


ARTICLE

τὸ ἔξαιφνης and Time in Plato's *Parmenides*

Asadullah Khan 

Department of Philosophy, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, Canada
Email: akhan438@uottawa.ca

Abstract

I argue, through Heidegger, that the notion of τὸ ἔξαιφνης in the *Parmenides* does not signify eternity, or a trace of eternity in time, but rather implies a primordial conception of time. In deduction two, the relationship between *stasis* and *kinesis* becomes problematic due to the notion of τὸ νῦν. This leads Parmenides, in deduction three, to posit the notion of τὸ ἔξαιφνης to solve this problematic relationship, implying a primordial conception of time.

Résumé

Je soutiens, à travers Heidegger, que la notion de τὸ ἔξαιφνης dans le *Parménide* ne signifie pas l'éternité, ou une trace d'éternité dans le temps, mais implique plutôt une conception primordiale du temps. Dans la déduction numéro deux, la relation entre la *stasis* et la *kinesis* devient problématique à cause de la notion de τὸ νῦν. Cela conduit Parménide, dans la déduction numéro trois, à poser la notion de τὸ ἔξαιφνης pour résoudre cette relation problématique, ce qui implique une conception primordiale du temps.

Keywords: Plato; time; eternity; the instant; change; Parmenides; Heidegger

1. Introduction

In the third deduction¹ of the *Parmenides*, Parmenides attempts to show how change from *stasis* to *kinesis* or from *kinesis* to *stasis* is possible through the notion of τὸ ἔξαιφνης.² In the literature on the *Parmenides*, τὸ ἔξαιφνης has often been identified with eternity in one way or another. My aim in this article is to show, with Martin Heidegger, that the notion of τὸ ἔξαιφνης in the third deduction need not be identified with eternity, or a trace of eternity in time, but rather that it signifies

¹ In recent scholarship, deduction three (155e–157b) has often been treated as a mere appendix to the second deduction. This first one to propose this view seems to be F. M. Cornford (2010, p. 194), but see also Plato (1996, p. 55). In this article, it will be assumed that this section is not an appendix to deduction two but a self-standing deduction, i.e., the third deduction.

² τὸ ἔξαιφνης can be translated as “the instant,” “the moment,” “the sudden.” τὸ ἔξαιφνης implies instantaneousness but also unexpectedness and unforeseenness. It will be left untranslated to preserve all of the shades of meaning implied in the word. For more on this, see Spyridon Rangos (2014, p. 541).

© The Author(s), 2023. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Canadian Philosophical Association/
Publié par Cambridge University Press au nom de l'Association canadienne de philosophie. This is an Open Access article,
distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>),
which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution and reproduction, provided the original article is properly cited.

a new, or more precisely an “originary,” conception of time.³ I will do this by showing that τὸ ἐξοίφνης is introduced in the third deduction to solve the relationship between *stasis* and *kinesis* that becomes problematic in the second deduction due to the notion of τὸ νῦν (the now) and the understanding of time implicit in this notion of τὸ νῦν. I will show that, for Heidegger, τὸ ἐξοίφνης not only takes the place of τὸ νῦν of deduction two but overturns the whole conception of time implied in it.

This article is divided into three main sections, which are further divided into subsections. Section 2 focuses on the concepts of *stasis*, *kinesis*, and time. Section 2.1 explicates what is meant by the concepts of *stasis* and *kinesis*, as Plato generally understands them, and how τὸ νῦν in deduction two makes change between the two difficult to reconcile. Section 2.2 makes explicit the conception of time implied in the τὸ νῦν of deduction two. Section 2.3 contrasts and compares τὸ νῦν of deduction two with τὸ νῦν in the poem of the historical Parmenides. Section 3 examines how τὸ ἐξοίφνης has been identified with eternity in the literature on Plato’s *Parmenides*. Section 3.1 examines how Ron Polansky and Joe Cimasky (2013) and Søren Kierkegaard (1980) identify τὸ ἐξοίφνης with eternity. Section 3.2 analyzes the subtle and complex account of τὸ ἐξοίφνης provided by Spyridon Rangos (2014). I argue that even though Rangos does not wholly identify τὸ ἐξοίφνης with τὸ νῦν of the second deduction, he nonetheless assimilates it into the conception of time implied in τὸ νῦν and identifies it with eternity. Lastly, in Section 4, I turn to Heidegger’s account of τὸ ἐξοίφνης in Plato’s (1996) *Parmenides* to show how it signifies an originary understanding of time. Section 4.1 outlines what Heidegger calls the “ordinary conception of time” (Heidegger, 2008, p. 374). Section 4.2 analyzes Heidegger’s account of the relationship between τὸ ἐξοίφνης and μεταβολή (change or shift) in the *Parmenides*. Section 4.3 discusses how Heidegger’s interpretation of τὸ ἐξοίφνης implies a belonging-together of past and future with the present signifying an originary account of time. Lastly, Section 4.4 briefly outlines how Heidegger’s interpretation of time in the third deduction of Plato’s *Parmenides* mirrors his account of originary temporality in *Being and Time*.

2. Stasis, Kinesis, and Time

2.1. Stasis Kinesis, and τὸ νῦν

Parmenides, in the third deduction of the *Parmenides*, endeavours to demonstrate how change from *stasis* to *kinesis* and from *kinesis* to *stasis* can be accounted for. What is implied in this demonstration, which is not made explicit in the *Parmenides*, is Plato’s understanding of *stasis* (rest) and *kinesis* (motion/process) and their relationship to τὸ νῦν. *Stasis* implies that a thing at rest remains what it is, whereas *kinesis* implies that a thing in a process never remains what it is but is constantly leaving-off what it is. Furthermore, for Plato, in τὸ νῦν, a thing can only be

³ This is argued for in the unpublished seminar that Heidegger gave in the 1930–1931 Winter semester, the transcript of which is held in the Herbert Marcuse Archive in Frankfurt am Main. The author has access to an unpublished version translated by Francisco J. Gonzalez because it was made available to graduate students enrolled in PHI5343 in the Fall semester of 2022 at the University of Ottawa. For more information on this unpublished seminar, see Gonzalez (2019), and Jussi Backman (2007).

what it is; whereas in a process, a thing, since it never *is* what it is but is in a constant process of leaving-off what it is, can never be in τὸ νῦν but must *always already* be on its way beyond τὸ νῦν towards the future; this is implied by Parmenides when, in the second deduction, he says, “if it was going forward, it could never be grasped by the now [A thing going forward is] releasing the now and reaching for the later” (152c).⁴ Kierkegaard has insight into this nature of *kinesis* when, in reference to Plato's *Parmenides*, he says, “because every moment, as well as the sum total of the moments, is a process (a passing by), no moment is a present” (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 85). However, a serious problem is encountered here because in the second deduction Parmenides also claims that if a thing is in a process, then it cannot “side-step the now, whenever a thing *is* at this point, it always stops its coming-to-be and then is whatever it may have come to be” (152d). For a process to be a genuine process, it must *always already* be on its way beyond τὸ νῦν towards the future; but it is claimed that what is in τὸ νῦν stops “coming-to-be” and can only “be,” and since what is in a process cannot sidestep τὸ νῦν, this means that what is in τὸ νῦν can never go beyond it, and thus a thing can never be in a process. This implies that “the now excludes becoming and by so doing it excludes any possibility of change” (Rangos, 2014, p. 546), a thing can only *be* what it is in the now and can never change into something other than what it is.

Since τὸ νῦν excludes any process/becoming and change (μεταβολή), then a thing cannot undergo a μεταβολή from *stasis* to *kinesis* and from *kinesis* to *stasis* in τὸ νῦν; no transition is possible in τὸ νῦν. What Parmenides seeks to grasp in the third deduction is how a μεταβολή from *stasis* to *kinesis* and from *kinesis* to *stasis*, that the concept of τὸ νῦν makes impossible, can be possible. To solve this problem, Parmenides attempts to make sense of the concept of μεταβολή itself. How can a thing that continues to be what it is (*stasis*) change (μεταβάλλειν) to leaving-off what it is (*kinesis*) and how can a thing that continues to leave-off what it is change to being what it is; what allows for this μεταβολή? Since this μεταβολή from *stasis* into *kinesis* and vice versa cannot be made sense of in τὸ νῦν, the notion of τὸ ἐξάιφνης is introduced to account for it. For Heidegger, τὸ ἐξάιφνης, in his seminar on the *Parmenides*, not only takes the place of τὸ νῦν of deduction two but overturns the whole conception of time implied in it.⁵ An in-depth analysis of τὸ ἐξάιφνης requires a further clarification of Plato's understanding of time implicit in the conception of τὸ νῦν that appears in deduction two.

2.2. τὸ νῦν and Time

Implicit in the understanding of τὸ νῦν outlined above, that makes μεταβολή between *kinesis* and *stasis* impossible, is a certain conception of time. Parmenides conceives of the “now time” as lying in-between “*was* and *will be*” (152b) — or, in other words, Parmenides conceives of the present as lying in-between and separated from the

⁴ In-text citations of this kind pertain to the Stephanus numbers (page margin numbers) found in Plato (1996).

⁵ This is not explicitly stated in Heidegger's seminar, but it is implied. This is especially evident when Heidegger discusses Aristotle's account of time in comparison to his interpretation of time as τὸ ἐξάιφνης in the *Parmenides* (Marcuse, n.d., p. 19).

past and the future that are only externally related to the present. Here past, present, and future are completely separated from each other, occupying their own distinct domains. The implication of the terms “was” and “will be” in deduction two are key to understanding why this is so. “Was” implies that a thing in the past is understood as already “having been,” with “having been” indicating that it *is not*. “Will be” implies that a thing in the future is understood as “yet to be,” with “yet to be” indicating that it *is not* yet. Effectively, the present is the only place where something properly *is*, the present only possesses a relationship to being, and whatever is in the past and future *cannot be*. The *non-being* of past and future are *excluded* from the *being* of the present. This exclusion is responsible for the fact that nothing can undergo a μεταβολή in τὸ νῦν. Change requires that “what is” (being) can leave-off what it is; this “leaving-off” is only possible if being has a relationship with non-being. For something to undergo a μεταβολή from *stasis* to *kinesis*, the being of the present has to have a relationship to the non-being of the future and past, and for something to undergo a μεταβολή from *kinesis* to *stasis*, the non-being of the future and past has to have a relationship to the being of the present, this is what the concept of τὸ ἐξείφνης makes possible on Heidegger’s account.

In deduction three, since μεταβολή cannot be accounted for through the understanding of time that is divided into past, present, and future, Heidegger argues that μεταβολή is transposed into τὸ ἐξείφνης by Parmenides. For Heidegger, this transposition implies an originary account of time. To make sense of μεταβολή proper, there needs to be a transformation of how the relationship of past and future with the present is thought. They have to be thought as belonging-together, or internally related. Time implied in τὸ νῦν of deduction two divides past, present, and future where only the present is what properly can be said *to be*, excluding it from the non-being of the past and future; whereas τὸ ἐξείφνης brings them together in a belonging-together. Let’s take a brief detour to examine how the understanding of τὸ νῦν in deduction two and the conception of time implicit in it mirror the understanding of τὸ νῦν and time in the poem of the historical Parmenides. This will help us get an insight into three things: (1) the conception of time that Plato is struggling with is already implicit in and inherited from the thought of the historical Parmenides; (2) the relationship between the historical Parmenides and the character Parmenides that Plato employs in the dialogue *Parmenides*; and (3) why τὸ νῦν in the thought of historical Parmenides as well as in Plato’s *Parmenides* should not be identified with eternity.

2.3. Historical Parmenides and τὸ νῦν

Parmenides⁶ says that being “was not, nor will it be at some time, since it is now, together, whole, One, continuous” (D8, 10).⁷ Here, being is possessed only by τὸ νῦν; this “possession” leads to precisely the same conception of time that is implied in the “now time” of deduction two of the *Parmenides* (which has been outlined in the previous sub-section). Parmenides, just like Plato’s Parmenides in deduction two,

⁶ In this sub-section, historical Parmenides will be referred to with the name “Parmenides” and the character Parmenides, in Plato’s *Parmenides*, will be referred to as “Plato’s Parmenides.”

⁷ In-text citations of this kind pertain to the fragment and page margin numbers found in Parmenides (2016).

assumes that it is only in τὸ νῦν that something can *be*. Whatever is in the past or future *cannot be*. This is why Parmenides says, “For what birth could you seek for it? ... from what could it have grown? Not from what is not — I shall not allow” (D8, 10–15); in these passages, Parmenides identifies “is” with τὸ νῦν and past and future with “is not.” Thus, the only thing that can *be* is what τὸ νῦν possesses, wherein the past and present are non-being with no inherent relationship to τὸ νῦν. It can be concluded that, for Parmenides, if being is to be being, it must be without a past or future and only possess a relation to τὸ νῦν.

The main difference between Plato's Parmenides and the historical Parmenides is that Plato's Parmenides does not deny process (*kinesis*) and change (μεταβολή) but rather just assumes it and seeks to give an account of it. But this presumption is precisely what leads to the difficulty in understanding how a μεταβολή between *kinesis* and *stasis* and vice versa is possible: Plato has inherited the conception of time where *only* τὸ νῦν possesses a relationship with being from Parmenides. Parmenides, on the one hand, does not fall into this contradiction because he outright denies *kinesis* and μεταβολή. Plato's Parmenides, on the other hand, does not deny *kinesis* and μεταβολή but brings in the concept of τὸ ἐξαιώνης to explain them by overcoming the understanding of time implied in τὸ νῦν, which separates the past, present, and future into their own distinct domains.

This account of being as pastless and futureless by Parmenides has led many to suggest that he is asserting timeless being, wherein “timeless” presumes that “what is” without time is eternal. However, Heidegger instead postulates that, “Parmenides never claims ... that Being is timeless, without temporal relation; a fortiori there is nothing here about eternity” (Heidegger, 2015, p. 127). In effect, the determination of being as “it is now” is not a determination of timelessness or eternity but a determination of *time itself* being identified with τὸ νῦν. τὸ νῦν, for Parmenides, is an element of time and not of eternity. This is likewise how τὸ νῦν is understood in the second deduction of the *Parmenides* and is the reason that Plato's Parmenides explicitly refers to it as the “now time” (152b, emphasis mine). Before I turn to Heidegger's account of τὸ ἐξαιώνης, a further examination of how τὸ ἐξαιώνης has often been identified with eternity in the literature requires our attention.

3. τὸ ἐξαιώνης and Eternity

Parmenides describes τὸ ἐξαιώνης as being “in no time at all” (156e) and as being literally “out of place” (*atopon*) (156d). This identification of τὸ ἐξαιώνης with “no time” and *atopon* has led many scholars to assume that τὸ ἐξαιώνης is linked with eternity. *Atopon* seems to imply a link to eternity because in time a thing is understood to be in some definite state or another, that is to say a thing has a *place* (*topos*). The description of τὸ ἐξαιώνης as *atopon* (or *a-topos*) has led to suggestions that τὸ ἐξαιώνης is “out of place” in the sense that it has no place in time, and since it has no place in time, then it must be out of time, i.e., eternal.

3.1. Polansky and Cimasky and Kierkegaard

Polansky and Cimasky, in their article “Counting the Hypotheses in Plato's *Parmenides*” identify τὸ ἐξαιώνης with eternity, in the sense that τὸ ἐξαιώνης

signifies “the moment of transition [that] is not extended in time” (Polansky & Cimasky, 2013, p. 236). For them this “not extended in time” implies that the conception of time as extension (time as a mere aggregate of nows separated into past, present, and future as distinct domains) is maintained and τὸ ἐξαιφνης as non-extended is completely removed from the temporal stretch. In being removed from time, τὸ ἐξαιφνης is taken to be the opposite of time, namely eternal. Polansky and Cimasky explicitly refer to it as “the eternal ‘instant’” (Polansky & Cimasky, 2013, p. 240) and that which is in τὸ ἐξαιφνης as “unchangingly outside time” (Polansky & Cimasky, 2013, p. 237). Thus, the conception of τὸ ἐξαιφνης here is not understood to imply a new understanding of time but is instead identified with the eternal to make sense of its being in “no time” and its *atopon* character. Furthermore, Polansky and Cimasky’s adherence to the conception of time as a stretch where τὸ νῦν is the only real part of the time is implied, although not explicitly stated, in their statement that the “‘now’ is the sensible analogue to the ‘instant’, which is not in time at all” (Polansky & Cimasky, 2013, p. 239). The issue with Polansky and Cimasky’s conception is that Parmenides never explicitly identifies τὸ ἐξαιφνης with eternity; instead, it is simply assumed that the concept of τὸ ἐξαιφνης being in “no time” means that it ought to be identified with eternity.

Kierkegaard, in speaking of τὸ ἐξαιφνης, says, “Nothing is as swift as a blink of an eye, and yet it is commensurable with the content of the eternal What we call the moment, Plato calls τὸ ἐξαιφνης [the sudden] The moment is not properly an atom of time but an atom of eternity” (Kierkegaard, 1980, pp. 87–88).⁸ τὸ ἐξαιφνης for Kierkegaard is not completely removed from time as stretch, as it is for Polansky and Cimasky; rather, he identifies it as a *trace* of eternity within time (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 87). This is because time for Kierkegaard is not conceived of as mere aggregate of atomistic nows but is conceived of as a process of passing by where no moment properly *is*, no moment is properly present (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 85). The present moment understood as τὸ ἐξαιφνης is not an atom of time through which the past moves into the future; rather, for Kierkegaard, if the present moment is to have real presence, it must be understood as a *trace* of eternity which allows for eternity *amidst* the passing by of time. Thus, the present, τὸ ἐξαιφνης, is “not properly an atom of time but an atom of eternity.” Again, Kierkegaard likewise makes the mistake of connecting τὸ ἐξαιφνης with eternity, which is part of time understood as a stretch, but he nonetheless offers the important insight that Parmenides seeks to retain a temporal relation with this concept.⁹

3.2. Rangos

Rangos (2014) provides a subtler account of τὸ ἐξαιφνης in his article “Plato on the Nature of the Sudden Moment, and the Asymmetry of the Second Part of the *Parmenides*” than the ones mentioned above. It is, in many respects, quite close to Heidegger’s own account. The key difference, however, is that while Rangos understands τὸ ἐξαιφνης as not wholly identified with unchanging eternity, it is nonetheless assimilated into the conception of time as a stretch and connected to eternity. In

⁸ See Kierkegaard (1980, pp. 82–84, footnote 2). Here, Kierkegaard gives detailed analysis of τὸ ἐξαιφνης in Plato’s *Parmenides* (as detailed as a footnote can be, that is).

⁹ For more on Kierkegaard’s understanding of τὸ ἐξαιφνης, see David Humbert’s (1983) wonderful article.

this section, I will show how this is the case. Rangos does not identify τὸ ἐξαιφνης with unchanging eternity because he is aware of the contradiction that the understanding of τὸ νῦν in deduction two creates between *stasis* and *kinesis* that has been outlined in Section 2. He argues that τὸ ἐξαιφνης is introduced to solve this contradiction. Rangos claims that τὸ ἐξαιφνης is not identical with τὸ νῦν because τὸ νῦν is closed off to *kinesis* whereas τὸ ἐξαιφνης is open to, and makes possible, *kinesis*.¹⁰ So, a complicated account of τὸ ἐξαιφνης that is open to becoming is given. But nonetheless, I would like to show, it is tied to the concept of time implied in τὸ νῦν of deduction two and to eternity for Rangos. Let's briefly outline Rangos's insightful account so it can be shown why this is so.

3.2.1. τὸ ἐξαιφνης and Time as a Stretch

Rangos argues that in the *Parmenides* time is inherently understood as a stretch. However, τὸ ἐξαιφνης is claimed to be “in no time.” This means that τὸ ἐξαιφνης is in “no time” in the sense that it is *inherently* not a stretch. Nonetheless, τὸ ἐξαιφνης is not “outside” the temporal stretch (which can be represented on a line) because Rangos conceives of it as a non-extended point *within* the temporal line or stretch. Even though τὸ ἐξαιφνης cannot be part of time as stretch, this does not mean that it cannot be a “duration-less point in the temporal flow” (Rangos, 2014, p. 545). So, τὸ ἐξαιφνης is not in time because it does not possess what any part of time must *inherently* possess, namely stretch, extension, or duration, but it is nonetheless an element of this temporal line as an *un-extended* point. Un-extended points lack the most important feature of a temporal line, namely extension, but it can nonetheless be said that there are un-extended points everywhere and anywhere on the line. In his own words:

From the account of τὸ ἐξαιφνης that I have given so far, it follows that the sudden moment must be everywhere along the temporal axis without however being part of time as duration. (Rangos, 2014, p. 546)

It can already be seen here that for Rangos τὸ ἐξαιφνης does not imply the overcoming of the understanding of time as a stretch but is rather assimilated, as a dimensionless point, into it, mirroring Kierkegaard's account in many ways. But how is this notion of τὸ ἐξαιφνης connected to eternity? To understand this, Rangos conception of the relationship between τὸ ἐξαιφνης and τὸ νῦν needs to be discussed.

3.2.2. τὸ ἐξαιφνης as Eternal

Rangos argues that τὸ ἐξαιφνης of the third deduction should not be identified with τὸ νῦν of the second deduction. It has been shown earlier that τὸ νῦν of the second deduction is that aspect of the present that excludes all *kinesis* and, thus, denies any possibility of change (μεταβολή). Rangos acknowledges this point and argues that τὸ ἐξαιφνης is introduced in the third deduction precisely to overcome this difficulty. As he says:

¹⁰ This is discussed in Section 3.2.2.

The now cannot be the locus of becoming, i.e., of change as a process. The now can only host Being. With the introduction of the notion of the now Parmenides, and by implication Plato, wanted to indicate that *in the midst of Becoming there is always a trace of Being*. It is this conclusion of the second deduction, I take it, that led Parmenides to introduce, in the third deduction, a new concept which would allow the interplay of Being and Becoming to occur. And this new concept is no other than the sudden moment [τὸ ἐξαιφνης]. (Rangos, 2014, p. 547)

For Rangos, τὸ ἐξαιφνης is the odd aspect of the present that is *open* to μεταβολή and allows for it, whereas the now (τὸ νῦν) is the other aspect of the present that is closed off to μεταβολή and as a consequence to *kinesis*. A thing is always in the now in the sense that it has being and does not become, but at the same time a thing is always in τὸ ἐξαιφνης in that it is open to and has the *potential* to become other, to leave-off what it is. τὸ ἐξαιφνης is that which is open to and allows for becoming to be and being to become, it makes possible the interplay between being and becoming (*stasis* and *kinesis*) that τὸ νῦν of the second deduction is unable to permit. What is implied in the claim that τὸ ἐξαιφνης is that aspect of the present that is open to *kinesis*? What is the nature of this *kinesis* as understood by Rangos?

Whatever is advancing in time is in τὸ νῦν in the sense that *it is*, and it is in τὸ ἐξαιφνης in that this “it is” is open to and always has the potential to become other, to leave-off what it is. This means that τὸ ἐξαιφνης is an *ever-present* element as *the potential to become other*. However, τὸ ἐξαιφνης fully manifests itself only occasionally for Rangos. When a thing is in motion, it is ascribed the predicate of motion, no matter how fast or slow or whichever direction it is moving. This predicate does not apply to the same object *only* when it comes to rest. So, even though τὸ ἐξαιφνης is in principle present in all minor and/or major *changes* of speed and direction, making these *changes* possible, it only fully manifests itself in *major shifts* when certain key predicates (forms) are gained or lost (Rangos, 2014, p. 551). What this gaining and losing of predicates implies is that τὸ ἐξαιφνης is that aspect of the present that makes possible the transition of participation from one *eternal* form to the other.

So, τὸ νῦν is that aspect of the present that allows the thing to be what it is. τὸ ἐξαιφνης is that other aspect of the present that allows this “it is” to lose or gain key property(s) and become other. This means that τὸ ἐξαιφνης is that aspect of the present moment that allows for an eternal form or property of a thing to *leave-off* and for another form or property that is *not yet* to *come to be*. But what is the status of the property that “leaves-off” and the property that is not yet that “comes to be” here? Does the property that leaves-off vanish into the non-being of the past? Does the property that is “not yet” come to be from a non-existing future? It seems to me that this is *not* the case. Rather, the forms that leave-off the present and the forms that come-to-be in the present, come and leave directly *out of and into eternity* through τὸ ἐξαιφνης. τὸ ἐξαιφνης for Rangos has no connection with past or future but with the eternal forms themselves. If my interpretation of Rangos is correct, then it is evident that all that is actual is the present-time alone and past and future are divided off as unreal (non-being). τὸ ἐξαιφνης is connected to eternity in the sense that it lets eternal forms leave-off and come-to-be in the

present time and it is in this sense then that τὸ ἐξαιφνης makes *kinesis* and μεταβολή possible for Rangos. This is what seems to be implied in Rangos's claim that "Both the now and the sudden are traces of eternity in time" (Rangos, 2014, p. 552). τὸ ἐξαιφνης does not open us to future or past, but it connects us to the eternal forms that are not in time, and in this sense, it is understood as a trace of eternity in time. For Heidegger, by contrast, as I explain in the next section, it cannot be said that the "sudden moment [τὸ ἐξαιφνης] is always in the present" (Rangos, 2014, p. 546) excluding past and future, but rather that the τὸ ἐξαιφνης signifies the belonging-together of the present with the past and future.

4. Heidegger's Interpretation of τὸ ἐξαιφνης

It has been shown that the understanding of time implied in τὸ νῦν of deduction two assumes a complete separation of the present from the past and the future. This understanding of time does not allow for a μεταβολή from *stasis* to *kinesis* and vice versa. According to Heidegger, this is solved by τὸ ἐξαιφνης of deduction three by presenting a new, or rather a more originary, conception of time where past and future are thought of as belonging-together with the present. Let's look at what this new conception of time is and how it is tied to the notion of τὸ ἐξαιφνης.

4.1. Ordinary Conception of Time

The understanding of time implicit in τὸ νῦν of deduction two signifies what Heidegger in his own work calls the "ordinary conception of time" (Heidegger, 2008, p. 374), and which I will refer to as the "representational understanding of time." Representational understanding of time is derived out of the *measurement* of change. Entities are seen changing from one state to another and out of this *perception* arises the measurement of change, which entails the representational understanding of time. Take the example of a ball that was hot but now is cold; perception categorizes this change into the past which is no longer (perception of ball that *was* hot); present which only is (perception of ball which *is* cold); and the future which *is not* yet. Through this measurement of change, by means of perception, an understanding of time emerges that prioritizes the present since it is only what properly *is*, separating it from *was* (the past) and *will be* (the future) that occupy distinct domains that *are not*, and are external to the present. This representational understanding of time, emerging through perception of change, inherently leads to the problem of μεταβολή, as discussed earlier.

4.2. μεταβολή and τὸ ἐξαιφνης

The difficulty in understanding a μεταβολή from *stasis* to *kinesis* and vice versa — a difficulty that emerges due to the representational understanding of time — is what leads Parmenides to the notion of τὸ ἐξαιφνης in deduction three. To make sense of change from *stasis* to *kinesis* and vice versa, there first needs to be an understanding of μεταβολή itself. Since the conception of the present in the representational understanding of time cannot make sense of μεταβολή, Parmenides transposes μεταβολή

in τὸ ἐξαιφνης (156d). According to Heidegger, this transposition signifies a conception of measureless time (Marcuse, n.d., p. 19). “Measureless” signifies a non-representational, *pre-perceptual*, understanding of time. *Prior* to the understanding of time that emerges from perceptual measurement of change, representational understanding, there is a more *originary* understanding of time. This is the understanding of “measureless” time that τὸ ἐξαιφνης in the third deduction signifies. To gain an insight into this, let’s first clarify what τὸ ἐξαιφνης precisely entails.

Heidegger points out that τὸ ἐξαιφνης entails two things: (1) the “unforeseen,” and (2) and the “at once.” (1) The “unforeseen” implies that τὸ ἐξαιφνης resists measurement or representation, it has the character of the “unexpected” or it has the character of, as is said in common parlance, “out of the blue.” This is indicated when τὸ ἐξαιφνης is conceived of as being in “no time” (156e) and *atopon* (156d) by Parmenides. The identification of τὸ ἐξαιφνης with “no time” does not mean that τὸ ἐξαιφνης is outside time, eternal, but only that it does not fit into the conception of time that emerges out of perceptual measurement of change which is perceived as occurring in some determinate entity — i.e., it does not fit into the representational understanding of time. This is implied in the following passage by Heidegger:

The *exaiphnes* is no characteristic of time, is no time; “no time” means only: no time in which and at which a thing is a determinate something, no time through which something could be counted (Aristotle!). (Marcuse, n.d., p. 18)

(2) The “at once” implies that τὸ ἐξαιφνης takes place “in one moment,” meaning that it is not stretched out in any way but has the characteristic of taking place “all-of-a-sudden.”

So, τὸ ἐξαιφνης has the characteristic of “unforeseen” and the “at once,” and since in deduction three μεταβολή is transported into τὸ ἐξαιφνης, this means that μεταβολή must inherently have these characteristics. First, μεταβολή must be understood as that which is “unforeseen,” as that which cannot be measured or represented, undermining the conception of time that emerges out of the perceptual measurement of μεταβολή. Second, μεταβολή must be understood as occurring “at once.” This “at once” signifies that μεταβολή is not stretched out in any way but occurs all-of-a-sudden. This implies that the three domains of time (was, is, will be) cannot be divided into their own separate domains but are squeezed down to a point — to the “at once.” The two characteristics that μεταβολή takes up by being transposed into τὸ ἐξαιφνης are pointed out in the following passage by Heidegger:

The all-of-a-sudden [τὸ ἐξαιφνης] has no duration and stretch; it cannot be measured. Unforeseen: it is that which cannot be foreseen, that which resists all measuring (Marcuse, n.d., p. 19)

4.3. Belonging-Together of Past and Future with the Present

The idea that μεταβολή implies a squeezing down of time to a point by being transposed to τὸ ἐξαιφνης is explained by Heidegger in the following passage:

Through the transposition of *metabole* in the *exaiphnes*, time is, as it were, squeezed down to a point so that it loses its character of being stretched out Time (as stretch) disappears (Marcuse, n.d., p. 19)

For Heidegger, τὸ ἐξαιώνης does not signify eternity or some abstract dimensionless point on a line. Rather, the transposition of μεταβολή in τὸ ἐξαιώνης implies that time is no longer understood as separated into distinct domains of past, present, and future, which can be represented on a line; rather, there is a reduction of the past, present, and future to a point, to an “at once.” This reduction does not mean the abandonment of the difference between past, present, and future to some kind of undifferentiated unity. Rather, it implies a *belonging-together* of the three. This “belonging-together” is hinted at by Parmenides in the following passage, in Mary Louise Gill and Paul Ryan's and Heidegger's translations, while discussing τὸ ἐξαιώνης:

The instant seems to signify something such that changing occurs *from* it to each of the two states. (Plato, 1996, 156d, emphasis mine)

Out of the sudden what changes, as changing, changes *into* each of the two. (Marcuse, n.d., p. 18).

This is the passage, often glossed over, that for Heidegger hints at a new conception of time. μεταβολή does not occur *in* time if time is understood as a stretch separating past and future from the present. Rather, μεταβολή occurs *in* and *out of* τὸ ἐξαιώνης. μεταβολή occurring *in* and *out of* τὸ ἐξαιώνης, for Heidegger, implies that μεταβολή must be understood through the characteristics of τὸ ἐξαιώνης, meaning that μεταβολή must be understood *as* τὸ ἐξαιώνης. Now, since μεταβολή is identified with τὸ ἐξαιώνης, this entails that the three domains of μεταβολή are also identified with τὸ ἐξαιώνης, as I have already hinted at. Was, is, and will be must be “unforeseen” and occur “at once.” The “unforeseen” here entails that these three domains of μεταβολή must be grasped in some way prior to any perceptual measurement, or representation, of determinate entities. The “at once” implies that past and future *belong-together* with the present, they are internal to the present in some way. But how is one to understand this “belonging-together”? In speaking of τὸ ἐξαιώνης, Parmenides says:

to [εἰς] it and *from* [ἐκ] it the moving thing changes to resting and the resting thing changes to moving. (156e, emphasis mine)

This passage, in light of the passage quoted above, implies that the “to” and “from” occurs *from out of* τὸ ἐξαιώνης. This is what is meant by the claim that time has been squeezed down to a point, meaning that the “to-from” *belong-together*. This, for Heidegger, means:

That which is becoming is already, *before one perceives it*, unforeseen, slipping away, already underway, — but it is *at once* also already arriving. In the ἐκ [from] is *already* found the εἰς [towards] and in the εἰς is still found the ἐκ. (Marcuse, n.d., p. 19, emphasis mine)

Since ἐκ and εἰς occur in τὸ ἐξοίφνης *at once*, it necessarily follows that *in* τὸ ἐξοίφνης, the εἰς is *internal* to the ἐκ and the ἐκ is *internal* to the εἰς. This means that *from* which something comes to be, the past, and that *towards* which something slips away, the future, belong-together in τὸ ἐξοίφνης. Here, past and future are *not* thought of as being separated from the present occupying their own distinct domains. In τὸ ἐξοίφνης, past does not come first, which afterwards moves to the future, but the future *always already* includes the past within itself, and the past *always already* is underway in the future, occurring at once, unforeseen in τὸ ἐξοίφνης; or it could be said to be occurring at once, unforeseen, in *the present*. Here τὸ ἐξοίφνης signifies a new concept of presence or the present. How are we to understand this new conception of the present and the belonging-together or occurrence at once, of the past, present, and future more concretely?

To grasp this, the future must not be understood as that which is *not yet* but *will be* later on. Rather, the future must be understood as that which is *to come*. Since the future is understood as that which is *coming*, it must always already be coming *back towards* (εἰς) the *from* (ἐκ). So, the future is that which is coming, and this coming implies that it is always already coming *back towards* what-has-been, the past; the εἰς is always already coming towards the ἐκ. The past here is not something that is no longer, rather *in* the future's process of *coming* is *entailed* that it is always already in the process of *having been*, the past is intertwined with the future's coming. This process of future's coming to the past occurs *in* the present, *in* τὸ ἐξοίφνης.¹¹ In short, the transposition of μεταβολή in τὸ ἐξοίφνης implies that the future, as that which is coming, is coming towards what-has-been, occurring *in* and out of τὸ ἐξοίφνης, the present. This, then, is what is meant by the claim that *in* τὸ ἐξοίφνης, the εἰς is *internal* to the ἐκ and the ἐκ is *internal* to the εἰς and this is the belonging-together of the past and future with the present, signifying a new conception of time. In the ordinary conception of time, past and future, the ἐκ and εἰς, are not internal to the present (τὸ νῦν); they do not belong-together with the present, but are external to it occupying their own distinct domains, merely externally related to the present.

This analysis remains quite abstract, and its significance is not immediately evident. To get a brief insight into its significance and to try to bring it down to earth a bit, let's briefly look at Heidegger's account of original temporality in *Being and Time*, which mirrors the account of time in deduction three of the *Parmenides* in a different context.

4.4. *Plato's Parmenides and Heidegger's Being and Time*

Having explained the conception of time implied by the transposition of μεταβολή in τὸ ἐξοίφνης, Heidegger goes on to claim that "the inner connection between time and *psyche* becomes evident; Aristotle: without the soul there is no time!" (Marcuse, n.d., p. 19). However, it is not clear what this means; Heidegger does not justify or explain this claim at all in the seminar. One can get a hint of what this identification of time with the soul means as well as a deeper insight into

¹¹ In *Being and Time*, this process of futures coming to the past is described as being "released" into the present rather than "occurring" in τὸ ἐξοίφνης. See Section 4.4.

Heidegger's analysis of time in deduction three of the *Parmenides* by looking at Heidegger's account of originary temporality in *Being and Time*. In *Being and Time* Heidegger's aim, at least in the part of the book that was published, is not to make sense of how *kinesis* and μεταβολή are possible as it is in the second and third deduction of the *Parmenides*. Rather, he seeks to understand the being of the human being. His analysis penultimately leads him to a conception of originary temporality¹² that mirrors his analysis of time in the third deduction of the *Parmenides*:

Temporalizing does not signify that ecstases come in a "succession". The future is *not later* than having been, and having been is *not earlier* than the Present. Temporality temporalizes itself as a future which makes present in a process of having been. (Heidegger, 2008, p. 401)

The ordinary conception of time implies that the past is no longer, the future is not yet and only the present is what properly *is*. This ordinary conception prioritizes the present because it is only what *is*, separating it from past and future as that which *are not*. This assumes a series of now moments to which past and future remain external. For Heidegger, however, *prior* to this ordinary conception, the human being is *always already* in anticipation of the future, which is *coming* towards us. Future does not mean a "now" that is not yet actual but will be actual for the first time later. Rather, the future is that which is coming (*Kunft*); it is coming *back to us*. This anticipation of the future, which is coming back to us, is coming back to us who *are as we already were*; as carrying what-*has-been*, the past, within ourselves (Heidegger, 2008, p. 373). "What has been" here signifies that which the future is coming back to is us who are the product of their past, carrying the past within themselves, the past being the culture and the history in which one finds oneself. In this sense, the past is always already entailed in the futures coming towards us. That which is opened up in the anticipation of the future is our having-been-ness (*Gewesenheit*), which is "released" into the present moment of action or encounter. This present moment can be referred to as the "ecstatic moment," mirroring the notion of τὸ ἐξάιωνης in the *Parmenides*. What does this being "released" in the present moment of action or encounter mean? It is only in the present that one's acts or encounters have presence. Any present encounter or action *always already implies* future anticipation that opens itself to the past that is released into the present encounter or action. To use an ontic example, when I pick up the hammer to hammer a nail, there is an anticipation of that for which I am hammering. This anticipation of that which is *to come* from hammering a nail opens me up to my past know-how of how to hammer. This anticipation that opens itself to the past know-how is released into the present action of hammering. It is in this sense, then, that the future and past is *always already there assumed* in all present action or encounter. The hammer does not merely lie there *present-at-hand* indifferent to the past and future.

In this all-too-brief sketch, it can be seen that the original phenomenon of time in *Being and Time* mirrors Heidegger's analysis of time as τὸ ἐξάιωνης in the

¹² For a more detailed analysis of originary temporality, see Stephan Käufer (2013, 2015, Sections IV and V).

Parmenides. Deduction three of the *Parmenides* argues that the *from* and *towards* of the μεταβολή occurs in τὸ ἐξοίφνης. The future as that which is coming is *always already* in the process of having been, occurring, or it could be said being *released*, in τὸ ἐξοίφνης. *Being and Time* argues that anticipation of the future is *always already* in the process of coming towards us, us who are their “has been,” their past, which is released, or it could be said *occurs*, in the ecstatic moment. Both accounts mirror each other and imply a simultaneous belonging-together of the past and future with the present. What is also evident in our analysis of originary temporality in *Being and Time* — which is not immediately evident in the *Parmenides* — is that this “originary temporality” describes the most primordial structure of *human* existence. This perhaps is what is meant by Heidegger’s claim about “the inner connection between time and psyche” in the seminar on the *Parmenides*. However, it is not at all clear what leads him to claim this based on what is said in the *Parmenides*. What is it that is said in the *Parmenides* that hints at this inner connection between time and psyche? Is it because τὸ ἐξοίφνης is inherently an occurrence of *human* existence? Or can τὸ ἐξοίφνης be conceived of as a part of human independent “reality” in some way? The answer to this question is not clear.

5. Conclusion

In this article, I have argued, with Heidegger, that the notion of τὸ ἐξοίφνης in the third deduction does not signify eternity, or a trace of eternity in time, but rather implies a radically new, or an originary, conception of time, which implies the belonging-together of the past and future with the present. First, I showed how in the second deduction the relationship between *stasis* and *kinesis* becomes problematic due to the notion of τὸ νῦν. Second, I showed that the conception of time implicit in τὸ νῦν of the second deduction leads Parmenides to posit τὸ ἐξοίφνης in order to solve the problematic relationship between *stasis* and *kinesis*. Third, I showed how τὸ ἐξοίφνης has often been identified with eternity in the literature. Lastly, I showed how, on Heidegger’s view, τὸ ἐξοίφνης in the third deduction of the *Parmenides* does not signify eternity in any sense but rather signifies an originary conception of time — the belonging-together of past and future with the present.

Acknowledgements. I am thankful to Professor Francisco J. Gonzalez for conducting an insightful seminar on Plato’s *Parmenides* during the Fall semester of 2022 at the University of Ottawa. The seminar piqued my interest in this project. Additionally, I extend my appreciation to Jill Flohil for her valuable assistance, and to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback. Lastly, I would like to thank my friend Amy Hull for her editing support with the paper, and Professor Boris Hennig for his feedback.

Competing interests. The author declares none.

References

- Backman, J. (2007). All of a sudden: Heidegger and Plato’s *Parmenides*. *Epoché*, 11(2), 393–408. <https://doi.org/10.5840/epoche200711219>
- Cornford, F. M. (2010). *Plato and Parmenides*. Routledge.
- Gonzalez, F. J. (2019). Shattering presence: Being as change, time as the sudden instant in Heidegger’s 1930–31 seminar on Plato’s *Parmenides*. *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 57(2), 313–338. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.2019.0027>

- Heidegger, M. (2008). *Being and time*. (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). HarperPerennial/Modern Thought.
- Heidegger, M. (2015). *The beginning of Western philosophy: Interpretation of Anaximander and Parmenides*. (R. Rojcewicz, Trans.). Indiana University Press.
- Humbert, D. (1983). Kierkegaard's use of Plato in his analysis of the moment in time. *Dionysius*, 7, 149–183.
- Käufer, S. (2013). Temporality as the ontological sense of care. In M. A. Wrathall (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Heidegger's Being and time* (pp. 338–359). Cambridge University Press.
- Käufer, S. (2015). Heidegger's interpretation of Kant. In D. O. Dahlstrom (Ed.), *Interpreting Heidegger* (pp. 174–196). Cambridge University Press.
- Kierkegaard, S. (1980). *The concept of anxiety: A simple psychologically orienting deliberation on the dogmatic issue of hereditary sin*. (R. Thomte, Ed. and Trans.). Princeton University Press.
- Marcuse, H. (n.d.). *Plato's Parmenides (Seminar) 1930-31: Unpublished Herbert Marcuse transcript*. (F. J. Gonzalez, Trans.). Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg. Germany, Archivzentrum, Na 3, 19 (0020.01).
- Parmenides. (2016). *Early Greek philosophy, Western Greek thinkers, Part 2*. (G. W. Most & Laks André, Eds. and Trans.). Harvard University Press.
- Plato. (1996). *Parmenides*. (M. L. Gill & P. Ryan, Trans.). Hackett.
- Polansky, R., & Cimasky, J. (2013). Counting the hypotheses in Plato's *Parmenides*. *Apeiron*, 46(3), 229–243. <https://doi.org/10.1515/apeiron-2013-0014>
- Rangos, S. (2014). Plato on the nature of the sudden moment, and the asymmetry of the second part of the *Parmenides*. *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review*, 53(3), 538–574. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0012217314000912>