

Consideration of Hegel, Heidegger and Rangos with respect to the Interrelationships of Deductions in the *Parmenides* of Plato

Brad Thomson

We shall inquire into the deductions in Plato's *Parmenides*. How many deductions are there? To what extent may the deductions be said to be true? Is there a key to understanding the interrelationships that exist between the deductions? We will consider the interpretations of the *Parmenides* offered by Hegel, Heidegger and Spyridon Rangos. Let us begin with Hegel.

In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel states, “The fully worked-out and genuine dialectic [of Plato] is... contained in the *Parmenides*- that most famous masterpiece of Platonic dialectic.”¹ Hegel suggests that the proper exercise for attaining to truth is to consider such ideas as *beauty*, *justice* and *goodness*. We must consider that which thought alone can grasp. Hegel will note that Plato places great emphasis upon the “dialectical point of view”, a process where pure thoughts become the “opposite of themselves”, and then return back to themselves, thereby demonstrating that the “unity of opposites” is what is true. In response to Plato's paradoxical closing words of the *Parmenides* (166b), Hegel opines, “This result may seem strange.”² We do not disagree. The result appears strange because normally we think about particular beings, we do not often consider such abstractions as *one*, *being*, *movement* and so forth as Ideas themselves. Hegel states, “...but these universals are taken as

1 *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, University of Nebraska Press, 1995, translated by E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, Volume Two, page 56. Future references to this work will be referred to simply as Hegel.

2 Hegel, page 56.

Ideas, and this Dialogue thus really contains the pure Platonic doctrine of Ideas.”³ These are enlightening thoughts. Hegel seems to express the opinion that Plato *does* have a “theory” of forms, but that the “theory” is in actuality a *methodology*. Hegel observes that, “...universals are taken as Ideas...” Thus the “theory” is not a static enunciation of a hierarchy of immutable forms, or universals, with *The Good* placed upon a pedestal. The movement of thought is involved. Plato's doctrine of Ideas is his dialectical approach to the performing of philosophy itself. It is, one might say, the meeting of epistemology and ontology. This may be considered to be a *radical* interpretation of Plato, but it seems to be what Hegel is suggesting. No utterly unchanging, steadfast and permanent forms remain, for they are Ideas grasped only in and through the movement of thought. The forms have being in and through their particular instantiations in thought, but they do not subsist independently by this interpretation. Hence its *radical* nature.

Hegel does not directly address the question of the number of deductions in the *Parmenides*. But given what we know, what inference might we reasonably adduce? What constitutes a dialectic for Hegel? Many things no doubt, but one is this. A dialectic is a form of presentation that contains a thesis, an antithesis and a synthesis as distinct moments. Dialectical arguments, or demonstrations, unfold in such a manner. The simplest form of dialectic contains three moments. The *thesis-antithesis-synthesis* distinction. If a dialectic were to continue, the third moment as synthesis of the first and second moments would function also as a new

³ *Ibid.*

thesis to a fourth moment antithesis which would in turn lead to resolution through another synthesis, a fifth moment, and so on. At each stage in the dialectical process, if we count, the moment which as synthesis becomes the next thesis to be opposed is always of an odd number in the ordering. A one-stage dialectic has three moments, a two-stage dialectic has five, a three-stage dialectic has seven, and a *four*-stage dialectic will be in possession of exactly *nine* moments. A presumed dialectic with an even number of moments would for any decent Hegelian be out of the question. This would mean that the last moment was an antithesis rather than a synthesis. Hegel is most certainly of the opinion that there cannot be an even number of deductions in the *Parmenides*. But how many are there? We know that Plato makes particular note of a methodology (136a). Hegel quotes this passage that describes four pairs of opposing deductions, adding to eight in total. This number will not satisfy him. There will be required another deduction that provides for an *original* dialectical synthesis of the other eight. And we arrive at a total of nine deductions. Where shall this new and *original* synthesizing deduction be placed in relation to the others? The answer is readily apparent from what we have already observed. A one-stage dialectic will possess three moments, the third providing the synthesis of the previous two. If the dialectic advances beyond one stage, then the synthesizing power of the third deduction will be carried over throughout and all moments will be resolved therethrough. But this will not be the case if the extra deduction functions anywhere other than third. We contend, therefore, that for Hegel there are nine deductions in Plato's *Parmenides*. Further, we believe that Hegel offers a

radical interpretation of Plato that calls for the third deduction to be distinct from the other eight in an *original* synthesizing manner.

In his paper, *Plato on the Nature of the Sudden Moment, and the Asymmetry of the Second Part of the Parmenides*, Spyridon Rangos expresses a position that is consistent with our analysis of Hegel. Rangos points out that it is argued by some that the balance and symmetry of the second half of the *Parmenides* would be lost if there were nine deductions rather than eight. He uses Cornford as an example and quotes, "...a peculiar problem is presented by any sort of becoming in time: the question when exactly becoming takes place. Accordingly an appendix or corollary is here added... It has no claim to the status, which many assign to it, of a ninth independent Hypothesis."⁴ Rangos is not convinced. For it is not the case that, "...Parmenides had clearly indicated the existence of eight, and only eight deductions in his programmatic exposition of his dialectical method."⁵ It is to be observed that Rangos does not consider the interpretations of those who would dismiss the import of the "so-called" third deduction altogether⁶. Almost as if they are beneath consideration. Further, we notice that Cornford does not suggest that the passage in question is extraneous to the dialectic. Cornford recognizes the importance of the passage. He simply suggests that it belongs within the second deduction rather than being deserving of independent status. While no Hegelian, neither is Cornford a proponent of any interpretation that

4 *Plato on the Nature of the Sudden Moment, and the Asymmetry of the Second Part of the Parmenides*, Spyridon Rangos, Sub-section 2.1, page 558. Future references to this paper will be referred to simply as Rangos.

5 *Ibid.*, page 559.

6 Meinwald, Palmer. There are others, Allen for example, who accept its existence but attribute to the third deduction a lesser status.

dismisses deduction three altogether. So where is our answer to be found? We find that Plato himself writes, “To take up the argument yet a third time...”⁷ This appears to leave little doubt. In fact, as Rangos observes, “...Plato seems to have been very eager to underline it [the third deduction]. The third deduction *stands out*...”⁸ Yes.

In his 1930-1931 seminar on Plato's *Parmenides*, Heidegger not only expresses agreement, but also offers his fullest interpretation of the dialogue and considerably more besides when he announces, “...9 ways of proceeding: for the positive and the negative hypothesis there are in each case a thesis and antithesis twice over; that gives 8 ways. The third way... is the *centerpiece of the entire dialogue*... the highest point positively attained by Plato; he here gives the determination of being as μεταβολή.”⁹ This is a remarkable statement in need of unpacking. Heidegger contends that there are nine deductions and that the third is unique, or *original*, and further that it resolves the other eight deductions that are related as pairs of *theses* and *antitheses*. But this is the least of his proclamations. For he goes on to suggest that this represents the “highest point” in all of Plato's philosophy. Further, Heidegger makes his claim precisely because *being* is defined as *change*, this interpretation of Plato representing the complete opposite of most traditional historical interpretations of Plato's thought. Including Heidegger's own! (We argue that Hegel is an exception.) Most interpretations of Plato, we know, contend that he presents an *unchanging*

⁷ *Parmenides*, Cornford translation, 155e.

⁸ Rangos, Sub-section 2.2, page 563.

⁹ *Plato's Parmenides (Seminar) 1930-31*, Herbert Marcuse transcript, translated by Francisco J. Gonzales, March 2018, page 7, section after spacing. Future references to this seminar will be referred to simply as Marcuse transcript. Text in square brackets [] is our own, except when stated in the specific footnote that it is Heidegger's.

realm of forms to be what is most real, or true. But by Heidegger's *radical* interpretation (shared by Hegel we contend) the status of the forms themselves is brought into question. For nothing remains permanent but becoming, or change.

To what extent may the series of deductions in the *Parmenides* be said to be true? Hegel comments upon the distinction between the one and the being of the one and finds problems. Only by understanding *one* as synonymous with *is* in the statement *the one is* are we allowing for a one that is not already predefined as two in some sense. Thus there is an impurity in the dialectic. Hegel writes, “There hence is in the proposition “the one is” a distinction; the many is therefore contained in it, and thus even with the one I express the many.”¹⁰ Hegel states that the dialectic is “correct” but not quite “pure” for this reason. He is perfectly content with the structure of dialectic in the *Parmenides*, but Hegel is concerned over its hypothetical starting point which already predicates twice of the one and thus never actually starts with it.¹¹ Hegel will therefore conclude that, “...the result arrived at in the *Parmenides* may not satisfy us, since it seems to be negative in character...”¹² For Hegel, what is *true* in the *Parmenides* is the dialectical process itself, in other words, the methodology, or the approach to learning. In short, Plato's doctrine of Ideas. What is not true is the result. And this is due to the impure separation of the one into many. In the context of a different discussion, Rangos states, “The second deduction understands the same claim “the One is” to mean that the One is both one

10 Marcuse transcript, page 7.

11 We will return to this question at a later point in our discussion.

12 Marcuse transcript, page 7

and something that exists... that it possesses two distinct predicates.”¹³
Rangos is echoing Hegel's contention.

Heidegger tells us that, “The dialogue has no “results”. We must be ready to endure this: that there are no “results”...”¹⁴ What does Heidegger mean when he states that there are no “results”? He begins to explain, “...“Being” signifies here [127 e 1-4] at once two different things: being-at-hand (there is...) and what-being, *ὅτι* and *τι*.”¹⁵ In other words, being signifies two things, the that-being and the what-being. For Heidegger, the that-being refers to the one and the what-being refers to the being of the one. Or, the that-being refers to the one of the second deduction, and the what-being refers to the one of the first deduction. These are the first two perspectives adopted when hypothesizing about the one. Thus the final conclusion, “The one and the many *are* only to the extent that they are in themselves null.”¹⁶ In other words, only in relation to one another can they be said to exist. They are both distinct from one another and yet necessarily interrelated. To speak of them “in and of themselves” is to speak of nothing, null, no results. And finally, therefore, “The dialogue literally arrives at nothing; it provides no result that could be captured in a proposition; the essence of philosophical truth consists in the development and seeing through a hypothesis, - thus the necessity of the exercise, the *gymnasia!*”¹⁷ We see that Heidegger's analysis is sympathetic to that of Hegel, and that his conclusion is identical. There is no true result to the

13 Rangos, Sub-section 1.1, page 564.

14 Marcuse transcript, page 1, first section.

15 *Ibid.*, page 1, second section. Square brackets [] are Heidegger's.

16 *Ibid.*, page 20.

17 *Ibid.*

process, but the process itself is true. We may now turn our attention to the third deduction.

Rangos traces the evolution of the term ἐξαίφνης throughout Plato in an extremely instructive manner. In the *Symposium* (210e), Diotima tells Socrates that if he is educated properly then *all of a sudden* he will experience a revelation. This will be the unexpected manifestation of *beauty* itself. Rangos writes, “The word ἐξαίφνης is used to describe the sudden conversion of the soul from one order of reality to another... from perceptible bodies... to the transcendence of Platonic Forms... ascension to a Form is an abrupt occurrence that disrupts the smooth succession of time.”¹⁸ Though taking place *in* time, we see that a vision of the atemporal is without notice opened up. The term ἐξαίφνης appears in a similar context in several other dialogues, including the *Republic* (514a-518d) where it is mentioned three times in the allegory of the cave during the ascent of the prisoner. In the *Parmenides*, Plato investigates this transition itself. The passage in question (155e-157b), Rangos contends, is not about change as such, but about the *transition*, or the “sudden shift” or switch-over between a process and a state, or between motion and rest. We have learned something of Plato's use of the term ἐξαίφνης in other dialogues. The discursive process of learning is *suddenly* replaced by a state of direct revelation, however brief and fleeting. It is to be noted that the interpretation of Rangos has to this point been epistemological in character. This is a result of Plato's use of the term ἐξαίφνης in the dialogues mentioned. We will soon see that the ontological question of the

¹⁸ Rangos, Sub-section 1.1, page 539.

transition between motion and rest becomes the subject of the third deduction in the *Parmenides*. A new definition of ἐξαίφνης will be developed and the term will be defined in a variety of ways, each adding more to the *new* concept Plato is seeking to grasp/create. First, ἐξαίφνης is defined as ἀτόπος, meaning *in no place*, or *nowhere*. Rangos suggests that the metaphorical meaning of “extremely puzzling”¹⁹ is more appropriate. Further, ἐξαίφνης is described as μεταξύ, meaning *between*, specifically as an intermediary between motion and rest. Also, ἐξαίφνης is in no time, ἐν χρόνῳ οὐδενί. And ἐξαίφνης is the end, εἰς ταύτην, and the origin, ἐκ ταύτην, of all changes. One might suggest that ἐξαίφνης appears to be nothing other than *change* itself. In the *Parmenides*, ἐξαίφνης is translated as “moment”, “instant”, or “the instant of change”. This poses a difficulty in translation because *moment* and *instant* are nouns. However, “...τό ἐξαίφνης, by contrast, is an adverb turned into a substantive by the addition of the definite article [the] in a highly abstract philosophical discussion.”²⁰ Rangos suggests that “the suddenly” is the best, most literal translation. This, we believe, is important.

Heidegger writes, “What does *exaiphnes* mean? All of a sudden.”²¹ This is less accurate than the definition provided by Rangos, for it leaves out the “the”, the definite article. This too is important to observe. In his *Intimations x Ponderings (II) and Directives*, written in October of 1931, less than a year after the seminar on Plato's *Parmenides*, Heidegger writes, “How the question of being is conspicuously decoyed to “being” as verbal

19 *Ibid.*, Sub-section 1.1, page 543.

20 *Ibid.*

21 Marcuse transcript, page 16, first section.

noun derived from “is.” What is here called a verbal noun - what lies in this “grammatical” “category” as regards the understanding of being and, above all, as regards the impotence of being or {?} *the echo of being...* Which restriction, emptying, and deception can be traced to the grasp of “being” in terms of the verbal noun?”²² What is the meaning of Heidegger speaking of the *verbal noun* and a grammatical category which would combine the two? And what is the meaning of Plato adding a definite article to an adverb in order to develop a specific terminology? Philosophy itself is the searching for an answer to the question of being. It therefore looks for and creates words, concepts and terminologies to facilitate its task. How is *being* to be understood as both one and many, or as both permanent and yet changing? The opposing concepts of *permanence* and *change* can be synthesized or brought together as a *verbal noun*, or as a (definite)article/adverb. For a being that changes to be properly expressed in grammar, neither noun nor verb alone is sufficient. A synthesis of the two concepts into one is needed. Heidegger's *verbal noun*, and Plato's (definite)article/adverb, are fully grasped and expressed in the English language by the term *gerund*. Being as the synthesis of noun and verb is *gerund*. Both Plato and Heidegger demonstrate this developmental process toward new concepts and terms that philosophy essentially demands. Now, recall the distinction made between the what-being and the that-being. The what-being refers to the one of the first deduction, while the that-being refers to the one of the second deduction. Heidegger writes, speaking under the heading of the third deduction, “...This way of being of the what-

²² *Intimations x Ponderings (II) and Directives*, Entry 207, Indiana University Press, 2014, translated by Richard Rojcewicz, page 65.

being (here of the *hen*) is what we name with the verb “*wesen*”.”²³ Heidegger is speaking of the hypothetical way of being of the “what-being” in the third deduction. Is this the *verbal noun* that Heidegger was pondering? The what-being of the first deduction refers to the one as noun, but we see that the what-being of the third deduction refers to the one as verb, specifically the verb *wesen*, meaning *to be*, or *to be present*. Heidegger recognizes clearly that the term *being* must be considered from one perspective as noun and from one perspective as verb. These perspectives played out in the first two deductions. He is now suggesting that it is the third deduction that presents the what-being not as noun, as was the case in the first deduction, but as verb. In other words, as what-being-that. To re-articulate, we see that for Heidegger the first deduction presents the what-being of the one as noun, the second deduction presents the that-being of the one as verb, and the third deduction synthesizes the first two into a what-being of the one as verb, in short a what-being-that. We notice immediately that a different mode of verb from the verb of the second deduction is posited as the verb of the third deduction. It is for Heidegger a verb describing a what-being-that, not simply a verb describing a that-being as is the case in the second deduction. In fact it is not a verb at all, it is a gerund. Is it not? It is surely not the case that Heidegger's that-being is identical to his what-being-that. This would be to conflate the second and third deductions. Thus it is perhaps curious that Heidegger does not make this explicit linguistic distinction. For his *verbal noun*, his what-being-that, seems perfectly equivalent to the

23 Marcuse transcript, page 11, first full section.

(definite)article/adverb of Plato. Why does Heidegger not choose a category of grammar more compatible with his *verbal noun*? Das Gerundium beispielsweise. The answer is not apparent. But it may be observed that Heidegger expresses often ἐξαίφνης though not τό ἐξαίφνης. By removing the definite article he is removing the noun/ness and retaining only the verb/ness of the terminology. But without noun/ness, deduction three is no different than deduction two. And this is certainly not Heidegger's intent. If his interpretation of deduction three is to hold up, Heidegger is committed to positing the object of deduction three as *Gerundium*.

Heidegger continues by stating that deduction three allows for the, “...*reestablishment* of the hen that was dismantled into its μέρη...”²⁴ In other words the one of the first and the one of the second deduction, the parts, are brought together as one again, but in a new manner of speaking. Both as ἐν and πολλά and as neither ἐν nor πολλά. Thus, Heidegger notes, “...being is μεταβολή, μεταβολή is ἐξαίφνης, ἐξαίφνης is not in χρόνω; - thus being *without* time!”²⁵ The notion of being without time solves the problem of the principle of non-contradiction as applied to the one. It is not a contradiction to state that the one is and is not many because it is never both at one time. Change without time is the paradoxical sounding result of our exercise. Heidegger concludes, “...One [falsely] assumes: the exaiphnes is not in time and therefore it is eternity! This thesis comprehends the whole of Western metaphysics in one formula.”²⁶ This

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, page 15, third section.

comment, we believe, is inaccurate. We have interpreted Hegel as stating the opposite precisely insofar as he is in agreement with Heidegger's own *radical* interpretation of Plato.

This connects directly to the heart of Hegelian metaphysics. Let us briefly recall the first three categories of Hegel's logic as presented in his *Science of Logic*. First, “*Being, pure being, without any further determination... is in fact nothing...*”²⁷ This sounds identical to the object of the first deduction of Plato's *Parmenides*. Hegel writes of his second category, “*Nothing, pure nothing... is... the same as... pure being...*”²⁸ This is utterly opposed to the second deduction of Plato's *Parmenides*. Recall that Hegel described the dialectic of Plato as impure as a result of the starting point which considered the one and the being of the one as distinct. The first deduction of Plato, and the first logical category of Hegel, are the same. They refer to the pure being of the one. But the second deduction of Plato refers to the one as many while the second logical category of Hegel refers to the non-being of the one. Things become speak-able for Plato in the second deduction, but for Hegel it is only within the context of the third logical category that anything may be spoken of. And so here exactly is the distinction. For Hegel, Plato's impurity, to be precise, lies in his transition from the first to the second deduction. The second deduction is in a sense already halfway to the third. It is not simply the hypothetical negation of the first, it also incorporates the hypothetical affirmation of the third. Hegel's synthesis of the first two categories is the third category, the category of *becoming*. Hegel writes,

²⁷ *Science of Logic*, Humanities Press International, 1969, translated by A.V. Miller, page 82.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

“*Pure being and pure nothing, are therefore, the same... each immediately vanishes in its opposite... becoming...*”²⁹ We observe that the third logical category of Hegel is identical in content to the third deduction of Plato. The third logical category possesses the same essential place in Hegel's system of thought as does the third deduction in Plato's (given the *radical* interpretation). The importance of the third deduction cannot therefore be overstated.

What are the interrelationships between the deductions? Rangos contends, “That the third deduction is not an absolutely new beginning but rather a synthesis of the earlier two deductions is evident from the phrase (155e4-5) τό ἐν εἰ ἐστὶν διεληλθαμεν (“if the One is such as we have seen it to be”).”³⁰ This refers to the One of each of the first two deductions. In the first deduction the One considered is the One that is in no sense many, but this leads to no One that can be spoken of. The second deduction will therefore allow for a One that can in some sense be many, and therefore be spoken of, but this is equivalent to allowing for a sense in which it is not One. It is important to note that there exists a relationship between deductions one and two. For if they were not opposites, the second having taken the hypothetical position of opposing the first, then no resolution would be possible. Opposed are the One that excludes many of deduction one and the One that includes many of deduction two. How can these distinct Ones be reconciled into one One? This is the relationship between the first and second deductions that calls for the third deduction to function as a resolution, a synthesis or as a mediator. Rangos continues, “The

²⁹ *Ibid.*, page 83.

³⁰ Rangos, page 544.

notion of time is meant to accommodate the conflicting attributes of the One reached through the first and second deductions.”³¹ The time when the One partakes of being will be different from the time when it does not. Time itself is the most essentially resolving factor. As a result, there is therefore no real asymmetry in the deductions. If the third deduction synthesizes the first two, Rangos postulates, “...it may be assumed that it... [is] ...the centre from which all deductions stem... [it] must be assumed as implicitly present, though unmentioned, also in the deductions that follow...”³² Rangos admits twice to making an assumption. But it is not completely out of the blue. What exactly is being proposed? Rangos contends that the results of deduction three apply to all deductions in an *original* manner. Future deductions are to be read and understood with deduction three in mind, and even the previous two deductions cannot be understood without it.

Heidegger states, “The six ways of the “Parmenides” that follow the third way distinguish themselves from the first two in not standing independently, but forming *pairs*...”³³ This statement contradicts the following statement already noted above, “...for the positive and the negative hypothesis there are in each case a thesis and antithesis twice over; that gives 8 ways...”, and is of course not the case. If it were then deduction three would not provide a synthesis of the first two, it too would be independent. But the need for the second deduction arose precisely due to the unsatisfactory conclusion of the first, and the third deduction would

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*, Sub-section 1.1, page 565.

33 Marcuse transcript, page 17, section two.

not have been possible otherwise. If the first two deductions were not related as hypothetical opposites, then no exercise at all could ensue. The *pairs* Heidegger specifies are 4b/a (4-5), 5b/a (6-7) and 6b/a (8-9). These pairs are resolved through deduction three, the “centerpiece” of the entire dialogue. Heidegger states while discussing the fifth deduction, “Each later hypothesis is always fuller in relation to the earlier!”³⁴ Heidegger seems to posit now a relationship between members of distinct pairs over and above their interrelationships within each pair. Posited specifically is a relationship between 4a and 5b, and a relationship between 5a and 6b. Posited, it would seem, is a relationship between *every* deduction as the exercise moves along. Next, Heidegger asks, “Why must the question of being unfold as hypothesis... as a continually repeating hypothesis? (the different ways in the Platonic Parmenides!)...”³⁵ This once again clearly speaks toward a pattern of interrelationships wherein one deduction flows into the next throughout the entire series of deductions. Suggested is a pattern of complete *interdependence* among all deductions. Clearly then, when Heidegger speaks of deductions that form “pairs” he *does not* by that notion intend to exclude the possibility of other interrelationships pertaining between those “paired” deductions and other deductions to which they are not “paired”. We may now conclude.

What would an Hegelian interpretation look like? We have answered this question throughout our discussion. It is possible to suggest that Plato presents a four-stage dialectic in the second half of his *Parmenides*. When considering Rangos we discovered that he “assumes” a reading compatible

³⁴ *Ibid.*, page 19, last section.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, page 9, last section.

with our suggestion. If his assumption is plausible, then so too is our suggestion. Rangos proposes an *interdependence* of all deductions with the third functioning as the *original* synthesis. We have contended that Hegel offers a compatible interpretation. And that Heidegger does the same.