilitates a “secure and permanent” philosophical character.

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196 Aristides is the namesake of his famous grandfather, the Athenian general Aristides I. In Plato’s Theaetetus, Socrates claims that the younger Aristides is one of many associates who benefitted from his maieutic skill, but left him sooner than was right and “neglected the children I helped… bring forth, and lost them, because they set more value upon lies and phantoms than upon the truth” (150e3-151a6). Aristides is also referenced in the Laches as his father Lysimachus seeks “the sort of training that would make the best of men” for his son (179a-b).

197 Aristides is also mentioned in the midst of Socrates’ account of the underworld in Gorgias 526b1. This concluding passage of the Gorgias features an appearance of ἐξαίφνης that is examined below.
Apparently, Aristides did not experience the sudden insight that is crucial to becoming a philosopher, and this is evidenced by his own admission regarding both the incremental loss and incremental gain of his ability to converse and follow an argument. For example, he claims that he made progress even if he was in the same house with Socrates, but even more so if he was in the same room with him. What’s more, he made even more improvement when he gazed upon Socrates as he spoke, and made the “greatest progress” when he “touched” him (130d2-130e3). Thus by Aristides’ own account, his association with Socrates was marked by steady progress, just as he characterizes the contrasting loss of his abilities as happening “little by little”. Absent the sudden illumination experience, his relationship with Socrates is exemplified by varying degrees of progress and regress.

As a result of this and other experiences, Socrates suggests that Theages find a teacher “who has control over the way he benefits people,” as opposed to the inscrutable δαιμόνιον that determines who profits from associating with Socrates (130e7). For his part, Theages proposes that they test the δαιμόνιον by cultivating a friendship. If Socrates’ spiritual sign indicates that the association must end, then Theages intends to conciliate it with “prayers and sacrifices” (131a5). Socrates reluctantly agrees, and as the dual nature of his name suggests, Theages began the conversation envying the gods, but ends revering them.

198 “Nowhere in Plato do we find this education through love, education through immediate presence, expressed more powerfully than in this passage,” maintains Friedlander 1977, 152.

199 In language reminiscent of the Theages, Socrates speaks of the hit-or-miss nature of his maieutic art in Theaetetus as benefitting “all whom God permits” (Theaetetus 150d5). Likewise, Aristides admits that “he never learned anything from [Socrates],” just as Socrates claims in Theaetetus that remarkable progress “is not due to anything they have learned from me” (Theages 130d3, and Theaetetus 150d7). Evidently this progress is manifested when “they discover within themselves a multitude of beautiful things, which they bring forth into the light” (Theaetetus 150d8-9).

200 Again, the name “Theages” may mean either “god revering” or “god envying.” See especially Pangle 1987, 153. And perhaps Theages has made some progress, as his evolution evokes Proverbs 1:7 “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”
Ἑξαίφνης in Theaetetus

The subject matter of Theaetetus is knowledge. Although the Theaetetus seems to end without a decisive understanding of what constitutes knowledge, the appearance of Ἑξαίφνης at 162c3 and 203e1 and Socrates’ overt reference to his conversation with Parmenides at 183e-184a suggests that Theaetetus and Parmenides are intimately related.201

Ἑξαίφνης first emerges in the aftermath of Theaetetus’ identification of knowledge with perception. Socrates traces Theaetetus’ view to Homer, Heraclitus, and Protagoras; in short, to those who claim that “all things flow like streams” and thus what a percipient knows at a given moment is indeed true for that percipient (160d7-8). Now that Theaetetus’ offspring has been brought to light by virtue of Socrates’ midwifery, it must be examined to determine its soundness.202

Socrates targets the opening line of Protagoras’ Truth, and its contention that “Man is the measure of all things.” In brief, Protagoras argues that because an individual’s perception is true for him, no man “can claim authority to examine another man’s judgment and see if it be right or wrong” (161d5-6). Thus Socrates claims that Protagoras could have just as easily claimed that “Pig” or “Baboon” is the measure of all things, because their perceptions must be true for themselves too (161c5). So as they were admiring Protagoras’ wisdom “as though he were a god, he was in reality no better authority than a tadpole – let alone any other man” (161d1-2).

201 Socrates also alludes to his conversation with Parmenides in the Sophist 217c2-5. For more on the connection between Parmenides and Theaetetus, see Bostock 1988, 3-5.
202 Sayre 2004, 263 compares the advent of philosophic insight in the Seventh Letter with Socratic midwifery from the Theaetetus: “Both contexts contain mention of the need for conversation with a master, for hard work and dedication to the topic, and for critical examination to eliminate obstructive false opinion. And both give central importance to the fact that when philosophic truth is finally brought to light, it comes directly from within the learner’s own mind.”
After Socrates fails to persuade Theodorus to defend Protagoras’ theory of knowledge, he returns to Theaetetus and asks him if he is “astonished (θαυμάζεις) at suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) finding that you are the equal in wisdom of any man or even a god?” (162c3-4) Theaetetus admits he is “very much astonished” (πάνυ θαυμάζω) (162d1). Furthermore, he states, “When we were working out the meaning of the principle that a thing is for each man what it seems to him to be, it appeared to me a very sound one. But now, all in a minute, it is quite the other way around” (162d1-4). Thus, the appearance of ἔξαίφνης signifies a flash of illumination on the part of Theaetetus who begins to recognize the absurd consequences of Protagoras’ theory.203 What’s more, after Socrates acknowledges that inserting the gods into the discussion would contravene Protagoras’ agnostic approach, he suggests they take up a different argument in order to determine if knowledge and perception are the same or different. He reminds Theaetetus that it is for this reason that they have “unearthed all this extraordinary (ἄτοπα) stuff” (163a11).204

The second appearance of ἔξαίφνης occurs at 203e1 as Theaetetus and Socrates make a breakthrough in their examination of knowledge. At this stage of the dialogue, Socrates and Theaetetus examine the hypothesis that knowledge is true belief with an account. After inquiring into the nature of individual letters and the syllables the letters form, Socrates proposes that the syllable is knowable, but not the constitutive letters. Nevertheless, he wonders how it would be possible to be ignorant of each letter, and yet cognizant of the syllable the letters construct. This prompts Theaetetus to remark that it “would be a strange and unaccountable thing” to know the whole, i.e., the syllable, without knowing the parts, i.e., the letters (203d6). At first, Socrates

203 Dorter 1994, 80 points out that “while the argument at first seems inconsequential, on closer inspection it implies a distinction between two levels of knowledge [e.g., perception and understanding], a distinction that will turn out to be important.”

204 Curiously, this appearance of ἔξαίφνης in Theaetetus is accompanied by a cognate of ἄτοπον, commonly translated as “strange” or “queer,” the same term used in ἔξαίφνης passages from Parmenides, Republic, and Symposium.
concludes that one must know the letters in order to know the syllable, and bemoans the abrupt loss of their “beautiful theory” (ὁ καλός λόγος) (203d10). For his part, Theaetetus laments how “suddenly” (ἐξαίφνης) their promising theory evaporated under scrutiny. Thus there might be good reason to revisit the intelligibility of the elements in light of both the emergence of ἐξαίφνης and the earlier allusion to the events of the Parmenides.

As it turns out, Socrates later secures Theaetetus’ agreement in establishing the elements as necessarily knowable:

Then if the proper procedure is to take such elements and complexes as we ourselves have experience of, and make an inference from them to the rest, we shall say that the elements are much more clearly known, and the knowledge of them is more decisive for the mastery of any branch of study than knowledge of the complex. And if anyone maintains that the complex is by nature knowable, and the element is unknowable, we shall regard this as tomfoolery whether it is intended to be or not (206b4-10).

Consequently, re-examining the letters-syllable idea with respect to the training exercise of Parmenides discloses an interpretive key to understanding the dialogue. In brief, an element can be comprehended only by combining it with another element to form a syllable that is united by virtue of “the instant” (τὸ ἐξαίφνης). Thus the elements are intelligible as the syllables they constitute, and the syllables are knowable by virtue of the properly situated elements. In other words, the elements and syllables clarify and illuminate each other. Thus, the second appearance of ἐξαίφνης in Theaetetus is significant because it points to Parmenides, and suggests that each element (hypothesis) becomes intelligible by generating the complexes (a given pair of hypotheses construed as syllables) and grasping the significance of the training exercise as a

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205 Socrates, clearly referencing his conversation with Parmenides in Parmenides, describes this meeting in Theaetetus: “I met him [Parmenides] when I was very young and he was a very old man; and he seemed to me to have a wholly noble depth” (183e7-184a1). Curiously, Theaetetus is described at the opening of Theaetetus as looking very much like Socrates insofar as he is “not beautiful at all” and being “snub-nosed, with eyes that stick out” (143e9-10). Thus, it is almost as if Plato is re-staging the conversation of Parmenides, with the seventy years-old Socrates playing the role of Parmenides, and Theaetetus replacing the youthful Socrates.
whole. Coincidentally, ἐξαίφνης emerges in between the opposing views of intelligible syllables and knowable elements, and evokes the neither ... nor..., both... and... dynamic that characterizes the third hypothesis of Parmenides.

Ἐξαίφνης in Cratylus

The topic of Cratylus is names, and whether or not names are determined by convention or nature. While this playful dialogue features a host of humorous etymologies, it ultimately concludes by making a profound point about the necessity of the ideas in establishing the truth of names. There are four appearances of ἐξαίφνης in Cratylus, and these appearances reflect the previous manifestations in other dialogues.206

Ἐξαίφνης first appears in the midst of a discussion about the importance of the dialectician with respect to establishing the rules for making a name. According to Socrates, the dialectician “looks to the natural name of each thing and is able to put its form into letters and syllables” (390e2-3). Up to this point, his interlocutor, Hermogenes, had argued that words are named by convention. Nevertheless, after hearing Socrates’ case for the dialectician in making names, he acknowledges his perplexity: “I don’t know how to oppose you, Socrates. It isn’t easy for me suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) to change my opinion, though. I think you would be more likely to persuade me if you showed me just what this natural correctness of names you’re talking about consists in” (390e4-391a3). For his part, Socrates reminds Hermogenes that he has no firm position on the matter and that this investigation is a joint endeavor. Nonetheless, Socrates does maintain that they have made some progress insofar as they have discovered that “names do possess some sort of natural correctness and that it isn’t every man who knows how to name

things well” (391a8-b1). Consequently, the first emergence of ἐξαίφνης in Cratylus heralds the introduction of the ideas, just as previous appearances signal a discussion of the ideas in, e.g., Republic and Symposium. What’s more, ἐξαίφνης represents a flash of understanding for Hermogenes, as he begins to recognize the inadequacy of understanding the making of names merely by convention.

Ἐξαίφνης emerges three more times in the Cratylus as Socrates examines the name of the chief deity of the ancient Greek pantheon, Zeus. Socrates contends that the name Zeus, “which is really one, is divided in two, ‘Dia’ and “Zēna’” (396b2). Nevertheless, these two names, “reunited into one,” convey the real meaning of the god’s activity (396a4). In other words, Zeus’ role as “the king of all things” is signified through the two names because he “is always the cause of life (ὅτ’ ὢν ζήν) for all creatures” (396a6-8). With respect to his lineage, Socrates reports that it might be considered distasteful “at first” (ἐξαίφνης) to believe that Zeus is the son of Cronus, whose name is mistakenly related to “koros”, or child (396b3). Nevertheless, this etymology is incorrect according to Socrates, because the name Cronus is not related to koros (child), but “korein”, which means “to sweep” (396b4-6). Thus, Zeus is “the offspring of a great intellect,” because Cronus’ name relates to “the purity and clarity of his intellect or understanding” (396b4-6). According to Reeve, Cronus’ nature “is spotless and his intelligence clear because both have been well swept” (Cooper 1997, 114).

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207 Friedlander 1977, 202-203 writes with respect to this passage, “Language has been rescued from sophistic abuse and has been secured as the proper instrument of the philosopher who knows how to use it seriously and objectively. It finds its real foundations where the Eidos comes into view – as yet by way of analogy and in the distance.”
208 Translator C.D.C Reeve’s helpful footnote states that “Zeus’ (nominative) has two declensions, one of which (a poetical one) has ‘Zēna’ in the accusative, the other (the ordinary one) ‘Dia’” (Cooper 1997, 114).
209 In his Second Letter, Plato uses similar phrasing as he writes “Upon the king of all do all things turn; he is the end of all things and the cause of all good” (312e1-2).
210 Ademollo 2011, 192 argues “As Cronus is the son of Uranus, so purity of intellect comes from astronomy. This sounds like a perfectly Platonic doctrine; for elsewhere Plato does hold that contemplation of the heavens leads us to philosophy and purifies our mind (cf. Republic, 527d-528a and Timaeus, 47b-c, 90c-d).”
Furthermore, Cronus’ name is fitting because he is the son of Uranus (Heaven), and looking to the heavens “results in purity of intellect” (396c1). Following the associations he establishes with respect to the names of Zeus, Cronus, and Uranus, Socrates regrets that he cannot remember Hesiod’s account of the gods’ genealogy. “I wouldn’t have stopped explaining the correctness of names he gives them,” he claims, “until I had tested this wisdom (τῆς σοφίας) which has suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) came upon me – I do not know from where – to see whether or not it holds up till the end” (396c3-d1). Hermogenes concurs with Socrates’ assessment: “you do seem to me to be exactly like a prophet who has suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) been inspired (ἐνθουσιῶντες) to deliver oracles” (396d2-3).

This section of the _Cratylus_ represents a turning point insofar as Socrates concludes that the analysis of Zeus’ name has revealed that they “now have some sort of outline to follow” (397a4). In other words, the etymology of “Zeus” disclosed that names are more likely to achieve a degree of accuracy and truthfulness when the term signifies something eternal. Or as Socrates maintains, “We are most likely to find correctly given names among those concerned with the things that by nature always are (ἂν ὁντα καὶ περικότα), since it is proper for their names to be given with the greatest care (ἐπισπονδᾶσθαι), and some may even be the work of a more than human power” (397b6-c2). Thus, just as the first manifestation of ἐξαίφνης in the _Cratylus_ introduced the forms, the three appearances in this section relate to things that “always are” and have provided Socrates and Hermogenes with an “outline” to guide them as they

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211 Regarding astronomy and intelligence, Keyt 2006, 197 claims “gazing at things in the sky symbolizes apprehending the Forms.”

212 With respect to Socrates’ sudden divine inspiration, Baxter 1992, 112 argues, “Only the gods can be relied upon to use correct names for everything. This being so, mantic powers are appropriate when trying to bridge the divide between gods and men.”

213 Ranasinghe 2009, 150 asserts that “The gods themselves are but time-bound representations of the Platonic forms or ideas.”
continue to examine names. Consequently, Socrates asks Hermogenes, “Isn’t it right to begin by seeing why the name ‘theoi’ (‘gods’) is itself one that the gods are correctly called?” (397c4-5).

After establishing that the gods are indeed appropriately named, Socrates then proceeds to consider these names: daemon, love, and humans. So, following the three appearances of ἐξαίφνης, Socrates employs here the same constellation of terms that Diotima made use of in Symposium to describe love’s role as the intermediary between gods and mortals – another dialogue that features significant use of ἐξαίφνης. With the exception of ἐξαίφνης, Friedlander 1977, 206-207 connects these terms and concludes, “Thus, in the midst of these etymologies, there emerges not infrequently a suggestion which, though it does not reveal the nature of things, at least leads in this direction.” Consequently, the four appearances of ἐξαίφνης in the Cratylus reflect previous manifestations insofar as they introduce the ideas, mark a significant change in the direction of the dialogue, and signify a flash of understanding.

Ἐξαίφνης in Gorgias

The Gorgias is a complex and multi-layered dialogue that questions the role of rhetoric and its relationship to virtue and philosophy. There is a lone appearance of ἐξαίφνης, and its

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214 Friedlander 1977, 205 contends, “Making a fresh start, the inquiry then leaves the poets and proceeds, in a sort of systematic succession, to expound the nature of things and, above all, the nature of immutable things, through the etymological meaning of words.”
215 Socrates later acknowledges that “we know nothing about the gods themselves or about the names they call themselves” (400d7-8). He is also careful to make the distinction between the gods themselves and the names humans employ to describe them: “We will not be investigating them – since we do not regard ourselves as worthy to conduct such an investigation – but rather human beings, and the beliefs they have in giving the gods their names. After all, there’s no offense in doing that” (401a2-5).
216 See Cratylus 397c-399d. With respect to humankind, Socrates asserts that “human beings alone among the animals are correctly named ‘anthropos’ – one who observes closely what he has seen (anathron ha opope)” (399c4-5).
217 Ademollo 2011, 191 maintains that the “common thread” with the etymologies in this section (396b-410b) is the concern “with the place of intelligence in the world.”
emergence evokes the myth of Er from Republic x insofar as the term appears in the midst of an account of the underworld.

After his partner in conversation, Callicles, resignedly permits him to relate the fate that awaits just and unjust humans in Hades, Socrates delivers his “very fine account” (μάλα καλοῦ λόγου) of the underworld (523a1). Following Homer’s version of this story, Socrates describes the practice that dispatched unjust mortals to Tartarus, and just mortals to the Isles of the Blessed. The trial and verdict took place on the day a particular mortal was fated to die. Nevertheless, this process was deemed unfair because the judges were often fooled by the appearance, e.g., physical beauty, fine clothes, and wealth, of those awaiting the decision. What’s more, the judges themselves were hindered by “having put their eyes and ears and their whole bodies up as screens in front of their souls” (523d1-2). Thus the entire procedure was called into question as it became clear that the decisions were distorted by appearances.

Consequently Zeus decided to “stop [mortals] from knowing their death ahead of time,” so the judgment would take place only after they died (523d5-6). In this way, humans would be “stripped naked” of bodily adornment and evaluated on the basis of their soul alone (523e2). Likewise, the judges would do away with bodily obstructions and the distorting influence of sense perception in order to ensure a soul-to-soul examination:

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218 The background for this account is Odyssey xi.
219 Ranasinghe 2009, 151 argues that “their souls were judged by democratic public opinion; the last judgment on a human life was literally conducted according to the rules of the famous underground chasm or Cave of the Republic. The parallel is subtle but devastating.” An additional parallel, and one that Ranasinghe does not mention, is that both passages feature appearances of ἐξαίφνης.
220 As Stauffer 2006, 171 maintains “The primary result of Zeus’ reforms seems to have been a general advance in justice. But the reforms also, and perhaps more importantly, indicate a movement toward a certain understanding of justice according to which what matters most is not one’s record of particular deeds – or other ‘external’ factors such as one’s position in the city or the standing of one’s family – but the internal quality of one’s soul.”
The judge, too, should be naked, and dead, and with only his soul he should study only the soul of each person immediately (ἐξαίφνης) upon his death, when he’s isolated from all his kinsmen and has left behind on earth all that adornment, so that the judgment may be a just one (523e3-7).

Zeus appoints his three sons to serve as judges, and consigns them to the meadow “at the three-way (τριόδῳ) crossing” that leads to the Isle of the Blessed and Tartarus (524a2). In this way, the decisions with respect to the just or unjust souls of mortals would themselves be as just as possible.

Socrates brings his account to a close by saying “it’s not *seeming* to be good but *being* good that a man should take care of more than anything” (527b6-7). In other words, the mere semblance of virtue is no true advantage in this life or the next. Likewise, the emergence of ἐξαίφνης in this myth marks the differentiation of appearance from reality, or falsity from truth, as mortals transform from the living into the dead. “This new way of judging the lives of men represents an understanding of the gods based on values that are transcendental not mimetic,” argues Ranasinghe 2009, 152 “and interior rather than external.” In other words, ἐξαίφνης introduces the idea of justice of soul, and a genuine criterion for determining the merit of one’s life.

*Ἐξαίφνης in Statesman*

The *Statesman* follows the *Sophist* insofar as it continues the examination and differentiation of sophistry, politics, and philosophy. Socrates had asked the Visitor during the

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221 The “three-way crossing” is one of several instances of “three” appearing in the myth. Other examples include (1) the three governing gods: Zeus, Poseidon, and Pluto, (2) Zeus’ three sons, Minos, Rhasamanthus, and Aeacus, who will act as judges, (3) Socrates at 527a8-b1 ironically referring to the “three (τρεῖς) of you,” i.e., Callicles, Polus, and Gorgias, as the “wisest of the Greeks,” and (4) the three types of lives that Socrates describes in the underworld, e.g., the virtuous, the vicious but curable, and the incurably vicious.

222 “It will not be possible to deceive the judges because everyone at this court will be completely naked and dead to the seductions of appearances;” claims Ranasinghe 2009, 153 “it was in this sense that Socrates famously described philosophy as a constant preparation for death in the *Phaedo.*” Moreover, in a footnote on the same page (153) Ranasinghe points out that “Gorgias was stripped of all his flowery speeches before being examined by Socrates.”
introductory conversation of the *Sophist* if his countrymen in Elea distinguished the sophist from the statesman and the philosopher, and the Visitor responded that “they think there are three kinds” (217b2). Thus the Visitor isolates and investigates sophistry in *Sophist*, and proceeds to explore the nature of statesmanship in the *Statesman*.

After reworking the definition of the statesman through the use of myth, the nature of examples, the method of weaving, and the meaning of excess and deficiency, the Visitor indicates that he and young Socrates are on the verge of a breakthrough. He claims rather cryptically that they are “getting close to some sort of trail leading to our destination” (290d6). The Visitor then begins the process of distinguishing a mixed class of phony statesmen from the true statesman, just as he differentiated the sophist from the philosopher in *Sophist*. He contends that this diverse group of counterfeit statesmen are “very odd (μάλα... ἀτόπους) people,” prompting a mystified young Socrates to remark that the Visitor himself must “have something odd (ἄτοπον) in view” (291a6 and 291b6). The Visitor’s ensuing response to young Socrates marks the lone appearance of ἐξαίφνης in the *Statesman*:

Yes; it’s a universal experience that not recognizing something makes it odd (ἄτοπον). And this is exactly what happened to me just now: at the moment (ἐξαίφνης) when I first saw the chorus of those concerned with the affairs of cities I failed to recognize them (291b8-c2).

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223 Theodorus describes the Visitor in the *Sophist* as someone “from Elea and he’s a member of the group who gather around Parmenides and Zeno. And he’s very much a philosopher” (216a1-4).
224 Friedlander 1970, 280 maintains that “*Statesman* and *Sophist* form a pair of dialogues so closely linked that their bond is comparable only to the one between *Timaeus* and *Critias*.”
225 Friedlander 1970, 281 cites Plato’s *Eleventh Letter* to explain why young Socrates replaces Theaetetus in the *Statesman*: “This young Socrates’ interest in politics undoubtedly is the reason why Plato in this discussion of the statesman or the political man gives him the part taken by Theaetetus in the *Sophist*.” In his *Eleventh Letter* Plato writes that neither he nor young Socrates could assist Laodamas with his plans to establish a colony in Thrace; Plato was unable because of old age and general weakness, while young Socrates was incapacitated due to a painful urinary condition (*Eleventh Letter* 358d-e).
Consequently, the Visitor’s flash of illumination, signified by the emergence of ἐξαίφνης, represents a turning point in the search for the genuine statesman. It leads to the notion that authentic statesmanship is characterized by enduring principles. In other words, the criteria that really matter when discussing the political art are knowledge and virtue.

The consequence of this turning point signified by the appearance of ἐξαίφνης surfaces just a short while later as the Visitor describes the only legitimate constitution:

So long as they [the rulers] act to preserve it on the basis of expert knowledge and what is just, making it better than it was so far as they can, this is the constitution which alone we must say is correct, under these conditions and in accordance with criteria of this sort. All the others that we generally say are constitutions we must say are not genuine, and not really constitutions at all, but imitations of this one; those we say are ‘law-abiding’ have imitated it for the better, the others for the worse (293d9-e6).

The Visitor’s account of various political pretenders and constitutions results in a standard by virtue of which we may discern the authentic statesman. Although this perfect statesman is less a reality and more a model for political leadership, the criteria provide a conceptual framework for judging the constitution that best approximates lawfulness and political justice.

Consequently, Rowe 2000, 165 maintains: “The only ‘correct’ form of rule, the only true constitution, exists when those who rule do so on the basis of knowledge – no other criterion is relevant; and other so-called constitutions are either finer or worse imitations of this one. A fortiori, those who rule under them can only be impostors.” And the appearance of ἐξαίφνης paved the way for this insight, because it was the sudden recognition of the diverse group of

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226 This appearance of ἐξαίφνης in Statesman is accompanied by ἄτοπον, commonly translated as “strange,” “odd,” or “queer;” the same term used in ἐξαίφνης passages from Parmenides, Republic, Symposium, and Theaetetus.
counterfeit statesmen that led the Visitor to isolate the difference between phony statesmen and their opposites.\textsuperscript{227}

\textit{ Ἐξαίφνης} in \textit{Laws}

The \textit{Laws} is thought of as Plato’s final work. On the one hand, the \textit{Laws} seeks, much like \textit{Republic}, to engender happiness for the state. On the other hand, the \textit{Laws} highlights virtue more so than happiness. “In particular,” argues Bobonich 2002, 120 “the lawgiver must aim at fostering all the virtues – courage, justice, moderation, and wisdom – in the citizens as a whole. Plato announces this claim with a fanfare at the beginning of the \textit{Laws}, returns to it at its end, and repeatedly stresses it throughout the text.” The dialogue features three elderly discussants, the Athenian Stranger, Clinias, and Megillus, and there are a total of eight appearances of \textit{ Ἐξαίφνης} in \textit{Laws}.\textsuperscript{228}

\textit{ Ἐξαίφνης} first emerges in the midst of a discussion of choruses. The Athenian Stranger argues that a chorus should “charm the souls of the children,” and “uphold all the admirable doctrines” that the three men have up to this point formulated (664b3-4). Furthermore, the chorus ought to instill the belief that “the gods say the best life does in fact bring most pleasure” and endeavor to convince the citizenry of this principle (664b6-c1).\textsuperscript{229} Following his account of the children’s chorus (dedicated to the Muses) and the chorus of those under thirty years old (dedicated to Apollo), the Athenian Stranger claims that “the remaining one, the third (τρίτον), must be identified as belonging to Dionysius” (665b1). Clinias is astonished at this suggestion:

\textsuperscript{227} Dorter 1994, 216 concludes, “now that he [the Visitor] has replaced the value-free method of division by relative measure (equal halves) with the value-grounding mean… it becomes in a sense the only relevant distinction.”

\textsuperscript{228} With respect to the number of times that \textit{ Ἐξαίφνης} emerges in this the dialogue, the eight appearances in \textit{Laws} is second only to the nine appearances in \textit{Republic}. Thus nearly half of the thirty-six total appearances of \textit{ Ἐξαίφνης} in Plato’s dialogues occur in two works advocating for a revised notion of political life, just as \textit{ Ἐξαίφνης} itself typically heralds a transformation or change of some kind.

\textsuperscript{229} Regarding the best life being most pleasurable, Benardete 2000, 75 argues that it is the same as “the formula for denying any difference between the eidetic structure of the good and the genetic structure of law.”
What! You had better explain yourself: a chorus of elderly men dedicated to Dionysius sounds a weird (ἀτοπος) and wonderful idea, at any rate at first hearing (ἐξαίφνης). Are men of more than thirty and even fifty, up to sixty, really going to dance in honor of Dionysius? (665a9-b5)

The Athenian Stranger explains that the third chorus “is the noblest element in our state,” because it will possess “more conviction than any other group” due to the age, social standing, and intellects of its constituents (665d1-2). In order to “encourage them [the aged men of the third chorus] to be enthusiastic,” the state will persuade them to drink a generous amount of wine (666a2). Along these lines, the Athenian Stranger interprets Dionysius’ bestowal of wine to humankind as a “medicine… to produce reverence in the soul, and health and strength in the body” (672d8-9). Imbibing in wine is thus characterized as both “the play-time and the prayer-time of the old” (666b4-5).

This first appearance of ἐξαίφνης in Laws is accompanied by the same constellation of terms as the third hypothesis of Parmenides: τρίτον, ἀτοπος, and ἐξαίφνης. What’s more, its appearance represents an unexpected uniting of opposites insofar as older men will be engaging in youthful activities. Finally, the emergence of ἐξαίφνης in this passage also introduces a threefold standard for judging the correctness of the chorus: the idea represented, the accuracy of the representation, and the goodness of the representation. Thus, the singers of the Dionysian chorus “will have pursued a more advanced course of training than will be given to ordinary men,” and in this way they will be the best judges of its beauty and goodness (670e3-4).
Consequently, the first appearance of ἐξαίφνης introduces the ideas as the proper standard of judgment and points the way forward to cultivating virtue in the citizenry.234

Ἐξαίφνης emerges for a second time in Laws during a discussion of the genesis and destruction of various political systems. Speculating about the cataclysmic consequences of a great flood, the Athenian Stranger argues that “those who escaped the disaster must have been pretty nearly all hill-shepherds – a few members of mankind preserved… on the tops of mountains” (677b1-3). Correlatively, “the few embers (ζώπυρα) of mankind preserved” were compelled to start anew, and rebuild civilization (677b2). In speaking about this progression the Athenian Stranger reasons, “The process was probably not sudden (ἐξαίφνης), but gradual, and took a considerable time” (678b9-10). At first glance, the appearance of the term in this passage seems inconsequential, and is perhaps merely a result of contrasting two ways of speaking about lengths of time.

Nevertheless, the Athenian Stranger stated that he was seeking the reason “why these changes took place” in order to uncover the origin and changes with respect to political systems (676c7). Thus the emergence of ἐξαίφνης in this context calls to mind the transformative power of “the instant” (τὸ ἐξαίφνης) from the third hypothesis of Parmenides. Benardete 2000, 91 maintains that the Athenian Stranger’s account of the catastrophic change that demands a new beginning of civilization demonstrates that “the city thus comes to be from the noncity.” And this conception of something transforming into its opposite mirrors the third hypothesis and previous

that they can isolate the primary and secondary degrees of goodness; otherwise they will never prove capable of charming the young in the direction of virtue” (670e5-671a3).

234 “So when someone says that music is judged by the criterion of pleasure,” argues the Athenian Stranger, “we should reject his argument out of hand, and absolutely refuse to go in for such music (if any were ever produced) as a serious genre. The music we ought to cultivate is the kind that bears a resemblance to its model, beauty (τὸ καλοῖ)” (668a9-b3). Pangle 1988, 422 argues that “The third chorus justifies the city because through it the city can claim to come close to providing, for some of its citizens, rational self-consciousness and an opportunity to exercise not only the active, political virtues but also the intellectual and artistic virtues.”
examples of Plato’s use of ἐξαίφνης. What’s more, the description of the “embers (ζώπυρα) of mankind” igniting a new civilization evokes the imagery of the Seventh Letter and its account of the flash of illumination that follows philosophical education when “suddenly (ἐξαίφνης), like light flashing forth when a fire (πυρός) is kindled, it is born in the soul and straightaway nourishes itself” (341c8-d1). Although the Athenian Stranger indicates the process of rebuilding civilization was “not sudden (ἐξαίφνης), but gradual,” the contextual similarity remains.

The third appearance of ἐξαίφνης in Laws occurs when the Athenian Stranger asks Megillus and Clinias to identify the political system of their respective homelands. As the oldest present, the Spartan citizen Megillus answers:

Very well. When I consider the political system in force at Sparta, sir, I find it impossible to give you a straight answer: I just can’t say what one ought to call it. You see, it really does look to me like a dictatorship (it has the ephors, a remarkably dictatorial institution), yet on occasions I think it gets very close to being run democratically. But then again, it would be plain silly to deny that it is an aristocracy; and there is also a kingship (held for life), which both we and the rest of the world speak of as the oldest kingship of all. So when I’m asked all of a sudden (ἐξαίφνης) like this, the fact is, as I said, that I can’t distinguish exactly which of these political systems it belongs to (712d2-e5).

Clinias is similarly perplexed regarding the constitution of his home in Cnossus. Consequently, the Athenian Stranger argues that the failure to classify their political regimes stems from the fact that their states “really do operate constitutions worthy of the name” (712e9-10). The commonly known political systems, e.g., monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, are “just a number of ways of running a state,” and are simply “named after the ruling class in each case” (712e11-713a1). Nevertheless, the Athenian Stranger accepts the familiar political classifications, but argues that the new state they have been discussing “should be named after the god who really does rule over men who are rational enough to let him” (713a3-4).
Asked to clarify, the Athenian Stranger relates an account of the “wonderfully happy people” who lived in the age of Cronus (713c3). The government established by Cronus was a “great success, and... served as a blueprint for the best run of our present-day states” (713b3-5). These citizens were blessed with happiness and good government because Cronus appointed “spirits (δαίμονας),” rather than men to rule the various states (713d3). Cronus’ decision to appoint spirits instead of men as rulers resulted in “peace, respect for others, good laws, justice in full measure, and a state of happiness and harmony among the races of the world” (713e2-3). Consequently, wherever the state is led by mere humans, the citizens are faced with adversity and hardship. Thus, according to the Athenian Stranger, “we should make every effort to imitate the life men are said to have led under Cronus,” and regulate all of our mortal activities “in obedience to what little spark of immortality lies in us” (713e6-714a1).

The emergence of ἔξαιφνης in this context recalls a similar appearance of the term in Republic v. The appearance of ἔξαιφνης in Republic v marks the moment when philosophy and politics begin to coalesce around the dialogue’s central idea of the philosopher-king. In other words, Glaucon’s “sudden (ἔξαιφνης) attack” initiates the line of argumentation that leads directly to the philosopher-king and a more expansive account of Plato’s theory of ideas. Glaucon insists that Socrates move beyond the advantages of the beautiful city and demonstrate its viability, and this prompts Socrates’ introduction of the philosopher-kings. It heralds a strange

235 "The myth," Benardete 2000, 136 maintains, “speaks of a time prior to the cataclysm that started off the Stranger’s account of Dorian history.” In other words, and Benardete does not mention this, the myth is thus related to the previous appearance of ἔξαιφνης at 678b9-10.

236 Benardete 2000, 134 links the spirits with the laws etymologically: “men lived happily under the rule of daimones, and laws are to be understood as their copies, for law as the distribution of mind (ἡ τοῦ νοῦ διανομή) is nothing but an anagram of δαίμονα.” See also Cratylus 398b-c.

237 Benardete 2000, 136 contends that “the Stranger seems to have abandoned the genetic structure of law entirely and attached law directly to the eidetic structure of the good, all of whose human goods, he had said, look to the divine goods, and all of whose divine goods look to their leader’s mind.” This connection to the good evokes the cave-allegory and its multiple appearances of ἔξαιφνης. See Chapter V of this dissertation.

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and marvelous time when “political power and philosophy entirely coincide,” and the beautiful city finally enters into “the light of the sun” (*Republic* v, 73c10-e4). Likewise, the appearance of ἐξαιφνής in *Laws* iv prompts the Athenian Stranger to provide an account of the “blueprint” established for government in the age of Cronus, just as Socrates sought a “model” of justice in *Republic* v, 472c3.238

The term appears for a fourth time in *Laws* when the Athenian Stranger presents the difficulties involved with the establishment of a new state. Among other potential problems related to its founding, the rulers of Magnesia must be aware of the conspiracies and intrigues that plague most governments. With respect to these conspiracies, the Athenian Stranger advises that the newly formed council must keep a close watch for any signs of trouble:

They must be particularly concerned with the constant revolutions of all kinds that are apt to occur in a state; if possible, they must prevent them, but failing that they must see that the state gets to know as soon as possible (ἐξαιφνής), so that the outbreak can be cured (758c5-d3). Thus it is imperative that the council be informed of any possible uprisings in order to quell them. If attempts at restoring order are unsuccessful, the council must notify the executive committee immediately in order that they may take the necessary steps to stamp out the rebellion. The emergence of ἐξαιφνής in this context underscores the necessity for retaining order and harmony in the new state of Magnesia, and mirrors the order and stability provided by “the instant” (τὸ ἐξαιφνής) in the *Parmenides*.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh appearance of ἐξαιφνής in *Laws* emerge as the Athenian Stranger considers two types of anger and how they lead to murder:

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238 The emergence of ἐξαιφνής in the context of a “blueprint” and “model” is also reminiscent of a passage from *Cratylus* (examined above) when following an appearance of ἐξαιφνής Socrates concludes that the analysis of Zeus’ name has revealed that they “now have some sort of outline to follow” (397a4). In *Cratylus*, the etymology of Zeus disclosed that names are more likely to achieve a degree of accuracy and truthfulness when the term signifies something eternal, e.g., the ideas.
Anger is common to (1) those who kill a man by blows or similar means, owing to sudden (ἐξαιφνης) impulse: here the action is immediate, there is no previous intention to kill, and regret for the dead follows at once; (2) those who have been stung by insults or opprobrious actions and who pursue their vengeance until, some time later, they kill somebody: they intend to kill, and the deed causes no repentance. So it looks as if we have to establish two categories of murder; broadly speaking, both are done in anger, but a proper description would be ‘falling somewhere midway between “voluntary” and “involuntary”; however, each type comes closer to one or other of these extremes. The man who nurses his anger and takes his vengeance later – not suddenly, on the spur of the moment (ἐξαιφνης), but with premeditation – approximates to the voluntary murderer. The man whose anger bursts forth uncontrollably, whose action is instant, immediate, and without premeditation, resembles the involuntary killer. Yet even so, he is not an entirely involuntary killer: he only resembles one. It is therefore sometimes difficult to categorize murders done under the influence of anger, and to know whether to treat them in law as voluntary or involuntary. The best course, which corresponds most closely to reality, is to classify them both under what they resemble, and to distinguish them by the presence or absence of premeditation. We should lay down comparatively severe penalties for those who have killed in anger and with premeditation, and lighter ones for those who have killed on the spur of the moment (ἐξαιφνης) without previous intent. Something which resembles a greater evil should attract a greater punishment, whereas a lesser penalty should be visited on that which resembles a lesser evil. This, then, is the course our laws should take (866d9-867c2).

The Athenian Stranger’s distinction between calculated murder and killing “on the spur of the moment” (ἐξαιφνης) reveals a sympathetic regard for those overcome by sudden passion.

At first glance, Plato’s use of ἐξαιφνης to describe the impulsive nature of crimes of passion seems commonplace. It doesn’t look as if there is any significant underlying reason for employing the term in this context, and the multiple appearances suggest ordinary usage. Nevertheless, Benardete 2000, 272 offers a helpful (if unintended) elucidation: “Instant retaliation is unthinking, brooding gives rise to premeditated revenge.” In other words, a sudden, overwhelming impulse to commit murder is characterized by non-rationality. In a similar vein, ἐξαιφνης as the flash of illumination accompanying the climax of philosophical education is a spontaneous experience insofar as its occurrence cannot be calculated. Although the moment of insight is preceded by a lengthy training period exemplified by sustained thinking and hard work, the moment itself – the interiorization of the idea – is an epiphanous, “unthinking” experience. And because this strange experience signifies a step beyond the confines of rational, discursive
thought, it is as Plato states in his *Seventh Letter*, “not something that can be put into words like other sciences” (341c7-8). Consequently, Plato’s use of the term in this passage from the *Laws* is consistent with previous appearances insofar as ἐξαιφνής connotes an experience that resists rationalization.

The eighth and final appearance of ἐξαιφνής in *Laws* surfaces in a related context as the above passage. Previously the Athenian Stranger sought to differentiate premeditated and impulsive murder, now he seeks to distinguish acts of cowardice in battle from circumstances beyond the control of the combatant:

Again, sometimes men have lost their weapons because of being thrown down from a height, or when at sea, or when suddenly (ἐξαιφνής) caught up by a tremendous onrush of water during their struggles in a storm (944a8-b3).

Military insubordination is not always easy to discern, and the Athenian Stranger takes care to make the necessary distinction. “When you are robbed of your shield with some force, you have not ‘abandoned’ it in the same way as if you had thrown it away deliberately,” he argues, “the two cases are fundamentally different” (944c1-3). This section of the *Laws* mirrors the previous passage concerning calculated and spontaneous murder, because ἐξαιφνής is employed in both contexts as signifying the presence of a sudden, irrational event. The term is used as the telltale mark for an irresistible transformation that mitigates blame in both cases. Moreover, in both passages ἐξαιφνής is the semantic locus that provides the basis for the Athenian Stranger’s differentiation. Just as “the instant” (τὸ ἐξαιφνής) of the third hypothesis of *Parmenides* differentiates the ideas, ἐξαιφνής is used in these latter passages from *Laws* to distinguish deliberate acts from involuntary doings.
Ἐξαίφνης after Plato

All thirty-six appearances of ἐξαίφνης in Plato’s dialogues have been examined in this dissertation. To the best of my knowledge, this represents the first comprehensive study of the term in Plato’s works. That Plato employs ἐξαίφνης in a fairly consistent manner demonstrates that its appearance in a given dialogue is deliberate, and thus significant for understanding his philosophical project.

Although the term generally indicated a sharp turn for the worse in Greek literature prior to Plato, the meaning of ἐξαίφνης changes to a more encouraging state of affairs with the dialogues and Seventh Letter. In other words, with Plato, ἐξαίφνης takes on a much more promising and positive role. The change that it inspires is enriching and constructive. Thus Plato’s philosophy reorients ensuing conceptions about ἐξαίφνης, and, in turn, supplants the Homeric worldview that characterized sudden change as destructive and disastrous. Plato’s likely influence with respect to the transformed meaning of ἐξαίφνης is evident in several subsequent works and thinkers. For example, ἐξαίφνης or its cognates appear in similar contexts in such disparate figures as Aristotle, Augustine, Boethius, Descartes, Hobbes, and Kierkegaard. Unfortunately, a comprehensive survey of the term’s appearance in literature and philosophy after Plato is beyond the scope of this dissertation; however, I have selected three prominent examples to illustrate briefly Plato’s influential treatment of ἐξαίφνης: The New Testament, Plotinus’ Enneads, and Martin Heidegger’s Being and Time.
The New Testament

The New Testament features six appearances of ἐξαιφνης, and it generally signifies the revelation or presence of divinity.\(^{239}\) For example, Mark 13:35-36 finds Jesus imploring his disciples to “keep awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly (ἐξαιφνης). And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.” Similarly in Luke 2:10-14 Christ’s birth is foretold to the shepherds by an angel: “Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly (ἐξαιφνης) there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!’”\(^{240}\)

Furthermore, Acts of the Apostles twice depicts Paul’s conversion experience as a sudden, flash of illumination similar to the sudden illumination experience depicted in Plato’s Seventh Letter, Republic, and Symposium. For instance, Acts 9:3 provides the following account of Paul’s conversion: “And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly (ἐξαιφνης) there shined round about him a light from heaven.” Likewise, in Acts 22:6 Paul restates this account: “While I was on my way and approaching Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly (ἐξαιφνης) shone about me.” The “sudden” nature of an eschatological transformation

\(^{239}\) Selected passages are from the 3rd edition of The New Oxford Annotated Bible (2001).
\(^{240}\) With respect to this passage, Soards 2001, 99 claims that “The designation of the newborn Jesus as Lord is striking, for that word in Greek (’kyrios’) is the precise term used consistently throughout the LXX [Septuagint] to translate the tetragrammaton, God’s holy and personal name (Heb ‘yhwh’).”
is affirmed in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 as Paul writes, “We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the blink of an eye (ἐξαίφνης), at the last trumpet.”

Plotinus

Plotinus employs ὑζαίφνης nine times in his Enneads. Many of these appearances relate to the vision of the One, or the Good. Below are several representative examples. The first occurs in V.3.17.28:

But it is enough if the intellect comes into contact with it; but when it has done so, while the contact lasts, it is absolutely impossible, nor has it time, to speak; but it is afterwards that it is able to reason about it. One must believe when one has seen, when the soul suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) takes light; for this light comes from him and is identical with him.

In V.5.3.13 Plotinus writes

The Supreme in its progress could never be borne forward upon some soulless vehicle nor even directly upon the soul: it will be heralded by some ineffable beauty: before the great King in his progress there comes first the minor train, then rank by rank the greater and more exalted, closer to the King the kinglier; next to his own honored company until, last among all these grandeur, suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) appears the Supreme Monarch himself, and all – unless indeed for those who have contented themselves with the spectacle before his coming and gone away – prostrate themselves and hail him.

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241 Kierkegaard 1980, 88 interprets this passage in his Concept of Anxiety: “By this he [Paul] also expresses that the moment is commensurable with eternity, precisely because the moment of destruction expresses eternity at the same moment. Permit me to illustrate what I mean, and forgive me if anyone should find the analogy offensive. Once here in Copenhagen there were two actors who probably never thought that their performance could have a deeper significance. They stepped forth on the stage, placed themselves opposite each other, and then began the mimical representation of one or another passionate conflict. When the mimical act was in full swing and the spectators’ eyes followed the story with expectation of what was to follow, they suddenly stopped and remained motionless as though petrified in the mimical expression of the moment. The effect of this can be exceedingly comical, for the moment in an accidental way becomes commensurable with the eternal. The plastic effect is due to the fact that the eternal expression is expressed eternally; the comic effect, on the other hand, consists in the eternalization of the accidental expression.”

242 The identity of the One and the Good is made explicit by Plotinus: “When we speak of the One and when we speak of the Good we must recognize an identical nature; we must affirm that they are the same” (II.9.5-6).

243 Hadot 1993, 58 contends “In mystical ecstasy, the soul leaves behind all forms, including her own, and becomes this formless reality, this pure presence which is the center of the soul, as it is of everything else.”

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Also, in V.5.7.34 Plotinus speaks of the Intellect as follows

It is certainly thus that the Intellectual Principle, hiding itself from all the outer, withdrawing to the inmost, seeing nothing, must have its vision – not of some other light in some other thing but of the light within itself, unmingled, pure, suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) gleaming before it.244

In VI.7.34.13 Plotinus writes of the assimilation with the One

Suppose the soul to have attained: the highest has come to her, or rather has revealed its presence; she has turned away from all about her and made herself apt, beautiful to the utmost, brought into likeness with the divine by those preparing and adorning which come unbidden to those growing ready for the vision – she has seen that presence suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) manifesting within her, for there is nothing between: here is no longer a duality but a two in one; for, so long as the presence holds, all distinction fades: it is a lover and beloved here.245

Likewise in VI.7.36.18 he writes

Here, we put aside all the learning; disciplined in this pitch, established in beauty, the quester holds knowledge still of the ground he rests on but, suddenly (ἐξαίφνης), swept beyond it all by the very crest of the wave of Intellect surging beneath, he is lifted and sees, never knowing how; the vision floods the eyes with light, but it is not a light showing some other object, the light is itself the vision.246

Martin Heidegger

Finally, Martin Heidegger employs Martin Luther’s German translation of 1 Corinthians 15:52 “the blink of an eye” (ἐξαίφνης) to generate Being and Time’s “Moment” or “Moment of Vision” (Augenblick).247 Heidegger’s “Moment” is evidently the locus of authenticity.248 Below are three passages from his Being and Time that exemplify his use of ἐξαίφνης/Augenblick:

244 “Once the soul has no more possessions,” according to Hadot 1993, 57, “and has stripped herself of all form, she is at one with the object of her love, and becomes the Good. She is the Good.”
245 Deck 1967, 8 cites this passage as an instance of Plotinus hinting at his own mystical experiences: “He describes the experiencing of the One in terms that seem to go beyond what could be known purely philosophically.” Furthermore, Deck writes “Porphyry affirms that his master had such an experience at least four times during his life” (8). Plotinus himself states, “Many times it has happened: Lifted out of the body into myself; becoming external to all other things; beholding a marvelous beauty; then, more than ever, assured of community with the loftiest order; living the noblest life, acquiring identity with the Divine” (Enneads IV.8.1).
246 Hadot 1993, 62 writes, “For Plotinus, as for Plato, vision consists in contact between the inner light of the eye and exterior light. Yet Plotinus concludes from this that when vision becomes spiritual, there is no longer any distinction between inner and outer light. Vision is light, and light is vision. There is a kind of self-vision of light, in which light is, as it were, transparent to itself.”
247 In a helpful footnote from translator Joan Stambaugh’s 2010 edition of Heidegger’s Being and Time: “The word ‘Augenblick’ – literally, ‘blink of an eye’ – is rightly translated as ‘Moment.’ It is a commonly used word – ‘ein Augenblick, bitte’ means ‘a moment, please’ – but Heidegger emphasizes this word, as well as its component words
We call the *present* that is held in authentic temporality, and is thus *authentic*, the Moment [Augenblick]. This term must be understood in the active sense as an ecstasy. … ‘In the Moment’ nothing can happen, but as an authentic present it lets us *encounter for the first time* what can be ‘in a time’ as something at hand or objectively present (323).

The Moment [Augenblick] brings existence to the situation and discloses the authentic ‘there’ (331).

The present, as the Moment [Augenblick], discloses the today authentically (377).

Dreyfus 1991, 321 contends that the Moment “would be better translated ‘the moment of transformation’” because Dasein transforms from inauthentic being-in-the-world to authenticity in the Moment,\(^\text{249}\) while Mulhall 2001, 150 maintains that in the Moment (or, ‘moment of vision’) “the resources of the present situation are laid before Dasein in their individual reality and in relation to its own possible individuality.” In a similar vein, Polt 1999, 100 claims that the Moment of Vision opens up possibilities for Dasein insofar as “he sees his current situation and understands how it forms part of his life.”

\(^\text{248}\) For a more thorough appraisal of Heidegger’s Augenblick and its enduring role in his thought, see especially William McNeill’s *The Glance of an Eye*. With respect to the term’s evolution in Heidegger’s thought, McNeill 1999, ix states that “from the mid-1930s on the Augenblick is thought increasingly as a site of the event (Ereignis) of worldly presencing and of possible transformations in the history of being. As such a site, it is characterized throughout by two fundamental traits: the trait of finitude, whereby it is open for the sudden, nonmediated, unforeseeable irruption of beings into presencing, and the trait of being held in such openness in such a manner as to be delivered over, always already, to historical time, to being with others, and to the claims of tradition.”

\(^\text{249}\) Dreyfus contrasts Kierkegaard’s “blink of an eye” (Oieblik) with Heidegger’s Augenblick: “For Kierkegaard, the Oieblik is the moment that an unconditional commitment comes to define my world and redifferentiate the content of my past and future. For Heidegger, it is the moment of the total gestalt switch of Dasein’s being-in-the-world from inauthenticity to authenticity” (320). McNeill 1999, 116 asserts that “Kierkegaard’s use of the term Augenblick (in Danish, Oieblik) is influenced by Schleiermacher, whose translation of Plato’s *Parmenides* (156d-e) renders exaiphnes as der Augenblick.” In his *Concept of Anxiety* Kierkegaard 1980, 87-88 writes “A blink is therefore a designation of time, but mark well, of time in the fateful conflict when it is touched by eternity. What we call the moment, Plato calls τὸ ἔξαίφνης [the sudden].”
Conclusion

In Plato’s hands ἔξαιφνης represents a transformative and self-sustaining illumination experience. And one special aspect of Plato’s use of “the sudden” is found in his non-linear development of philosophical education. Put simply, ἔξαιφνης signals the interiorization of the idea with respect to the philosopher, and the locus of participation with respect to the ideas themselves. With regard to other, comparatively minor instances, the appearance of ἔξαιφνης signifies a breakthrough, or revelatory moment in the dialogues that often introduces the ideas or symbolizes a suprarational event. Ultimately, Plato’s purposeful use of ἔξαιφνης, and its several momentous appearances, demonstrates that it is the key expression for a phenomenon that often evades comprehension: Participation.

While the fifty-nine appearances of ἔξαιφνης in Greek literature prior to Plato evince a menacing quality and destructive outcome, Plato’s use of the term demonstrates a radical shift in meaning and significance. In Plato’s Parmenides ἔξαιφνης is “the instant” that animates and crystallizes the ideas as it functions as the locus of participation, while in the Seventh Letter ἔξαιφνης represents the sudden illumination experience that stimulates and solidifies the budding philosopher’s desire to pursue wisdom with a burning enthusiasm. The allegory of the cave from Republic vii finds ἔξαιφνης marking the moment of emancipation as the prisoner is suddenly compelled to look toward the light of the Good itself, just as ἔξαιφνης in the Symposium signifies the sudden revelation of Beauty itself. Thus in Plato’s hands, ἔξαιφνης is liberated from its caustic genesis in early Greek literature and transformed into a symbol for the sudden flash of insight that crystallizes the climactic conversion experience engendered by philosophical education.
The comparatively minor role that ἐξαιρῆς plays in other Platonic dialogues complements the more significant appearances insofar as the term’s emergence often introduces the ideas. That many of these other appearances of ἐξαιρῆς are deliberate and related to the more noteworthy examples is demonstrated by the inclusion of the Greek words for “strange” (ἄτοπος) and/or “third” (τρίτον) – the same constellation of terms found in the third hypothesis of Parmenides, the allegory of the cave and philosopher-king passages of Republic, and the revelation of Beauty itself and Alcibiades’ sudden entrance in Symposium.

Ultimately the most remarkable examples of the thirty-six appearances of ἐξαιρῆς in the dialogues show that Plato’s conception of the methodical, step-by-step process of philosophical education climaxes with a sudden and dramatic, non-linear conversion experience that mirrors the way the ideas participate with each other in “the instant” of the third hypothesis of Parmenides. This “strange” flash of illumination differentiates the disciplined and orderly climb exemplified by the hard work of character and intellectual training that typifies philosophical education. And thus the sudden and striking reorientation “turns the whole soul until it is able to study that which is and the brightest thing that is, namely, the one we call the good” (Republic vii, 518c7-d1).
BIBLIOGRAPHY


