Introduction

Platonic Idea versus Plato’s Eidos

The Parmenides dialogue is about eide (εἴδη, the plural form of the Greek word εἶδος, eidos). It is the foundation on which Plato builds everything else that he says about eide in eight other crucial dialogues (Phaedo, Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman, Hippias Major, Philebus, Timaeus and Republic). But what did Plato, who coined the term, mean by eidos? On the answer to this question hinges our appreciation of what happened in the history of Western thought since Plato’s death.

The dialogue has been transmitted down to our day from antiquity with the misleading title Parmenides, or about ideas (Παρμενίδης ἢ περὶ ἰδέων). But this is not the title given by Plato. It was assigned to the text some 350 years after Plato’s death by Thrasyllus, the ancient editor of Plato’s dialogues and a Stoic confidant of Emperor Tiberius. The editorial decision to name the dialogue “about ideas” contradicted the fact that the dialogue is not about ideas but about eide and the unity of eide, and also contradicted the clearly stated conclusion1 that eide cannot possibly be ideas or, indeed, any kind of mental entities.

Following Thrasyllus 250 years later (and 600 years after Plato’s death), Diogenes Laertius asserts that Plato “calls the idea also eidos”2. Thus, the confusion of the two terms was never a matter of problematic translations from the Greek original to other languages. The confusion originated among the original Greek speaking readers of Plato and only intensified when translations of the dialogue into other languages were attempted.

M. Tullius Cicero, who is responsible for translating Greek philosophical terms into Latin and thus inserting them into western languages, slightly before Thrasyllus translated εἶδος into the Latinized Greek genus, and ἰδέα into the Latin forma and also species.

Marsilio Ficino in his comprehensive late 15th century translation of all of Plato’s works (the first ever in the non-Greek West) translated εἶδος into the Latin species and ἰδέα into the Latinized Greek idea.

The critical early 16th century Stephanus edition of Plato’s dialogues translated εἶδος into the Latin species and ἰδέα into the Latinized Greek idea, to which it attached the parenthetic clarification (id est forma).

Modern translations have greater variety. Cherniss (1939) uses “idea” for both εἶδος and ἰδέα, a practice that was started by Jowett in 1892; A.E. Taylor (1934) uses “form” for both εἶδος and ἰδέα; Cornford (1939) uses “form” for εἴδος and “character” for ἰδέα. R.E. Allen (1997) uses “character” for εἴδος and “characteristic” for ἰδέα. Less established translations use “concept”, “conception”, “kind”, “shape”, “figure”, “look”, etc., variously for either εἴδος or ἰδέα or both.

1 Plato, Parmenides 132a1-c12.
2 Diogenes Laertius, Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers III.64
If one adds to this scandalous situation the fact that each of these terms – “idea”, “form”, “character”, “concept”, “kind”, etc. – is loaded with many and different layers of meaning that have been piled up on top of each other over 24 centuries, one can safely conclude that, with all its accumulated erudition of over two millennia, the soi disant philosophical community has no clue (better yet, no idea) of what Plato is talking about in the Parmenides. The polite terminus technicus to denote this cluelessness is “Plato’s most enigmatic dialogue”.

This state of affairs is rooted in the original failure of the Greek speaking successors of Plato to understand why he not only goes to lengths to distinguish between εἶδος and ἰδέα but that Plato’s entire thought hinges on that distinction. That original failure of Plato’s Greek speaking successors is what caused the scandalous situation of translations from the time of Cicero to date.

History would have been different if Plato’s word, εἶδος, had been simply transliterated into Latin as eidos, entered western languages in that form, and been allowed to acquire its meaning from context and usage, as had happened with so many other Greek terms either through direct transliteration (“theory”, “method”, “hypothesis”, “idea”, “mathematics”, etc.) or through the coining of Latin neologisms, as Cicero did, to render vital philosophical terms initiated by Plato or Aristotle. Some key Greek philosophical terms naturalized to western languages by Cicero in this way are: ἀτόμον = individuum = individual; ποιότης = qualitas = quality; ποσότης = quantitas = quantity; οὐσία = essentia = essence; ἐπ-ἀγωγή = in-ductio = induction; ἀπ-ἀγωγή = de-ductio = deduction.

The translation that follows does something similar. Instead of attempting to find a modern English equivalent to render εἶδος, a word that Plato had enlisted to serve a specific philosophical duty, I simply transliterate it as eidos (plural eide) and let it be invested with the meaning that the dialogue intends. Accordingly, Thrasyllus’s title “about ideas” (περὶ ἰδεῶν) should be changed to “about eide” (περὶ εἰδῶν).

The dialectical procedure for shedding light on eidos

In this dialogue, the word eidos appears 56 times and the word idea only seven times – six of them in passages intended to draw a sharp distinction between eidos and idea. Clearly, as far as the Parmenides dialogue is concerned, Plato’s eidos and idea are two different things. But the tradition has handed down the legends of “platonic ideas” and “platonic theory of forms” based on the persistent confusion of eidos and idea.

Eidos in this dialogue is portrayed as an extra-mental object of knowledge, while idea is the mental perception that corresponds to that extra-mental object of knowledge. In addition, eidos is not material because the fleeting character of matter precludes knowledge, whereas eidos is asserted to be itself an object of knowledge. How can a real entity be both

---

3 Plato, Parmenides 132a-b, 132c-d, 133c-d, 134a9-c2, 134e9-135b2 and 135b5-c3.
4 The driving impetus of all Greek philosophy from the outset was the puzzle of extracting stable objects of knowledge from an ever changing material world.
extra-mental and immaterial? Also, how can it be that eidos is not separate from the material world, though itself immaterial?\(^6\)

The first part of the dialogue (128e5-135c4) is the initial presentation by a young and inexperienced Socrates of a naïve and unworkable theory of eide, followed by the theory’s merciless refutation by the elderly and experienced Parmenides. This first part ends with the gifted youngster and the wise old man concluding in agreement that the eidos is a real, extra-mental, immaterial entity, albeit not apart from the material world without which thinking cannot occur.

How is such a seemingly paradoxical thing possible and how is our mind to grasp it? One may mouth the words “eidos is an object of knowledge which is real, extra-mental, not material but also not separate from matter”, but for the mind to grasp this paradoxical eidos in a single act of understanding – if even possible – will be the work of prolonged and laborious dialectical procedure. Such a dialectical procedure is carried out in the second part of the dialogue from 135c8 to the very end at 166c5.

What transpires in this lengthy, densely packed and very challenging second part is best understood with the help of a description of the dialectical procedure as described by Socrates in a lengthy discussion in Republic 531c9-535a1. The key passage that sheds light on what is going on in the Parmenides is: “the dialectical method alone proceeds in this way, nullifying the hypotheses up to the founding principle itself, where it will be secure” (ἡ διαλεκτικὴ μέθοδος μόνη ταύτῃ πορεύεται, τὰς ύποθέσεις ἀναρροῦσα, ἐπὶ αὐτῇ τὴν ἀρχῇ ἣνα βεβαιώσηται)\(^7\).

Perhaps “nullifying” is not an adequate translation of “ἀναρροῦσα” and other translations have been suggested, such as “confuting”, “doing away”, “canceling out”, etc. The intended meaning is not to proceed as if the hypotheses never existed but rather to take the hypotheses into account and to subject them to a process that supersedes them, that gives rise to something, to a self-evident certainty that was not contained in the hypotheses.

The methodical nullification of a comprehensive set of hypotheses induces the emergence into view of the founding principle, the “ἀρχῇ”. It is a move to induction. It is precisely this method of nullification of hypotheses described in the Republic that the elderly Parmenides proposes in our dialogue in 136a4-c5 and subsequently carries it out by investigating the implications of each of a comprehensive set of eight hypotheses regarding the oneness of eidos.

The summary result of these eight investigations is the concluding sentence of the dialogue:

Let us therefore say this in addition: that, as it seems, whether the one is or is not, both it and the others, both in relation to themselves and each other, all in every way both are and are not and appear and do not appear.

A more comprehensive nullification of the eight preceding hypotheses is difficult to imagine. The nullification being now complete, what remains is to make the inductive leap to the un-

---

6 Ibid. 134e9-135a3.
7 Plato, Republic 533c7-d4
hypothesized founding principle, the “ἀρχή”, namely to state that which the dialogue seeks, to answer the question of what is the eidos. That is never spelled out by Plato. What the eidos is not was already spelled out in the first part of the dialogue: it is not a mental entity, it is not material and it is not separate from matter. But what it is must not be spelled out by Plato but must instead be induced by his reader as a result of experiencing this procedural nullification of hypotheses.

The reader/student will either “get it” or will not “get it”. Plato’s spelling it out would not generate the requisite insight in the mind of that reader/student who does not already possess the capacity to grasp what eidos is. Those who possess this capacity to see the dialectical procedure to its inductive conclusion do not need Plato to spell it out. Those who do not possess that capacity will not be helped by Plato’s spelling it out and they might be harmed: having failed to “get it” after this arduous journey of hypothesis nullification, they are likely to apply any number of arbitrary interpretations on whatever Plato might spell out as an affirmative answer to the question of “what is eidos”.

Plato’s methodical refusal to provide an affirmative answer after he has provided a comprehensive pathway to the answer is his way of safeguarding truths that can only be possessed as a result of all-consuming, arduous effort. There is a difference between parroting the words of a right answer by rote and grasping its essence with the mind. Plato’s spoon-feeding the right answer would only provide occasion to avoid the arduous effort and encourage the parroting.

Plato’s refusal to spoon-feed lent some credence to Aristotle’s unfounded claim that Plato had an “unwritten doctrine” distinct from what is found in his dialogues. In subsequent centuries, this unfortunate mistake of Aristotle was seized by mystical speculators of all types as an opportunity to claim legitimacy for their mystical views by posing as interpreters of Plato’s “unwritten doctrine”. This long line of mystical Neo-Platonic speculators stretches from Plotinus and Proclus to Hegel and the Tubingen School and, for the most part, is based on imaginative readings of the Parmenides.

But imagination (εἰκασία), the favored tool of the Neo-Platonists, is ranked by Plato as the lowest of our faculties, beneath the faculty of reasoning and beneath even mere opinion8, whereas in the Parmenides he requires the application of the highest faculty, the pure intellect, νοῦς. The Neo-Platonic interpretations of the Parmenides are precisely the “barbarous cesspool”9 against which Plato insists on deploying the demanding rigor of his dialectical method.

**Some features of eidos gleaned from the nullified hypotheses**

The eight hypotheses about the one, whether it and its many counterparts exist or do not exist are about eidos and the many participants. The equivalence between the one and eidos is clearly established in passage 132c7: “eidos be this very object that is thought to be one”. After that point in the text, everything that is said about the one and its many, the others, applies for eidos and its others, its participants.

---

8 According to the ranking of faculties in the Republic 533e7-534a5.
9 Republic 533d1: «ἐν βορβόρῳ βαρβαρικῷ». 
The first hypothesis examines the implications of the one viewed simply as pure oneness and concludes that a pure and simple one cannot exist, cannot even be thought, let alone spoken. To be one it has to be some single thing. It has to be something. It has to have being. If it is absolutely and simply one without being a certain one thing, a something, it is apart from existing things, it lacks being.

The second hypothesis examines the implications of the one that is endowed with being, a one that actually exists, and concludes that the one does not have merely being in the abstract. It has ousia, substance, a particular kind of being. “Being in the abstract” is a conceptual invention that comes after Plato’s time. The Greek word to on (τὸ ὄν) which is usually and wrongly translated as Being with a capital “B”, actually means “that which is”, not “Being in the abstract” but “this concrete being”. For something to be an on (ὄν), a concrete being, it must have a particular kind of substance, an ousia (οὐσία) – a “substance” in the sense meant when we say “chemical substance”.

As a result of this, the conclusion follows that this substantial one, this eidos, is no longer a simple one but has at least two parts, its oneness and its substance, and that each of these two parts also consists of oneness and substance ad infinitum. But it is also whole.

The self-multiplicative character of the eidos gives rise to discrete multitude, an infinite domain of definite numbers. Its character of whole gives rise to continuous quantity. The eidos is both one and indefinite many, both the founding principle, the ἀρχή of the multitude and the whole of the multitude both discrete and continuous.

Obviously, the eidos is seen as one in three different senses of the one: (1) the one as founding principle of the set, (2) the one in the sense of the set as a whole and (3) the one as a single member of the set.

Also, the fact that the eidos is whole gives rise to boundaries that both contain this whole and maintain contact what whatever is outside this whole. This eidos, the one that has substance, τὸ ὄν, generates the nested manifold of space. The eidos gives rise to space and space is relative to it; it is not relative to space.

Finally, because of its unfolding into multitude, its becoming a whole and a continuous quantity, the eidos gives rise to time and time is relative to it; it is not relative to time.

What is this concrete thing that has substance, this entity, this on (ὄν), which in order to be must be both one and many and a whole, and in the process of so being generate discrete number, continuous quantity, space and time?

In this haunting question the second hypothesis concludes.

The third hypothesis examines the implications for the many, the things that are the others of the one, when we assume that the one has substance. It ends by concluding that the others exist in a manner consistent with the findings of the second hypothesis.
The fourth hypothesis mirrors the first: what happens to those things that are the others of the one if the one, as per the first hypothesis, has no being? Hypothesizing a pure one that does not share in being makes whatever things are the others of this pure-and-simple one lack any characteristic and in this way mirror that non-existent one. Both it and they together are all that there is which means that both together are nothing – a prime example of hypothesis nullification.

These then are the four hypotheses that assume the one (either as eidos or as pure and simple oneness devoid of being) and the implications of this assumption both for the one itself and for the others.

The remaining four hypotheses examine the implications for the one and the others if we assume that the one is not either absolutely or relatively.

If (sixth hypothesis) the one is not, in the absolute sense that it does not exist at all, it is impossible for it even to appear to exist and this in turn (eighth hypothesis) makes it impossible even to conceive what the others that would correspond to it might be; neither the one nor the others exist or even appear to exist.

Further, if (fifth hypothesis) the one is not, in the relative sense that it is not something in particular but otherwise it exists, then the consequence for the one is that it shares in both being and not-being, and thus is subject to alteration between being and not-being and when altered it is subject to becoming and perishing and when not altered it is not subject to becoming and perishing.

Finally, if (seventh hypothesis) the one is not in this relative sense but instead it is in some vague and undefined sense, the consequence for the others is that they are others to something undefined and vague, therefore are themselves undefined and vague. Unable to be either one or many and lacking a proper other they seem to be each other’s other, but lacking a one cannot be proper multitudes but seem to be unlimited bulks whose seeming fragments that appear smallest one moment suddenly seem colossal the next – a dreamlike state of seeming.

To summarize: hypotheses one, four, six, seven and eight are nullified by resulting in absurdities.

The remaining three hypotheses undergo nullification only if we hang on to our natural, naïve conceptions of “one”, “is”, “part”, “whole”, “time” and “space”.

The second hypothesis produces a paradoxical result that describes the one/eidos as the constitutive entity of a peculiar ontological order: a ‘thing that is’, an on (ᠣᠨ) that is a singular founding principle which, qua a whole contains all its founded parts, qua the sum of its parts is contained by the whole and qua founding principle stands above both the whole and the sum of the parts; moreover, the founding action of this eidos gives rise to discrete number, continuous quantity, space and time.
The third hypothesis leads to the conclusion that the things which are the other of the one/eidos have the same — i.e., corresponding — paradoxical characteristics that the one/eidos was found to have in the second hypothesis.

The fifth hypothesis, at last, gives some first indications in what particular ways non-being is and how the dialectic of being and non-being drives the process of coming to be and perishing and may provide the foundation for an understanding how exactly “participation” of the many in the one is possible. (This is a theme that Plato famously elucidates further in the Sophist).

The conclusions of these three last hypotheses are not presented as nullifications by absurdity but rather as nullifications by paradox. For the Socratic dialectical procedure to take off from the “nullification of hypotheses” and proceed to an inductive grasp of the un-hypothesized founding principle, the ἀρχή, it must discard the absurd conclusions of the earlier hypotheses and concentrate on the implications of the paradoxical conclusions of the second, third and fifth hypotheses.

These paradoxes will not be resolved unless our notions of “one”, “being”, “not-being”, “part”, “whole”, “space”, and “time” are modified in ways that eliminate these apparent paradoxes.

From this dialectical induction the meaning of Plato’s eidos will emerge.

Some historical drama behind the dialogue

Plato wrote this dialogue to describe a legendary event that had taken place nearly a century prior to the time of his writing and indeed before he was born. It is probably Plato’s only dialogue other than the Protagoras that describes a conversation that occurred before his lifetime.

The time of Plato’s writing was a time of utter disintegration of the classical Greek world. That entire world was continuing to be torn apart by an endless string of fratricidal wars between and within city-states that had begun in 431 B.C. with the Peloponnesian War and never ended until the year 146 B.C., when Roman legions razed to the ground Corinth (incidentally the very city-state that had been the instigator of the Peloponnesian War), and thus completed Rome’s conquest of the Greek world and staunched its bleeding.

When Plato wrote the dialogue, Athens had long ago suffered its humiliating defeat in the Peloponnesian War, had seen its overseas empire destroyed, its population decimated, and its political class humbled into parochial irrelevancy and self-delusion. The great rival of Athens, the once proud Sparta that had defeated Athens in the Peloponnesian War, was now also impotent and humiliated by defeat at the hands of the ascendant Thebes. Persia-financed Thebes, the perennial Persia-collaborators of the Greek world, had become the temporary arbiter of Greek affairs. Virtually every political faction in every significant Greek city-state was either dependent on bribes from the Persian Court or was aspiring to be so dependent. The age of the freedom of Greek city-states was over when Plato wrote this dialogue and it was not to return ever again.
For reason, Plato sets the dramatic date of the dialogue in the summer of the year 450 B.C. If a time may be picked to mark the highest point of classical Greek civilization, the most solemn moment of its trajectory, it would be the year 450 and, more specifically, the summer of that year when a triumphant Athens was celebrating its quadrennial Great Panathenaea festival. This was the week of July 28-August 3 of 450 B.C. or, according to the Attic calendar, 23-29 of Hecatombaion in the 3rd year of the 82nd Olympiad. That was the moment of the legendary meeting between the great Parmenides, the undisputed towering intellect of his time, and the restless genius of the adolescent Socrates. That encounter produced an intellectual achievement that has yet to run its course in the history of man.

In that historic summer of 450 B.C., a brilliant alliance between Athens and Sparta, the two leading Greek city-states, had unified and was jointly leading the entire Greek universe – all 2,000-plus city-states spread from the Crimea in the Black Sea to the western Mediterranean coasts of Gaul and Iberia. This alliance had forced the entire Persian Empire into strategic retreat while allied Greek armies and navies pressed forward all across the borderlands of Western Asia and North Africa. In Athens itself, a rare, short-lived moment of civic concord prevailed between the aristocratic and democratic parties that had struck a power-sharing deal whereby the aristocrat leader Cimon shared power with the democrat leader Pericles, the first in charge of foreign and military policy the second in charge of domestic and economic affairs.

On that summer of 450 B.C. almost all the great personalities that made up the fleeting miracle of classical Greek civilization were alive: Herodotus, Thucydides, Sophocles, Euripides, Socrates, Pericles, Cimon, Parmenides, Zeno, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Leucippus, Empedocles, Protagoras, Gorgias, Pindar, Hippocrates, Zeuxis, Phidias, Ictinus, Callicrates, el al. These persons provide the living context for the encounter of Parmenides and Socrates that produced the astonishing thoughts recorded in the Parmenides dialogue.

In writing this dialogue, Plato situates the time, place and personalities associated with this central achievement of classical Greek civilization that he, Plato, tries to preserve for posterity. That achievement is the understanding of eidos as it emerges in the Parmenides dialogue.

The dialogue marks the launching of Socrates’s philosophical career. The very same themes of this dialogue are presented again for further elaboration in a number of discussions that Socrates and others held at the end of Socrates’s life a few days before his death. These discussions are recorded in the Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman, Euthyphro, Apology, Crito and Phaedo. They must be read as direct continuation and elaboration of the argument launched in the Parmenides or their point will be missed.

There is an important difference between the Parmenides and these seven other dialogues describing the last days of Socrates. In these latter dialogues we can be reasonably certain that Plato’s reports of what the various interlocutors say in the dialogues correspond roughly with what those interlocutors actually said. All these latter dialogues supply their own evidence of the veracity of what Plato attributes to the various speakers. The Theaetetus, Sophist and Statesman are based on written notes that Socrates himself proofread while in prison, as we are told by Eucleides of Megara, the dialogues’ narrator and a personal friend of Socrates and Plato. If
Plato’s report had not conformed with the written notes cleared by Socrates, Eucleides would have objected in ways that could not be missed by posterity. The text of the Apology is uncontestably what Socrates said at his trial as all Athenians of the time would have known and as Xenophon, a friend of Socrates and vocal critic of Plato, also concurs; the highly dramatic Phaedo not only reports what both Socrates and all those present at his death said but also records the actual names of all those present, all of whom were living when the dialogue was published. Given that most of them were notable personalities in their own right, had they thought Plato’s record of the event inaccurate we would have heard from them. The same is true of the Euthyphro and the Crito dialogues – they had living eye-and ear-witnesses at the time of publication.

Not so with the Parmenides. Plato here reports the proceedings at fourth hand: Cephalus, an otherwise unidentified visitor from Clazomenae, reports what he heard some time earlier from Antiphon, Plato’s half-brother, who in turn heard from his older friend Pythodorus an account of what had transpired between the young Socrates and the elder Parmenides. The story of the encounter emerges from the mist of legend: the great event took place a long time ago in a golden age of victorious and free cities, national unity, civic concord, great men and great achievements, and now reaches down to us in defeated, demoralized Athens as a memory to look up to, a lesson to learn, a legacy to preserve for all mankind “as a possession for all time” as Thucydides would have said.

A poignant detail: the entirety of the elaborate, dense and intellectually exhausting arguments of that conversation of 450 B.C. is repeated word for word from memory by Plato’s half-brother Antiphon who heard them and memorized them as a young boy many years before. He must have been quite a dedicated and gifted lover of wisdom back then to engage in such a nearly impossible feat of memorization. But now he is a middle aged man whose philosophical flame has gone out long ago and is now only interested in horsemanship and the breeding of horses – the traditional preoccupation of a retiring country gentleman of his time. When asked to retell the old story he objects at first to the prospect of revisiting old loves but, after some cajoling by the old acquaintance from Clazomenae and his two brothers, Antiphon’s old spark flickers for a brief moment and he agrees to roam again, for one last time, in that philosophical “vast sea of words” as the great Parmenides had once called it.

Antiphon reaches deep down in his memory and retells the legendary encounter without a flaw and without a halt – perhaps the only Platonic dialogue of such intensity without the customary digression. Antiphon finishes his delivery and disappears from the stage of history never to be heard of again. Plato tips his hat to his half-brother, the defeated, retiring Athenian country gentleman who was once a lover of wisdom and now is a lover of horses and the keeper of priceless memories.

Criton M. Zoakos
1/18/2019

© Copyright 2019
Encounter in the marketplace

126 CEPHALUS: After we arrived in Athens from Clazomenae, our home, we met with Adeimantus and Glaucias in the marketplace; and Adeimantus took me by the hand and said: Greetings, Cephalus, and if you need anything that we can do for you, say so.

But really, I said, that is exactly why I am here, to ask you a favor.

Speak then, he said, what favor?

And I said: What was the name of your maternal half-brother? I don’t remember.

He was just a child when I was last here from Clazomenae and a long time has passed since then. His father’s name was Pyrilampes, I believe.

Indeed, he said.

And his own name?

Antiphon. But why do you ask?

These here, I said, are fellow citizens of mine, very philosophical, and they have heard that this Antiphon had many encounters with a certain Pythodorus, a companion of Zeno, and remembers the discussions that Socrates, Zeno and Parmenides once had, having heard them many times from Pythodorus.

What you say is true, he said.

Then it is these arguments that we need to hear, I said.

But that’s not difficult, he said, given that he studied them thoroughly as a youngsters, although now he spends most of his time with horses like his grandfather and namesake. But let us go to him if you want; he just went home from here and lives nearby in Melite.

Having said this we walked and caught up with Antiphon at home handing a bridle to a coppersmith to be fitted. After he dismissed the man, and his brothers explained to him why we were there, he recognized me from my earlier visit and embraced me; and when we asked him to recount the arguments he was reluctant at first – because, he said, it was a lot of work – but then he began to talk. Antiphon described how Pythodorus recounted that Zeno and Parmenides had once arrived for the Great Panathenaea, Parmenides being well advanced in years, white haired, of handsome and good appearance, about sixty-five years of age; and Zeno nearly forty years old then, tall and graceful looking and it was rumored that he had been Parmenides’s lover. And he said that they took up residence with

Pythodorus outside the wall in the Cerameicus, and that both Socrates and certain numerous others had arrived there who desired to hear from the writings of Zeno – since this was the first time they had brought them – and that Socrates was very young at that time. Zeno himself read to them while Parmenides happened to be out of the house; and Pythodorus said that it was very shortly before the rest of the arguments had been read that he came in from outside with Parmenides and Aristoteles (the one who later became one of the Thirty Tyrants), and that they heard only the little that remained of the writing; but he himself had heard Zeno’s reading previously.
Young Socrates proposes separate *eide* in answer to Zeno’s conundrum

When Socrates finished listening, he asked that the first hypothesis of the first argument be read again and when it was read he said: How do you argue this, Zeno? That if the *things that are* are many, each ought to be both like and unlike, which is impossible because neither can the unlike be like nor the like be unlike? Isn’t this how you argue?

That is how, said Zeno.

If then it is impossible for the unlike to be like and the like unlike, it is also impossible for them to be many, for if they were they would suffer the impossible. Is this the aim of your arguments, to maintain despite everything that is said that there are not many? And do you think that each argument is proof of this very thing so that you believe you have supplied as many proofs that there are not many as you have written arguments?

Is this how you argue or am I mistaken?

No, said Zeno, you understood well the aim of the whole writing.

I notice, Parmenides, said Socrates, that Zeno here wants to cleave to you not only by means of your other love but also by his book. He has written the same thing as you, but by twisting it somehow he tries to fool us that he says something different. For you in your poems say that all reality is one, and you supply fine and good proofs; and this one again says that it is not many, and he supplies very many and very large proofs. So you say ‘one’ and he says ‘not many’ and each of you says it in such a way as to seem that you are not saying the same thing at all. To the rest of us it seems that you say things over our heads.

Yes, Socrates, said Zeno. But you have not sensed completely the truth of my book even though you track down and hunt the arguments like a Spartan bitch. But in the first place the point that you are missing is this: the book is not quite as boastful as you say my intention was in writing it, pretending to the public that it is some great achievement. In fact, you raised something incidental, whereas the actual truth is that these writings are a sort of help to Parmenides’s argument against those who attempt to ridicule it by saying that, if the one *is*, the argument will suffer many ridiculous and self-contradictory consequences. This book speaks against those who argue in favor of the many and repays them with interest, intending to show that their hypothesis of many beings, if pursued far enough, is open to greater ridicule than the hypothesis of the one being. It was in such a spirit of contention that I wrote it as a youth but, when I did, someone stole it, so I could not decide whether or not it should come to light. Your mistake, Socrates, is that you imagine it was not written by a youth for the sake of contention but by an older person for the love of honor. Otherwise, as I said, you didn’t surmise wrongly.

But I agree, said Socrates, and I believe it is as you say. But tell me this: don’t you think that there exists by itself a certain *eidos*\(^\text{10}\) (*eîdoç*) of likeness *per se*, and again

---

\(^{10}\) Plato’s *eîdoç* (plural *eîðη*), has no agreed modern equivalent. Modern languages render it as “idea”, “form”, “species”, “character”, “characteristic”, “kind”, “shape”, “figure”, “look”, “Begriff”, “Gestalt”, “Idee”, “Gattungsform”, “idée”, “caractère”, etc. In this translation the term is left untranslated and is transliterated in
another one opposite to it, which is the unlike, and that you and I, and the others\textsuperscript{11} (tά ἄλλα) that we call many, partake of these two beings? Those that partake of likeness become like in the manner and to the degree in which they partake, those that partake of unlikeness become unlike, and those that partake of both, both? And if all things partake of both of these opposite beings, and by their sharing in both they are like and unlike themselves, what is there to marvel at? But if one said that likeness itself became unlike or unlikeness like, that, I think, would be remarkable; but if one says that the things that share in both undergo both, that doesn’t seem out of place to me, Zeno, nor if somebody says that all things are one by sharing in the one and also are many by sharing in multitude. But it would amaze me if he shows that the one itself is many and the many one. And likewise with respect to all the others. If someone would show that the genera and eide in themselves undergo their opposite effects, it would be a marvel. But where is the marvel if a man were to show that I am both one and many, and when he wants to show that I am many he says that my right side is one thing, my left another, my front another, my rear another and so are my top and bottom – so I am thought to share in many. And to show that I am one he says that of the seven of us I am but one man, sharing in the one; thus he shows both. If then someone would try to show that such things are both one and many – I mean stones and sticks and suchlike – we shall say that he proves that they are many and one, not that the one itself is many or the many one, nor that he says something marvelous, but rather what we all would admit. But if someone were first to set apart\textsuperscript{12} those very eide by themselves that I was just mentioning – i.e., likeness and unlikeness, multitude and one, rest and motion and all such – and afterward show that these are capable of blending and separating themselves, I would be awed with amazement, Zeno. I think you have dealt with these matters with great courage; but, as I say, I would be far more awed if someone could show that this very same impasse is in every way knitted into the eide themselves, and show it in things grasped by reason in the same way as he shows it in things that are visible.

---

### Parmenides questions young Socrates

As Socrates was arguing these points, Pythodorus said he feared that Parmenides and Zeno would be vexed by them, but instead they were paying very close attention to him and often looked at each other smiling as if in awe of Socrates. In fact, when Socrates

\textsuperscript{11} The adjective “others” together with the definite article “the” is used as a substantive noun meaning “the many” that partake in the “one” eidos (“the others that we call many” in the text). The bold italicized, the others, in this translation denotes this meaning rather that the ordinary adjectival meaning of “other”.

\textsuperscript{12} Χωρίς (apart) is a strong term used to emphasize the ontological status of eide as separate from the things that participate in them. The young Socrates for the first time here asserts under questioning that the eide exist apart (χωρίς) from the multitude of participants. The rest of the dialogue will first challenge and then refute this. See Introduction.
stopped, Parmenides spoke up. Socrates, he said, your passion for argument is admirable. But tell me, did you yourself divide them in the manner you describe, namely the *eide* themselves *apart* and the others that share in them also *apart*? And do you think there is likeness in itself *apart* from the likeness that we have, and also one and many and all that you heard from Zeno just now?

I most certainly did, said Socrates. Such things also, said Parmenides, like an *eidos* of the just as such in itself, and of the beautiful and the good and generally of all such things?

Yes, he said.

And an *eidos* of man *apart* from us and from all who are like us, an *eidos* of man in itself, or of fire or even of water?

Quite often, Parmenides, I have been perplexed, he said, over whether one must speak about these as one does about the others or differently.

And of these things, Socrates, that are thought silly, such as hair, clay and dirt or some other quite worthless and foul thing -- are you perplexed as to whether or not one must say that for each of these there is a separate *eidos* that is other than the things that we deal with?

Absolutely not, said Socrates, on the contrary, these things that we see are the very same things that *are*; and to imagine an *eidos* of them would be utterly absurd. But then it vexes me lest the same thing apply to all. When I get to this point I run away in fear that I may fall in an abyss of babble and perish; but when I arrive at the things that we were just now saying have *eide*, there I spend my time laboring.

---

1 Is partaking of young Socrates’s *eide* possible?

You are still young, Socrates, Parmenides said, and philosophy has not yet seized you as one day it will, in my view, and then you will belittle none of them; but now you still have regard for people’s opinions because of your youth. But tell me this: do you think, as you say, that there are *eide* from which the others take their name by partaking of them, such as the like things partaking of likeness, the large partaking of largeness, and those partaking of beauty and justice come to be just and beautiful?

Indeed I do, said Socrates.

Does each of the partaking things then partake of the whole *eidos* or of a part? Or is there some other kind of partaking aside from these?

How could there be? he said.

What then, do you expect is the case: that the whole *eidos*, being one, is in each of the many, or what?

What would prevent it, Parmenides, (from being one)? said Socrates.

So then, being one and the same in things that are many and apart, it would also be whole in each one of them and in this way it would be apart from itself.

Not so, he said, if it is like the day which is one and the same and in many places at once and yet not apart from itself; each *eidos* in the same way would be one and the same in all at once.

Very nice, Socrates, how you make one and the same to be in many places at once as if you threw one sail over many people and then claim that one whole is over many; or is this not what you mean to say?
2 Young Socrates admits his *eide* are not divisible

Are you then saying that the whole sail is over each man or a different part of it is over a different man?

A different part.

So Socrates, he said, these *eide* are divisible and those that share in them share a part, and the whole is not in each, but only a part of each *eidos*.

So it appears.

Are you then, Socrates, willing to say to us in truth that the one *eidos* is divided and is still one?

No way, he said.

Because you see, he said, if you divide largeness itself, and each of the many large things is large by a smaller part of largeness itself, wouldn’t this therefore appear irrational?

Indeed, he said.

And when each thing receives a small part of equality and is therefore less than equality itself, could it be equal to anything?

Impossible.

And if one of us takes a part of smallness, smallness would be greater than this part given that it is part of itself, and thus smallness would be greater; and that to which the part of smallness that we have taken is added will become smaller and not greater than before.

This could not happen, he replied.

In what way then, Socrates, he said, would the others partake of your *eide*, if they cannot partake either by parts or by wholes?

By Zeus, he replied, I don’t think it is easy to determine such a thing in any way.

What next, then? What do you think of this?

Of what?

3 Young Socrates admits *eide* cannot be ideas

I suspect you believe each *eidos* is one because of something like this: When many things seem large to you, seeing them you may imagine as you look at them that one and the same *idea*¹³ (*iôêa*) applies to all of them, so you think *the large is one*.

What you say is true, he said.

But then, if likewise you see in your soul *this one large* in itself together with *the other* large things, would not yet another *large one* emerge by means of which all of these will appear large?

It seems so.

So another *eidos* of largeness will emerge, in addition to the previous largeness itself and to those that share in it; and on top of all these yet another by means of which all of these are large; thus each of your *eide* will no longer be one but unlimited in multitude.

---

¹³ Here and in all the other six passages of this dialogue where the word occurs, *iôêa* (*idea, concept*) is a hybrid mental/extra-mental entity, in contrast to *eidos*, which is the extra-mental object of that thought. Cf. Introduction.
4 Young Socrates admits *eide* cannot be thoughts

132c7: "eidos be this very object that is thought to be one"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>But, Parmenides, said Socrates, couldn’t each of these <em>eide</em> be a thought which does not properly come to exist anywhere else except in souls? In this way each would be one and would not suffer the effects that you just described.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What? Is each of these thoughts <em>one</em>, and a thought of <em>not-even-one</em> (nothing)? But that’s impossible, he said. So it is a thought of something? Yes. Of something that is or of something that is not? Of something that is. Is it not of some one thing which the thought (νόημα) thinks (νοεῖ) as overlaid over all, as one single <em>idea</em>? Yes. Thus, wouldn’t <em>eidos</em> be this very object that is thought to be one, always the same over all? Again, it seems necessary. What about this? said Parmenides: Since you say that <em>the others</em> share in <em>eide</em>, mustn’t you believe either that each of these others comes from thoughts and they all think, or that while they are thoughts themselves they are not the objects of thought?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Young Socrates admits *eide* cannot be blueprints

| Then this is not reasonable either, Socrates said. But it is clear to me, Parmenides, that this is how the matter stands: that these *eide* are like blueprints in the nature of things and that *the others* resemble them and are their likenesses and the sharing of *the others* in the *eide* is nothing else than *the others* resembling the *eide*. Then if something resembles the *eidos*, is it possible for that *eidos* not to be like that which resembles it insofar as that thing was made to be like it? Or is there a device by which the like is not like to its like? There is not. Is it then not very necessary for the like to share in the same *eidos* as its like? Necessary. And this thing by whose sharing the like are like, would that not be the *eidos*? Most certainly. Therefore it is not possible for something to be like the *eidos* nor for the *eidos* to be like something else; for if it were, another *eidos* would always emerge beside the first, and if this new *eidos* is like the first, then yet another eidos would emerge and there would never be an end in the emergence of new *eide* if the *eidos* is like that which shares in it. What you say is very true. So it is not by likeness that *the others* partake of the *eide*. Another means of partaking must be sought. |

---

14 A pun: the Greek word for ‘nothing’ is ‘μηδέν’ (μὴ δὲ ἕν) literally ‘not-even-one’.
It seems so.

You see then, Socrates, he said, what a conundrum it is if one determines that these *eide* are in and by themselves?

Very much so.

---

**6 If the eide are separate they cannot be known and discourse is impossible**

Bear this in mind then, he said, that, if I may so put it, you are not even close to grasping how great a conundrum it is if you always posit each one *eidos* as something set apart from existing things.

How is that? he said.

Many reasons, he said, but the greatest is this: if someone said that it is not even appropriate for *eide* to be known if they are what we say they must be, it would not be possible to prove him a liar, unless whoever challenges him happens to be a person of great experience, not dim-witted, and willing to follow a multifarious, long winded demonstration; otherwise he who contends that they are necessarily unknown will remain unconvinced.

How so, Parmenides?, said Socrates.

Because, Socrates, I think that you or anyone else who asserts that any given essence of things exists in and by itself would be the first to agree that none of these essences exists in us.

How could it be in us and still exist just in and by itself? said Socrates.

Well said, he replied.

The kinds of *ideas* that are what they are as a result of their relation to each other are those that have their essence relative to each other, but not relative to those things close to us¹⁵, that one may call likenesses or whatever else and from which we are named by sharing in them. But the things close to us, though namesakes of those that are apart from us, are relative to each other and not to the *eide*, and are named from each other not from them.

What do you mean? said Socrates.

For example, said Parmenides, if one of us is lord or slave, the slave is not slave to that which is lordship itself, and the lord is not lord of that which is slavery itself, but both are what they are as one man in relation to another. The separate lordship in itself is what it is relative to the separate slavery in itself, and similarly the separate slavery in itself relative to the separate lordship in itself; but things close to us do not have their properties relative to the things that are separate in themselves, nor do the things that are separate in themselves have their properties relative to us. But, as I say, those are in themselves and relative to themselves, and things close to us similarly are relative to each other. Don’t you understand what I am saying?

I understand very well, said Socrates.

And then, he said, knowledge – namely that which is separate knowledge in itself – would be the knowledge of that which is the separate truth in itself?

Indeed.

And each kind of separate knowledge in itself would be knowledge of each

---

¹⁵ "Things close to us" ("τὰ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν") are what Socrates earlier called "the many that partake in the *eide*" as distinct from the *eide*.
separate being in itself, no?
   Yes.
   And is it not the case that the knowledge close to us is of the truth close to us, and,
   again, that each kind of knowledge close to us is the knowledge of each of the beings close
to us?
   Necessarily.
   But as you concur, we neither have the *eide* themselves, nor is it possible for them
to be close to us.
   Indeed not.
   But each of the separate kinds of *eide* in themselves is known by the *eidos* of
separate knowledge in itself?
   Yes.
   And this is an *eidos* that we do not possess.
   We do not.
   Therefore none of the *eide* is known by us because we do not share in this separate
knowledge in itself.
   It seems not.
   Therefore, it is unknown to us what the beautiful in itself is, and the good in itself
and all those that we conceive as ideas in themselves.
   I’m afraid so.
   Look now at something more terrible than even this.
   What?
   Would you say that if there exists a genus of knowledge in itself, it is far more
precise than our knowledge, and likewise in the case of beauty in itself and of all the other
things in themselves?
   Yes.
   And if something is to have a share in knowledge in itself would you say that
nobody but god would have this most precise knowledge?
   Necessarily.
   I wonder then, would it be possible for god to know things that are close to us when
he has this separate knowledge in itself?
   But why not?
   Because, said Parmenides, we have agreed, Socrates, that neither do the separate
*eide* have their properties relative to things close to us, nor the things close to us have their
properties relative to the separate *eide*, but they each respectively have their properties
relative to themselves.
   We have agreed.
   Then if this most precise lordship and this most precise knowledge is close to god,
neither would that lordship ever dominate us nor would that knowledge know us or
anything close to us, and similarly, we would not rule over them with our ruling power nor
would we know anything at all of the divine by means of our knowledge; and moreover, by
the same reasoning, they who are gods would not be lords over us nor would they know
anything of human affairs.
   But, he said, it would be a most astonishing argument that would deprive god of the
power to know.
   Such are the problems, Socrates, said Parmenides, and many others besides that
necessarily accompany the **eide** if the **eide** are the **ideas** of beings themselves and if each **eidos** is demarcated as something separate in itself; thus the listener would be perplexed and would doubt whether they exist, or if they do exist at all they would necessarily be unknown to human nature; and speaking in this way he would fancy he makes sense and, as I said, he would be utterly unconvinced. Only a very ingenious man will be able to perceive that for everything there is a genus and an essence in itself, and only an even more admirable man will find another one capable of adequately clarifying and teaching all these things.

I agree with you Parmenides, said Socrates, because you are saying what is very much in my mind.

And yet Socrates, said Parmenides, if someone pays attention to these and other similar objections and denies that the **eide** of beings exist and does not demarcate the **eidos** of each thing, he shall have nowhere to turn his thinking given that he does not allow the **idea** of each being to be always the same – and in this way he annihilates the very capacity to reason. But I believe you have sensed something like this.

You speak the truth, he said.

What are you going to do about philosophy then? Where shall you turn while these things are unknown?

I believe I don’t see clearly at all, at least right now.

Because Socrates, he said, you tried too soon and before you had practiced, to define what is the beautiful and the just and the good and each one of the **eide**. I thought this when I heard you talking with Aristoteles here. The ardor with which you assault arguments is no doubt beautiful and godly. But while you are still young you must exert yourself and practice in that kind of subtle talk that the crowd considers and calls useless – otherwise the truth will escape you.

**Parmenides proposes a method of investigation**

So then Parmenides, he said, what kind of practice is this?

The kind you heard from Zeno, he said, but also what you told him, and I admired you for it – not letting him limit the survey to visible things nor wander around them but instead focus on those things that one can best grasp by reason and can consider to be **eide**.

It seems to me, said Socrates, that in this way it is not difficult to show that things can be both like and unlike and can undergo any other condition whatsoever.

Fine then, said Parmenides, but this also must be done in addition if you want to be really trained: you must not only investigate what ensues from a hypothesis if each hypothesized thing is affirmed, but also if that very same thing is negated.

How do you mean? said Socrates.

For instance, answered Parmenides, take the hypothesis that Zeno proposed: if there are many, what must ensue for the many with respect to themselves and to the **one**, and also for the **one** with respect to itself and the many; and again if there are not many, consider what will ensue for the **one** and the many with respect to themselves and to each.

---

16 The text explicitly cautions against (a) equating ideas with **eide** and (b) against considering **eide** as existing separately.

17 Parmenides warns that if **eide** did not exist then **ideas** would not exist with which dianoia could work.
b other. Again, if you assume whether likeness exists or not, what will ensue from each assumption for both the thing assumed and for the others with respect to themselves and each other alike; and likewise about the unlike and about motion and about rest and about generation and perishing and about being itself and not being. Simply put, about anything that you may suppose to be or not be and to undergo any other condition, you must consider what ensues with respect to itself and likewise with respect to each, and to most and to all of the others that you may choose. Again, you must consider the others both with respect to themselves and to whatever you choose, whether you suppose it to be or not be – if, by practicing thoroughly, you are to discern the truth.

You propose a baffling task, Parmenides, he said, that I really don’t grasp. Why don’t you hypothesize a certain thing and go through it so I may learn better?

You demand too great a task of a man of my age, Socrates, he said. And Zeno laughed and said: Let’s ask Parmenides himself, Socrates, because what he says is no easy matter; or don’t you see what a heavy task you demand? If there were more of us it wouldn’t even be worth asking because it would be unbecoming to discuss such matters before many people, given that he is so old, since the many do not know that without this comprehensive discourse and without this wandering off it is not possible to come upon and fasten the mind on the true. Therefore, Parmenides, I plead together with Socrates so that I myself may hear and learn over time.

Antiphon said that when Zeno finished talking Pythodorus recounted that he, Aristoteles and the others begged Parmenides to demonstrate what he meant and not refuse. And Parmenides said: I must comply although I feel that what is happening to me is the plight of Ibycus’s horse – an old race horse that was about to enter the chariot race and trembled for what lay ahead because of past experience – to which Ibycus likened himself when he remarked that while he was likewise old in years he was forced against his will to make love. I think that I, too, am filled with great fear as I remember how I must cross such a vast sea of words while being so old. Nevertheless, I must do you the favor especially because, as Zeno says, we are by ourselves. Where shall we begin then, and what shall we hypothesize first? Or, since you expect to play this arduous game, do you wish to begin from myself and my hypothesis, hypothesizing about the one itself, whether it exists or not and what must ensue?

Yes, by all means, said Zeno.

Who will answer my questions, then? he said. Will it be the youngest? He would be the least troublesome and the most likely to speak his mind; in addition, his reply would be a chance for me to rest.

I am ready to do that for you, Parmenides, said Aristoteles, since you mean me when you say the youngest. Go ahead, ask and I will reply.

First Hypothesis: what mere one (without being) implies

1 The one is not whole and has no parts

---

18 The discussion about the one that follows from this point on is about eidos, (eidos = the one as indicated in 132c6-7 above: «εἴδος ἦσσε τούτῳ τὸ νοούμενον ἐν εὐναὐ» = "eidos is this very object of thought which is thought to be one"). The bold italicized style – ‘the one’ – is used to distinguish this substantive sense of the ‘the one’ from its ordinary numeral sense and in conformity with the corresponding bold italic style of ‘the others’ (‘the many’).
– So be it, he said: If it is [simply and purely] one, what else could the one be except not many?
– Of course.
– Therefore it must not have parts and it must not be whole.
– Why, exactly?
– The part is part of a whole.
– Yes.
– And the whole? Isn’t whole that from which no part is missing?
– Indeed.
– Either way then the one would consist of parts, being whole and having parts.
– Necessarily.
– Either way it would be many and not one.
– True.
– And it must be not many but one.
– It must.
– Thus it will be not whole and have no parts if the one is to be one.
– No.

2 The one has no shape

– If then it has no parts, it will have neither beginning nor end nor middle, since those kinds of things would be parts of it.
– Correct.
– And isn’t beginning and end the boundary of each thing?
– Of course.
– Then the one is boundless if it has neither beginning nor end.
– Boundless.
– And thus shapeless, since it doesn’t share either in the round or in the straight.
– How so?
– Round is that whose extremes are everywhere equidistant from the middle.
– Yes.
– And straight is that whose middle stands in the way of both extremes.
– So it is.
– Would not then the one have parts if it shared either in the straight or in the round shape?
– Yes indeed.
– Therefore it is neither straight nor round precisely because it has no parts.
– Correct.

3 The one is nowhere

– Moreover, since it is like this it cannot be anywhere, because it is neither in anything else nor in itself.
– How so?
– If it were in anything else it would be contained all round by that in which it is, and would be touched by many things in many places; but it is impossible for the one to be touched all round in many places, because it has no parts and does not share in the round shape.
– Impossible.
– Furthermore, if it were in itself, it would be the container of none other than itself, if it really were to be in itself, for it is not possible to be in something that is not a container.
– Impossible.
– So then, the container would be one thing and the contained another, because one and the same thing cannot as a whole both contain and be contained; so the one would be two and would no longer be one.
– Indeed not.
– So, since it is not in itself or in another, the one is not anywhere.
– It is not.

4 The one is not at rest and not in motion

– This being the case let us see if it is possible for it to be at rest or to move.
– Why exactly should it not be?
– Because in moving it would be either transported or altered, since these are the only kinds of movements.
– Yes.
– And being altered from itself it would be impossible for the one to remain one.
– Impossible.
– Thus it does not move by alteration.
– It appears not.
– And by transport?
– Maybe.
– If the one were transported it would either be rotating in a circle or changing its place from another place.
– Necessarily.
– But in order to rotate it must stand still at the center while other parts of itself move around that center. But is there any device that could carry in a circle around a center something that has neither center nor parts?
– None.
– Is it moved by changing places and coming to be in other places at other times?
– Yes, if it were to move to begin with.
– But it was shown that it cannot be in anything?
– Yes.
– Then coming to be is even more impossible.
– I don’t understand how.
– If a thing is coming to be in something isn’t it necessary that it be neither in nor entirely out of it while it is coming to be?
– It must.
– If there is anything that is affected this way it would only be the kind of thing that has parts, so that a part of it would be in and a part of it out simultaneously. But what has no parts cannot in its entirety be simultaneously in and out of something.
– True.
– That which has no parts and is not whole, is it not more impossible for it to come to be either in parts or as a whole?
Rather.

It does not change place either by going and coming to be in something, or by rotating around itself or by being altered.

No.

So the one is unmoved with respect to all the kinds motion.

Unmoved.

But we also say that it is impossible for it to be in anything.

We do.

So it is never in 

Why, exactly?

Because then it would be in that in which 

Yes, of course.

But it is not possible for it to be enclosed either in itself or in anything else.

Not indeed.

Thus the one is never in 

It seems not.

But certainly then that which is never in 

It is not possible.

The one then, as it seems, neither stands nor moves.

Obviously not.

5 The one is neither other than nor the same as anything

Moreover it will not be the same as another thing or as itself, nor would it be other than itself or than another.

How so?

If it were other than itself it would be other than one and it would not be one.

True.

Moreover, if it were the same as another it would be that other and not itself; thus it would not be what it is, one, but other than one.

Of course not.

So it is not the same as another or other than itself.

No.

It is not other than another while it is one; it is not a property of the one to be other than something; it is only the property of the other of some other and of nothing else.

Correct.

Therefore, being one would not cause it to be other, no?

Of course not.

But if this does not cause it to be other, then its own self does not cause it to be other, and if so, it is not other. And since it is in no way other, it will not be other than anything.

Correct.

Nor will it be the same as itself.

Why not?

Because the nature of the one itself is not the nature of the same.

19 «ἐν τῷ οὖτῳ» = “in the same”; with the definite article “the”, the specific adjective “same” serves as its corresponding abstract generic substantive “sameness”, denoting overall sameness of condition, place, status etc.
– Why?
– Because when something becomes the *same* it does not become *one*.
– What then?
– If it becomes the *same* as many it must become many and not *one*.
– True.
– If *the one* and the *same* do not differ when something becomes *same* it would become *one* and when *one, same*.
– Indeed.
– If *the one* is the *same* with itself, it is not *one* with itself and so by being *one* it is not *one*, which is impossible; thus it is impossible for *the one* to be *other* than another or the *same* as itself.
– Impossible.
– Thus *the one* is neither other than nor the same as itself or another.
– Indeed not.

**6 The one is neither like nor unlike anything**

– Nor is it like something or unlike either itself or another.
– Why?
– Because the like in some way is affected by the same.
– Yes.
– And the nature of the same proved to be apart from the nature of *the one*.
– It did.
– But if *the one* is affected by something apart from *the one* it would be more than one, which is impossible.
– Yes.
– In no way then is *the one* affected to be the same as another or the same as itself.
– It seems not.
– Nor can it be like another or like itself.
– Not likely.
– Nor indeed can *the one* be affected to be other, because in that case it would be affected to be more than one.
– Yes, more.
– And indeed that which is affected to be other than itself or be other than another would be unlike itself or another if the like is affected by the same.
– Correct.
– And so *the one*, as it seems, because it is in no way affected by other is in no way unlike itself or another.
– No.
– So *the one* is neither like nor unlike either another or itself.
– It seems not.

**7 The one is neither equal nor unequal to anything**

– This being the case, it is neither equal nor unequal either to itself or to anything else.
– How?
– As equal it would be of the same measures as its equal.
  – Yes.
  – Being larger or smaller than its commensurates it would have more measures than the lesser and fewer than the larger.
  – Yes.
  – And of the incommensurates, it would have lesser measures than some and larger than others.
  – Of course.
  – That then which does not share in the same cannot be of the same measures or of anything else the same?
  – It cannot.
  – Being without the same measures, it is not equal either to itself or to anything else.
  – It seems not.
  – But by being of more or fewer measures, it would be of as many parts as it is of measures and thus it would no longer be one but it would be as many as the measures.
  – Correct.
  – And, moreover, if it is of one measure, it would be equal to the measure; it was shown, however, that it cannot be equal to itself.
  – Yes, it was shown.
  – Therefore, by not sharing either in one measure, or in many, or in a few, it seems it will never be equal to itself or to another; nor, again, will it be greater or lesser than itself or another.
  – It is most certainly so.

8 The one is not older, newer or the same age as anything, nor in time, nor is time in it

– What then? Can the one be considered to be older or newer or of the same age?
  – Why not?
  – Because in being the same age as itself or another it would be sharing in temporal equality and likeness in which the one does not share, as we were just saying.
  – We were saying indeed.
  – And we were also saying that it does not share in unlikeness and inequality.
  – We were indeed.
  – How is it possible for something like this to be older than or newer than or be of the same age as anything?
  – Not possible.
  – Therefore the one is not newer nor yet older nor has the same age as either itself or anything else.
  – Obviously not.
  – So then the one could not be in time altogether if it is something like this. Or isn’t it the case that if something is in time it must always become older than itself?
  – It must.
  – And the older is always older than the newer?
  – Naturally.
  – So the older it becomes than itself the newer it becomes at once if it is to obtain that than which it will become older.
– What do you mean?
– This: things already different from one another need nothing to become different, but
either already are so, or have been or will be so, but what is becoming different neither has
been nor will be nor is different, but is simply becoming and nothing else.

\textit{c} – This is necessarily so.
– And moreover, the older is a difference from the newer and from nothing else.
– So it is.
– Therefore that which is coming to be older than itself it must also at once be coming to
be newer than itself.
– It seems so.
– And further it must come to be neither in more time than itself nor in less but must come
to be and must be and have been and in future be in equal time as itself.
– These also must be.

\textit{d} – It is necessary then, as it seems, that each of the things that are in time [141d] and share
in time must be of the same age as itself, and newer than itself and older than itself all at
once.
– It seems likely so.
– But none of these conditions belongs with \textit{the one}.
– None does.
– Therefore neither time belongs with \textit{the one} nor is \textit{the one} in some time.
– No indeed, as the argument proves.

9 Conclusion: The one neither is nor is it one

– So then. The ‘was’ and the ‘has become’ and the ‘was becoming’ seem to indicate
sharing in some past occurrence?
– Certainly.

\textit{e} – What then? Does not the ‘will be’ and ‘will become’ and ‘will have become’ indicate a
future thereafter?
– Yes.
– And the ‘is’ and the ‘is becoming’ indicate a present act?
– Yes indeed.
– If therefore the one does not in any way share in any time, it never ‘has become’ nor
‘was becoming’ nor ‘was’, nor now ‘became’ nor ‘is becoming’ nor ‘is’, nor ‘shall
become’ nor ‘shall have become’ nor ‘shall be’.
– Most true.
– But is there a way other than these by which anything may share in being?
– There isn’t.
– Then \textit{the one} in no way shares in being.
– It seems not.
– So \textit{the one} in no way \textit{is}.
– Apparently not.
– Nor can it be \textit{one}, because then it would be and share in \textit{being}; but it seems that \textit{the one}
neither is \textit{one} nor \textit{is}, if you are to trust this argument.
– I’m afraid so.

142 – And of that which is not, could anything be in it or of it while it is not?
– How could that possibly be?
– So it has no name, nor description nor knowledge nor sense nor opinion.
– It seems not.
– So it is not named nor spoken nor opined nor known nor does any being sense it.
– It seems not.
– Is it possible then for all these to be true about the one?
– It does not seem so to me.

Second Hypothesis: the one has substance

b – Are you willing then to revisit the hypothesis from the start in case our review shows us anything different?
– I am very much willing.
– We say then, if the one is, we must come to an agreement on the consequences of this whatever they be, no?
– Yes.
– Let’s see now from the beginning: If the one is, is it possible for it to be and not to share in substance?
– Not possible.
– The substance of the one is not the same as the one; if it were the same it would not be the substance of the one nor would the one share in it, but saying ‘one substance’ would be like saying ‘one one’. Now the hypothesis is not what must follow ‘if one one’, but ‘if it is one’, isn’t it so?
– Yes, it certainly is.
– Because the ‘is’ indicates something other than the ‘one’?
– It must.
– So when someone says generally that the one is, he means nothing else but that the one shares in substance?
– Indeed.

1 The one is a whole unlimited in multitude

d – Let us then say again what would follow if the one is. Examine then if this hypothesis points to a one that is of such kind that must have parts.
– How?
– This way: If ‘is’ is said about the one that is and ‘one’ is said about the one that is, and substance and the one are not the same but of the same thing, namely of the assumed the one that is, must not the one that is be one whole and that one and ‘is’ be portions of this whole?
– It must.
– What then, shall we refer to each of these portions as a mere portion, or as portion of the whole?
– Of the whole.
– The one that is, therefore, is whole as well as has portions.
– Of course.
– What then? Can each of two portions of the one that is, namely ‘one’ and ‘is’, quit the other, either the ‘one’ quitting the ‘is’ or the ‘is’ quitting the ‘one’ portion?
– No, it cannot.
– Again then, each portion retains both ‘one’ and ‘is’ and each consists of at least two portions; and likewise any portion that comes to be always retains these two portions, for the ‘one’ always retains the ‘is’ and the ‘is’ always retains the ‘one’. Thus, as it is always coming to be two it must never be one.
– Most certainly.
– In this way, would not the one that is be unlimited in multitude?
– It seems.

2 The one is unlimited in number

– Let’s continue this way.
– How?
– We say that the one shares in substance because it is?
– Yes.
– And because of this, the one was shown to be many.
– So.
– What then? If, for purposes of reasoning only, we isolate the one itself that we say shares in substance, and consider it by itself without that of which we say it shares, will it be shown to be only one or many?
– One, I think.
– Let’s see: If the one is not substance but has a share in substance in its capacity as one, then the substance of the one must be other than it and the one itself other than the substance.
– It must.
– If substance is other and the one is other, then the one is other than substance not by virtue of oneness, and substance is other than the one not by virtue of substance, but both are other than each other by virtue of being different and other.
– Yes, by all means.
– Other is not the same as one or substance.
– I don’t see how it could be.

20 «τῇ διανοίᾳ μόνον» = “only according to reasoning” refers not to real distinctions which can only be grasped by νοῦς = mind, but only to conceptual distinctions made by διανοία = reasoning, a faculty radically distinct from mind. See Introduction.
21 This means that the one partakes of substance not insofar as it is simply one, but by virtue of being a certain kind of one thing, a something that stands out as a distinctive singularity, a ‘one’.

\[\text{\ldots}\]
– And hasn’t each of them now been said?
  – Yes.
  – So when I say substance and one, don’t I say both?
  – Indeed.
  – Then if I say substance and other or other and one, and so on, in each case I say both?
  – Yes.
  – And those that are correctly called ‘both’, is it possible that they be ‘both’ but not two?
  – Not possible.
  – And those that are two, is there a device by which each of them would not be one?
  – No.
  – Since then each of these ones come in pairs, each separately would be one.
  – Evidently.
  – And if each of them is one, when the one is composed with any pair whatsoever, don’t they all become three?
  – Yes.
  – And three are odd and two are even?
  – No doubt.

– If there are two, must there not be twice, and if three thrice, since twice-one preexists in the two and thrice-one in the three?
  – There must.
  – And if there are two and twice must there not be twice-two, and if three and thrice must there not also be thrice-three?
  – No doubt.
  – So then, if there are three and twice and two and thrice, must there not be three-twice and two-thrice?
  – Yes.

– So there would be even times even and odd times odd and odd times even and even times odd.
  – It is so.
  – If this is so, do you think there is any number left over which is not necessary to exist?
  – No way.
  – Therefore, if the one is, there must also be number.
  – There must.
  – If there is number there must be many and an unlimited multitude of beings: or is it not the case that number is unlimited in multitude and comes to be by sharing in substance?
  – Indeed.
  – So if every number shares in substance, each fraction of number shares in substance?
  – Yes.

– Therefore substance is distributed over all of the many beings and is not lacking in any of them, from the smallest to the greatest? Or is it irrational even to ask this? For how could substance be absent from beings?
  – No way.
  – So substance is dispersed in every way into beings that are as small and as large as possible, and is the most divided of all, and the parts of substance are unlimited.

– It is so.
  – Therefore the parts of substance are the utmost.
– The utmost indeed.
– What then? Is there any one of them which is part of substance and yet not one part?
– How could this be?
– I suppose that if it is and so long as it is, it must be a one something, and it is impossible to be a nothing (not-even-one)22
– It must.
– So, the one is attached to each and every part of substance and is not absent either from the smallest or from the greatest or from any other part.
– Yes.

Consider this: while it is one, is it in many places at once and as a whole?
– I am considering and I see it is impossible.
– If not as a whole, then as divided: in no other way can the one be present in all parts of substance unless it is divided.
– Yes.
– Also, what is divisible must be as many as there are parts.
– It must.
– So we did not speak the truth when we just said that substance is distributed in the greatest number of parts. It is not distributed to more than the one but to equally as many parts as the one: for neither is being absent from the one nor the one from being, but the two are always equal through all things.
– It certainly appears so.
– So the one itself fragmented by substance is a plurality and an unlimited multitude.
– Evidently.
– Therefore, not only is the one that is many, but the one itself distributed by that which is must necessarily be many.
– Most certainly.

3 The one is whole and limited

– Also, since the portions are portions of a whole, the one is bounded by being a whole; or are not the portions enclosed by the whole?
– They must be.
– But that which encloses is limit.
– No doubt.
– So the one that is somehow is both one and many, whole and portions, and bounded and boundless in multitude.
– So it seems.
– Does it also have extremes, given that it is bounded?
– It must.
– Next, as a whole, would not the one have beginning and middle and end? Is it possible for something to be whole without these three? And if one of these is missing could it still be whole?
– It could not.
– So it seems that the one must have beginning and end and middle.

22 A pun: the word for ‘nothing’ is ‘μηδέν’ (μὴ δὲ ἑν) literally ‘not-even-one’.
b – It must.
– But the middle is equally distant from the extremes, or else it would not be middle.
– No.

4 The one has shape and is contained by something

– Being this kind of thing, it seems that the one would share in some sort of shape, either straight or round or a mixture of both.
– It would.
– This then being the case, would it not be in itself and in another?
– How so?
– Each part somehow is in the whole and none is outside the whole.
– Yes.

And all the parts are contained by the whole?
– Yes.
– Indeed the one is all of its parts, and neither more nor less than all of them.
– No.
– And is not the one also the whole?
– No doubt.
– Since all the parts happen to be in the whole, and all the parts are the one as well as the whole itself, and all the parts are contained by the whole, the one would be contained by the one, and thus the one itself would be inside itself.
– It seems.

But the whole is not in the parts, neither in all of them nor in any one in particular. If it were in all of them, it would also have to be in one; but because it is not in any one part, the whole cannot be in all of them; and if the one consists of all of them, but the whole is not in it, how can the whole be in all of them?
– No way.
– Nor is the whole in some of the parts, because if the whole were in some, the more would be in less, which is impossible.
– Impossible indeed.
– And by not being in several parts, or in one part, or in all the parts, must the whole either be inside another or be nowhere at all?
– It must.
– Being nowhere, it would be nothing, but given that it is whole and because it is not in itself, it must be in another?
– Indeed.
– Insofar as the one is whole, then, the one is in another; and insofar as it is all its parts, the one is in itself; and thus, the one must be both in itself and in another.
– It must.

5 The one is both in motion and at rest

– Being of such nature, must not the one move as well as be at rest?
– How?
– It is at rest, I imagine, if it is in itself; if it remains in the one without departing, it would
be in *sameness*\(^{23}\), namely in itself.
– That is so.
– And that which is always in *sameness* must always be at rest.
– Indeed.
– Next: That which is always in *otherness*\(^{24}\) must, by contrast, never be in *sameness*, and by never being in *sameness* not be at rest, and by not being at rest be in motion.
– Yes.
– So *the one*, always in itself and in another, must be always in motion and at rest.
– It seems.

6 The one is the same as and other than itself and the others

b – Further, *the one* must be the *same* as itself and *other* than itself, and also the *same* as the *others* and *other* than the *others* if the above arguments hold.
– How?
– Everything relates to all things in this way: It is either the *same* or *other*; or if it is neither the *same* nor *other*, it is related either as part to a whole or as whole to a part.
– It seems so.
– But is *the one* itself a part of itself?
– In no way.
– Then neither would it relate to itself as whole to part or as part to whole.

c – It is not possible.
– But then is *the one* other than *the one*?
– Certainly not.
– Then it is not *other* than itself.
– Certainly not.
– If *the one* is neither *other* than itself, nor related to itself as whole to part or as part to whole, must it not be the same as itself?
– It must.
– What then? That which is [in a place, condition or state] *other* than itself while being in that same self must it not be *other* than itself – if indeed it is to be [in a place, condition or state] *other* than itself?
– I think so.
– But *the one* was shown to be such that it is at once in itself and in *other*.

\(^{23}\) See footnote #19 above.

\(^{24}\) «ἐν ἑτέρῳ» = “in other”; the specific adjective “other” here serves as its corresponding abstract generic substantive noun, “otherness” and denotes overall otherness in every respect – otherness of place, condition or status. In contrast to “*the others*” = «τὰ ἄλλα» which means “other” in the sense of *aliud*, this “other” = «Ἐτέρον» means “other” in the sense of *alter*. See 148b5 below: “*other* («Ἐτέρον») somehow is *other* than something that is *like* it”.
– No doubt.
– So the one is other than the others.
– Other.
– See now: aren’t the same itself and the other opposites of each other?
– How could they be otherwise?
– Would then the same ever be in the other or the other in the same?
– It would not.
– If then the other is never in the same, there are no beings in which the other would be present at any time; for if the other were in some being for any time, it would be in the same for just that time, not so?
– So.
– And because the other is never in the same, it is never in any being.
– True.
– So the other is neither in non-ones nor in the one.
– Indeed not.
– So it is not because of the other that the one is other than the non-one and the non-one than the one.
– No.
– Nor are they mutually other because of themselves, since they do not share in the other.
– I don’t see how.
– If they are not other because of themselves and they are not other because of the other, does the case of their not being other elude us?
– It eludes us.
– Also, non-ones do not share in the one, otherwise they would not be non-ones but somehow be one.
– True.
– Nor are the non-ones number; for if they were they would not be fully non-ones.
– Indeed not.
– What then? Are non-ones portions of the one? Would not non-ones be sharing in the one if they were portions of the one?
– They would.
– Therefore, if the one is in every way one and if the non-ones are in every way non-ones, the one is not a portion of non-ones nor a whole with non-ones as portions; nor are non-ones portions of the one or wholes with the one as portion.
– Of course not.
– But we said that what are not portions nor wholes nor other with respect to each other are the same as each other.
– We did.
– Shall we say then that, this being the case with the one and the non-ones, the one is the same as they?
– Yes.
– Therefore, the one, it seems, is other than the others and other than itself and the same as they and itself.
– It seems clear from the discussion.
c  – Is the one therefore both like and unlike itself as well as the others?
    – Maybe.
    – Because it was certainly shown to be other than the others, the others also are somehow other than it.
    – Of course.
    – And it is other than the others exactly as much as the others are other than it and neither more so nor less?
    – It must be so.
    – If neither more nor less, then like.
    – Yes.
    – Just as it bears the condition of being other than the others in a way akin to their being other than it, likewise the one is the same as the others and the others are the same as the one.

d  – How?
    – Does each name you utter apply to some one thing?
    – Yes.
    – Even if you utter it more than once?
    – Yes.
    – So then, if you utter it only once you invoke that thing whose name it is, and if many times not that thing? Or, regardless of whether you utter the same name once or many times you must always invoke the same thing?
    – Of course.
    – And is not the other a name applied to something?
    – Indeed.

e  – When you utter it, whether once or many times, you don’t name any random thing but that thing whose name it is.
    – I must.
    – And when we say that the others are other than the one and the one is other than the others, and have uttered the name other twice, no more do we speak of any other nature but of that one whose name it is.
    – Indeed.

148 – Insofar as the one is other than the others and the others are other than the one, and precisely by bearing the condition of other, the one bears the condition of being the same as the others and to bear the same condition is to be like, is it not?
    – Yes.
    – Insofar as the one bears the condition of being other than the others, all things are like all things, because all things are other than all things.
    – It seems so.
    – Yes but the like is opposite to the unlike.
    – Yes.
    – And also the other is opposite to the same.
    – This too.

b  – But it was also shown that the one is the same as the others.
    – Yes it was.
– And to be the same as the others is an opposite condition to being other than the others.
– Indeed.
– And this while the other was shown to be the same.
– Yes.
– Accordingly, the same will be unlike, as a result of the fact that unlike is a condition opposite to the condition of being like. And the other somehow is other than something that is like it.
– Yes.
– So it is the same by way of being unlike, otherwise it would not be opposite to other.
– It seems.

So the one is like and unlike the others: while it is other, it is like and while it is the same, unlike.
– Yes, it seems to fit this account.
– And also the following.
– Which?
– While it bears the condition of the same it does not bear the different and by not bearing the different it is not unlike, and by not being unlike it is like; and while it bears the condition of the other, it is different and by being different it is unlike.
– True.
– Therefore, the one by being the same as the others and also by being the same as whatever is other, according to both of these accounts and according to either of them separately, it is both like and unlike the others.
– Indeed.
– With respect to itself also, because it was shown to be both other than and the same as itself, according to both of these accounts and according to either of them will it be shown to be both like and unlike?
– It must.

8 The one touches and does not touch itself and the others

– What next? Let’s see whether the one does or does not touch itself and the others.
– Let’s do it.
– The one itself was shown to be in itself as a whole somehow.
– Correct.
– And the one is also in the others?
– Yes.
– Insofar as it is in the others it would be touching the others; and insofar as it is in itself it would refrain from touching the others; but, as it is in itself, it would be touching itself.
– It appears.
– Thus the one would be touching both itself and the others.
– It would.
– What about this? Must not everything that is to touch something else lie next to that which it is to touch, and occupy that particular position which, by being next to the position-that the other thing occupies, touches it?
– It must.
– So if the one is to touch itself it must lie directly next to itself and occupy that place
which is next to that other place in which the one itself is.
– It must indeed.
– But the one would accomplish these things if it were two and were in two places at once, but while it is one, it cannot.
– Indeed it cannot.
– It is by the same necessity that the one is not two that it does not touch itself.
– The same.
– But it will not touch the others either.
– Why, exactly?
– Because we said that that which is to touch, being apart, must be next to what is to be touched and there must be no third thing between them.
– True.
– There must be at least two if there is to be contact.
– There must.
– And if a third is attached to the two boundaries, there will be three and the contacts will be two.

– Yes.
– And likewise whenever one more is added one more contact is also added and as a result the contacts are always fewer by one than the number of the multitude. As the first two exceeded the contacts by being of greater number than the number of contacts, so also every subsequent number exceeds all the contacts by an equal excess, because every time one is subsequently added to the number at once one more contact is added to the contacts.
– Correct.

– So whatever the number of beings is, the contacts are one fewer than they.
– True.
– And if the one is alone and there is no dyad, there is no contact.
– Of course.
– We said that the others of the one neither are one nor share in the one if indeed they are other.
– No they do not.
– So there is no number in the others since there is no one in them.
– No doubt.
– So the others are neither one nor two nor are named by any other number.
– No.

– So the one alone is one and there is no dyad.
– It appears not.
– Because there are no two, there is no contact.
– No.
– So neither does the one touch the others nor the others touch the one because there is no contact.
– Indeed not.
– So for all these reasons, the one both touches and does not touch both itself and the others.
– It seems so.
9 The one is equal and unequal to itself and the others

– Is the one then equal and unequal to itself as well as to the others?
  – How?
  – If the one were more or less than the others or the others more or less than the one, would either the one or the others be either more or less than each other not by virtue of the one being one nor the others by virtue of being other than one, i.e., not by virtue of their respective essence? But, instead, if each had equality in addition to being what each is, they would be equal to each other; and if the others had largeness and the one smallness or the one largeness and the others smallness, whichever of the two that belonged to the eidos of largeness would be more and that which belonged to smallness, would be less?
  – It must be.
  – Don’t these two eide – largeness and smallness – exist? If they did not exist they would not come to be each other’s opposites nor come to be in things.

– Of course.
– If smallness comes to be in the one, it would be either in the whole one or in part of it.
– It must.
– If in the whole, would it not be either equally stretched throughout the whole one or contain it?
– Obviously.
– So if the smallness were spread equally throughout the one it would be equal to it, and if smallness were to contain the one, smallness would be greater?
– No doubt.
– Is it possible for smallness to be equal or greater than something and to accomplish what is proper to largeness and equality but not what is proper to it?
– Not possible.
– So smallness cannot be in the whole one but in part, if at all.
– Yes.
– And not in all of the part either, or else it would proceed as it did in relation to the whole, and be equal to or greater than the part in which it is.
– It must.
– So smallness never is in anything, nor does it come to be either in a part or in the whole; nor is there anything small except smallness itself.
– It seems not.
– Nor is largeness contained in the one, because then something other than largeness would be larger – namely that in which largeness was contained – while smallness, which largeness must exceed if it is to be large, was not in that container; and this is impossible because smallness is nowhere.
– True.
– But largeness itself is larger than nothing else except smallness and smallness is not smaller than anything else except largeness itself.
– Indeed not.
– Nor are the others larger or smaller than the one, because they do not have either largeness or smallness, and because these two (i.e., largeness and smallness) do not have the power to exceed or be exceeded by the one but only by each other; nor, again, can the
d  one be larger or smaller either than these two (i.e., largeness and smallness) or than the others, since it has neither largeness nor smallness.
   – Indeed, it appears not.
   – So then, if the one is neither larger nor smaller than the others, must it neither exceed nor be exceeded by them?
   – It must.
   – That which neither exceeds nor is exceeded, must it not then be even and, by being even, be equal?
   – Of course.
   – And further, the one itself must relate to itself similarly: having neither largeness nor smallness in itself, it neither exceeds nor is exceeded by itself but, by being even, is equal to itself.
   – Yes, by all means.
   – Therefore the one is equal to itself and to the others.
   – So it appears.
   – Moreover, by being in itself the one contains itself from the outside and, as container, it is larger than itself while, as contained, it is smaller, and in this way the one is both larger and smaller than itself.
   – Yes it is.
   – Is it not also true that nothing is except the one and the others?
   – Of course.
   – But what is must always be somewhere.
   – Yes.
   – Anything that is in something is a smaller thing in a larger thing; there is no other way for one thing to be in another.
   – No.
   – And since there is nothing else apart from the one and the others, and these must be in something, must they not be in each other, the others in the one and the one in the others, or else be nowhere?
   – It appears so.
   – So because the one is in the others, the others would be larger than the one because they contain it and the one would be smaller than the others because it is contained; and because the others are in the one, for the same reason the one would be larger than the others and the others smaller than the one.
   – It seems.
   – So the one is equal to, larger and smaller than both itself and the others.
   – It appears.
   – And if larger and smaller and equal, it would be of equal, larger and smaller measures with itself and the others; and if of measures, also of parts.

b  – Of course.
   – So being of equal and larger and smaller measures it would also be smaller and larger in number than itself and the others and equal to itself and the others.
   – How?
   – Compared to those things than which the one is larger, it would have more measures than they have and it would also have as many parts as it has measures; and likewise with respect to the things that are smaller than and equal to the one.

c  – Of course.
   – So being of equal and larger and smaller measures it would also be smaller and larger in number than itself and the others and equal to itself and the others.
   – How?
   – Compared to those things than which the one is larger, it would have more measures than they have and it would also have as many parts as it has measures; and likewise with respect to the things that are smaller than and equal to the one.
– So.
– And by being larger and smaller than itself and equal to itself, the one would be of an equal number of measures and of more and of fewer measures than itself, and if this be the case with respect to measures it is also the case with respect to parts.
– Of course.
– So by being of equal parts as itself the one would be the same in multitude as itself, in being of more parts it would exceed itself in number and in being of fewer parts it would be lesser than itself in number.
– It appears.
– Will not the one be similarly disposed toward the others? When it appears to be larger than they, must it not exceed them in number; when it appears smaller be of lesser number; and when equal in largeness also be equal to the others in multitude?
– It must.
– So, as it seems, the one is equal in number to, and more than, and less than itself and the others.
– It is.

10 The one is older and newer than and the same age as itself and the others

– Does the one share in time and, by sharing in time, both is and is coming to be both newer and older than both itself and the others and neither younger nor older than either itself or the others?
– How?
– If the one is, then ‘to be’ somehow subsists in it.
– Yes.
– And ‘to be’ is nothing other than the sharing in substance together with the present time, just as ‘was’ and ‘will be’ are the communion of substance with past time and with future time.
– It is indeed.
– Therefore, it shares in time if it shares in ‘to be’.
– Indeed.
– And, therefore, in time as it marches on?
– Yes.
– So the one always becomes older than itself if it advances according to time.
– It must.
– But do we remember that, by coming to be newly, the older becomes older?
– We remember.
– And so, because the one comes to be older than itself, does it not come to be older than itself by coming to be newer than itself?
– It must.
– And in this way it comes to be both newer and older than itself.
– Yes.
– And is it older when, in coming to be so in the now, it is between the ‘was’ and the ‘will be’? Because it will not somehow bypass the now when it proceeds from the before to the after.
– Indeed not.
c  Does it not, therefore, refrain from coming to be older whenever it encounters the now, but instead of then coming to be older, it already is older? As long as it is in process it cannot be captured by the now, because what is in process is such that it touches both the now and the after; the now while it is leaving it and the after while reaching it, coming to be between both of them, both the after and the now.

  – True.
  – And if all coming to be must not bypass the now, whenever the one encounters the now it always refrains from coming to be and then already is whatever it was coming to be.

  – It appears.
  – And so when the one encounters the now while coming to be older, it abstains from coming to be and then is older.

  – Yes, indeed.
  – And now the one is older than that thing than which it was coming to be older; but is not the one itself that very thing than which it was coming to be older?

  – Yes.
  – And that which is older is older than that which is newer?

  – It is.
  – Therefore also when the one happens to be coming to be older in the now, right then it is newer than itself.

  – It must.
  – Moreover, the now always is in attendance in the one through every aspect of ‘to be’; because whenever the one is, it is always now.

  – Of course.
  – Thus the one always both is and comes to be older and newer than itself.

  – It seems.
  – When the one is or is coming to be older or newer than itself does it do so in more time or in equal time?

  – Equal.
  – But in being, or in coming to be for equal time, it has the same age.

  – Of course.
  – And what has the same age is neither older nor newer.

  – Indeed not.
  – So the one, while being and coming to be in equal time as itself, neither is nor is coming to be either newer, or older than itself.

  – It seems not.
  – Than the others also, then?

  – I am not in a position to say.

  – But you do say this: that the others, if they are plural and not a singular other, are more than one; because if the others were a singular other they would be one; but being plural others the others are more than one and have multitude.

  – Of course they have.
  – Multitudes share in number greater than one.

  – No doubt.
  – Do we say that the greater number emerges and comes to pass earlier or that the smaller does?

  – The smaller.
– So the smallest is first, which is the one, no?
– Yes.
– So of all things that have number, the one is first; and all the others have number if they are plural and not singular other.
– They do indeed.
– And I think that as the one emerged first, it emerged earlier, and the others emerged later, and they that emerged later are newer than those that came earlier; so the others are newer than the one and the one is older than the others.
– Of course they are.
– And what of this? Could the one turn out to be contrary to its own nature, or is this impossible?
– Impossible.
– But the one was shown to have parts and, if parts, also beginning, end and middle.
– Yes.
– And the beginning of all things – both of the one itself and of each of the others – is the first that comes to be, and after it come all the others through to the end?
– Of course.
– And we say that the others are all portions of the whole and of the one, and that the one comes to be one and whole together with the end.
– We do.
– The end, I think, comes to be last and the one comes to be whole with it according to its nature. So that if the one is not to turn out to be contrary to its nature, it will, according to its nature, come to be last, together with the end.
– So it appears.
– Therefore the one is newer than the others and the others older than the one.
– So it appears to me also.
– What then? The beginning or any other part of the one or of any other thing, while it is a part, must it not be a one if it is to be a singular part and not plural parts?
– It must.
– And the one comes to be at once as the first part does, and as the second and so on, omitting none of the others that come to be in succession of one another, until, having gone through to the last, the one comes to be a whole one without, in this process of coming to be, skipping either the middle or the first or the last or any other part.
– True.
– Therefore the one is of the same age as all the others. So if the one is not contrary to nature, it does not come to be either before or after the others but simultaneously with them. And according to this argument the one is neither older nor newer than the others, nor are the others older or newer than it, but according to the previous argument the one is both older and newer, and the others of the one are likewise.
– Yes indeed.
– It is and has come to be in this way, but what about its coming to be older and newer than the others and the others than it, and its coming to be neither younger nor older? Is the case of its coming to be similar to the case of its being, or is it different?
– I cannot say.
– But I can say this much: if one thing is older than another it cannot come to be still older than the original age difference by which it came to be at first, nor being newer to come to
be newer still, because the addition of equals to unequals, whether in the case of time or of anything else, always results in the difference being equal to what it was at first.
– Of course.
– So, that which is cannot come to be older or newer than that which already is, if its age difference is always equal, but it is and has come to be older and the other has come to be newer, but it is not coming to be.
– True.
– So the one that is older or newer never comes to be older or newer than the others.
– Indeed not.
– Let’s see if in this way it becomes older or younger.
– In what way, exactly?
– In that way by which the one appeared older than the others and the others than the one.
– What then?
– When the one is older than the others, it has been for more time than the others.
– Yes.
– Again, consider: if we add equal time to more and to less time, will the more differ from the less by equal fraction or by smaller?
– By smaller.
– So the age difference between the one and the others, whatever it was at first, will not remain the same afterward, but the one by taking equal time as the others, will differ in age from the others by less than before, no?
– Yes.
– And does that which differs in age from something by less than before, become newer than those in relation to which it was previously older?
– Newer.
– And if that is newer, are not the others correspondingly older than the one than they were before?
– Indeed.
– So what has been newer is becoming older with respect to that which previously had been and now is older, and it never is older but always is becoming older than that. For the one is tending toward being newer and the other older. And again, the older becomes newer than the newer in similar fashion. For as they move in opposite direction they are coming to be their mutual opposites, the newer coming to be older than the older and the older coming to be newer than the newer. But they cannot have come to be. For if they had come to be, they would not be coming to be but would actually be. In the now they are coming to be each other’s older and newer. The one is coming to be newer than the others because it was shown to be and have been prior, and the others are coming to be older than the one because they were shown to have been last. According to the same argument the same holds for the others relative to the one, since they were shown to be and have been older than it.
– So it appears.
– Since neither of the two comes to be either older or newer than the other because they differ from each other by an equal number, neither does the one come to be older or newer than the others, nor do the others come to be older or newer than the one. And moreover, given that those that came to be earlier than the later as well as those that came to be later than the earlier, necessarily differ by a different portion, it follows that both the others and
the one must be both older and newer than each other.
– Indeed.
– According to all these arguments then, the one is and is coming to be both older and newer than itself and the others.
– Absolutely.
– And since the one shares in time and also shares in coming to be both older and newer, must it not therefore share in the ‘before’ and the ‘after’ and the ‘now’, if it shares in time?
– It must.
– Then the one is and will be and was coming to be and is coming to be and will come to be.
– Of course.
– And there would be, and was and is and will be something that is in it and belongs to it.
– Indeed.
– And there would be knowledge of it, and opinion and sensation, since indeed we are right now performing all these things with respect to it.
– Correct.
– And it has name and description and it is named and described. And whatever other similar properties pertain to the others pertain also to the one.

– This is absolutely so.

11 From-the-sudden: Being-becoming and nonbeing-perishing in time

– Let us then discuss a third thing: If the one is such as we have detailed, being both one and many and neither one nor many and sharing in time, must it not sometimes share in substance because it is one and sometimes not share in substance because it is not one?
– It must.
– Is it then possible to share in substance while it is not sharing in it or not to share while it is sharing?
– Not possible.
– So it shares in substance at one time and does not at another time, for only this way can it share and not share in the same thing.
– Correct.
– And is there not a time when it is partaking of substance and when it is being relieved of it? Or how can it sometimes be and have substance, and sometimes not have it, if it is not at some time taking it and at another time letting go of it?
– No way.
– Do you call the partaking of substance coming to be?
– I do.
– And do you call the letting go of substance perishing?
– Indeed, by all means.
– So then, it seems that the one, by partaking and letting go of substance, comes to be and perishes.
– It must.
– And as it is one and many and it comes to be and perishes, are the many not perishing when it comes to be one, and is the one not perishing when it comes to be many?
– Indeed.
– And in coming to be one and many, must it not undergo segregation and also aggregation?
– It must indeed.
– And when it comes to be like and unlike, must undergo assimilation and differentiation?
– Yes.
– And when larger and smaller and equal, must increase, decrease and be equal?
– Yes.
– And when being in motion it comes to rest, and when from rest it changes to motion, it must somehow be in no time at all.
– How exactly?
– It is impossible for the one to be previously at rest and afterward in motion and previously in motion and afterward at rest without changing.
– Of course not.
– Because there is no time in which something would be neither in motion nor at rest.
– No, of course not.
– But neither would it be altering without being altered.
– Not possible.
– But when would it be altered? It is not altered while at rest, nor while in motion, nor while it is in time.
– No, of course not.
– Thus there is this paradoxical thing in which it is when it changes.
– What thing?
– The from-the-sudden\textsuperscript{25}, because the from-the-sudden seems to indicate a certain kind of thing from which each condition changes to its corresponding other condition. For it does not change from rest while at rest nor from motion while in motion, but the nature of the from-the-sudden is something paradoxical that lies between both motion and rest and is in no time at all, and it is to this and from this that the condition of motion changes to rest and the resting condition changes to motion.
– Possibly.
– So then, the one, whether at rest or in motion, alternates between these two states (for it is only in this way it can accomplish either), and as it alternates, it alternates from-the-sudden, and while it alternates it is not in any kind of time whatsoever, and is neither in motion nor at rest.
– Indeed not.
– Is this also not the case with the other changes, when it changes from being to perishing or from not being to coming to be – is it then between certain kinds of motions and rests, and neither is nor is not, neither coming to be nor perishing?
– It seems so.
– And according to this argument, in going from one to many and from many to one, it is neither one nor many, and neither segregates nor aggregates; and in going from like to unlike and from unlike to like it does not either assimilate or differentiate; and in going from small to large and to equal and to their contraries – [namely that which is] neither small nor large nor equal – it would not be increased, nor decreased nor equated.

\textsuperscript{25} The conventional translation of Plato’s ἐξαίφνης (exaiphnes) as “instant” can be wrong, because “instant”, originally an adjective, can ambiguously refer to “instant of time”. Plato’s text makes it unambiguously clear that his exaiphnes is not a part of time. Hence it is here translated literally as from-the-sudden.
– It seems not.
– If the one is, it would undergo all these conditions.
– Of course.

**Third Hypothesis: the others if the one is**

1 The others are wholes that have portions of the One

– Now, shall we consider what should happen with respect to the others if the one is?
– Let’s consider.
– We say then, if the one is, what must happen to the others of the one?
– We say.

**c**
– Because they are other than the one, the others are not one; if they were they would not be other.
– Right.
– Nor are the others totally devoid of the one but in a way they share in it.
– How, exactly?
– It is through having portions of the one that the others are other, for if they did not have portions of the one they would be entirely one.
– Correct.
– Portions, we said, are of that which is whole.
– Yes.
– But the whole must be a one made out of many, the portions being portions of that whole, for every portion must be a portion not of many but of a whole.
– How?

**d**
– If something is a portion of many, with itself being one of them, it would doubtless be a portion of itself, which is impossible, and of each one and of all the others. But because it is not a portion of one, it will be a portion of the others minus the one, and thus it will not be a portion of each one; and not being a portion of each one, it will be of none of the many. Something that belongs to none of all these cannot be a portion or anything else of that to which it is nothing.
– So it appears.

**e**
– So the portion is not a portion of many or of all but of a certain one idea, and of a certain one thing that we call whole, that has come to be a complete one consisting of all; it is of this that a portion would be a portion.
– Most certainly.
– If then the others have portions, they would also share in the whole and in the one.
– Of course.
– Therefore, those that are the others of the one must be one perfect whole that has portions.
– They must.
– And the same argument holds for each of the portions, for each must also share in the one. For since each of them is a portion, and “each” in a way means “one”, each is by itself

---

26 It would be a portion of itself because that which is a portion of the one is also one of the others, the πολλά, the many, ("the others are the many" – τάλα τά πολλά of Socrates’s initial definition in 129a3)
and set apart from *the others* if it is to be “each”.
– Correct.
– Each of them shares in *the one* because it is other than one, or else it would not be sharing but would be *the one* itself. But it is impossible for anything to be *one* but *the one* itself.
– Impossible.
– And both the whole and the portion must share in *the one*. *The one* is whole because the portions are its portions; and again, each *one* portion is a portion of the whole if it belongs to a whole.
– Just so.

2 The others are limited and unlimited

– And the things that share in it, don’t they share in it insofar as they are other than *the one*?
– Of course.
– But things other than *the one* are many, for if *the others* are neither one nor more, they would be nothing.
– Nothing indeed.
– And since both those that share in the one portion and in *the one* as a whole are more than one, must not those that partake of *the one* be themselves unlimited in multitude?
– How?
– Look at it this way: when they are in the process of partaking of *the one*, are they not partaking simply because they neither are the one nor share in the one?
– Obviously.
– Because they are multitudes then, in which there is no *one*?
– Because they are multitudes.
– What then? If, for purposes of reasoning, we were to subtract from suchlike multitudes the least we possibly could, must not that which is subtracted be itself a multitude and not a *one*, if indeed it does not share in the one?
– It must.
– So whenever we examine in this way the very nature itself of that which is other than the eidos, whatever amount of it we view will always be unlimited in multitude.
– Most certainly.
– Furthermore, when each portion becomes a portion, it already has boundaries with each of the other portions and with the whole, and the whole has boundaries with the portions.
– Quite so.
– As it seems, when *the others* of *the one* commune with *the one*, then some other thing comes into being in them that imparts mutual limit among them. But, considered in themselves, their nature imparts limitlessness.
– So it appears.
– Thus *the others* of *the one* as wholes and as portions are both limitless and share in limit.
– Indeed.

---

27 «τῇ διανοίᾳ» see footnote #20
3 The others are like and unlike themselves and each other

– Are they then like and unlike each other and themselves?
– How, exactly?
– Insofar as all of them are unlimited according to their own nature, they all bear the same condition.
– Indeed.
– Furthermore, insofar as they all share in limit, in this way also they bear the same condition.
– No doubt.
– And insofar as they happen to be both unlimited and limited, they bear these conditions that are conditions opposite to each other.
– Yes.
– And the opposites are the most unlike possible.
– Of course.
– So according to each condition separately they are like themselves and like each other, but according to both conditions together they are both most opposite and most unlike.
– Likely so.
– In just this way the others are like and unlike themselves and one another.
– It is so.

4 Further ways in which the others are and are not

– Having shown that the others of the one undergo the above, we shall have no trouble finding that they are the same as and other than one another, and both in motion and at rest, and undergo all opposite affections.
– You are right.

Fourth Hypothesis: the others if the one is apart

– If we admit these results as evident, shall we examine again whether the others are not so or not only so if the one is [simply and purely] one?
– Yes, by all means.
– Let us say from the beginning: if the one is simply one, what must happen to the others of the one?
– Let us indeed.
– Is it not the case that the one is apart from the others and the others are apart from the one?
– But why, exactly?
– Because clearly besides these there is nothing else that is other than the one and other than the other: we say everything when we say the one and the others.
– Yes, everything.
– Then neither is there anything else besides them by being in which both the one and the others would be in the same [i.e., place, condition or state].

28 ἐν ταυτῷ = “in the same”. See footnote #19.
– Indeed not.
– Thus the one and the others are never in the same [place, condition or state].
– It seems not.
– Therefore they are apart?
– Yes.
– Moreover we assert that the truly one has no portions.
– Of course not.

If the one is apart from the others and lacks portions, then neither the one as a whole nor portions are in the other.
– Of course not.
– So in no way will the others share in the one since they do not share in it either as portions or as a whole.
– It seems not.
– In no way therefore are the others one nor have one in them.
– Most certainly not.
– Nor are the others many, then, for if they were, each portion of their whole would be one, but now the others of the one are neither one nor many nor whole nor portions since they do not share in the one in any way.
– Right.
– So then the others themselves are neither two nor three nor are two or three contained in them if the others in every way lack the one.
– It is so.
– So the others are neither like nor unlike the one nor have likeness and unlikeness in them; for if they were like and unlike and had likeness and unlikeness in them, then the others of the one would have in them two eide that are opposite each other.
– So it appears.
– But it is impossible for that which does not share even in one thing to share in two.
– Impossible.

Therefore the others are neither like nor unlike nor both. If they were like or unlike they would be sharing in either of these eide and if both they would share in two opposites. But this proved impossible.
– True.
– So the others are neither same nor other, nor in motion nor at rest, nor coming to be nor perishing, nor greater nor smaller nor equal; nor undergo any other such affection. For if the others submitted to any of these they would share in one and two and three and odd and even, but it was proven that it is impossible to share in these while they totally lack the one.
– Very true.
– Therefore then, if the one is [simply and purely] one, it is everything and nothing in relation both to itself and also to the others.
– Completely true.

Fifth Hypothesis: the one if it is not something

– Fine. Should we not think next what the consequences are if the one is not?
– Yes we should.
c – What exactly is this hypothesis “if the one is not”? Does it differ from “if the not-one is not”?
   – It most certainly differs.
   – Does it merely differ or is saying “if the not-one is not” totally contrary to “if the one is not”?
   – Totally contrary.
   – If someone says that largeness is not, or smallness is not, or some other such thing, does he not make clear that in each case he speaks of a different not-being?
   – Indeed.
   – When he says if the one is not, does he now make clear that he speaks of a not-being other than the others, and do we know that of which he speaks?
   – We know.
   – Therefore, when he says one, he speaks of a thing that a) is known, and b) is other than the others, whether he attaches to it being or not-being. A thing that is said not to be is not less known than – and indeed is known to be different from – the others. Not so?

d – Necessarily.
   – What must be the case if the one is not ought to at the outset be spelled out in this way: First, it seems that this must precede it: that there be knowledge of it, otherwise we would not know what is said when one spoke the words if the one is not.
   – True.
   – And the others must be other than it; or can it not be said that it is other than the others?
   – Of course.
   – So there is otherness in it in addition to knowledge: we do not speak of the otherness of the others when we call the one other than the others, but of its own otherness.

e – It appears.
   – Furthermore, the one that is not shares in the ‘that’ and the ‘something’ and ‘this’ and ‘toward this’ and ‘these’ and in all suchlike. For the one would not be spoken of, nor would the others than the one, nor whether something were about it or of it, if it did not share either in something related to it or in these others.
   – Right.
   – It is impossible for the one to be since it is not, but nothing prevents it from sharing in many things. In fact it must if it is to not be that particular one and not a different one. In fact, if that thing which we say is not is not even that particular one nor any other, nothing need even be uttered. But if that particular one and none other is the subject of not-being, then it must have a share in that and in many other things.
   – Yes, of course.
   – And so, it has unlikeness relative to the others; because the others of the one, in being other, are diverse.
   – Yes.
   – And aren’t the diverse those things that are of another kind?
   – No doubt.
   – And those of another kind aren’t they unlike?
   – Unlike indeed.
   – Therefore, if they are unlike the one, obviously the unlike are unlike the unlike.
   – Obviously.

b – So the one has unlikeness with respect to which the others are unlike it.
– It seems so.
– And if it has unlikeness of the others, must it not have likeness of itself?
– How so?
– If the one had unlikeness of the one, the argument would not be about something like the one, nor would the hypothesis be about one but about other than one.
– Indeed.
– Therefore it must not have unlikeness.
– Certainly not.
– Then the one must have likeness of itself.
– It must.
– Moreover it is not equal to the others, for if it were equal it would be like them with respect to equality. And both of these are impossible if it is the one that is not.
– Impossible.
– Since it is not equal to the others, must the others also be not equal to it?
– They must.
– And the not equal are unequal?
– Yes.
– And the unequal are unequal to unequals?
– No doubt.
– The one also shares in inequality, with respect to which the others are unequal to it?
– It does.
– But largeness and smallness certainly are aspects of inequality.
– They are.
– Then both largeness and smallness belong to a one such as this?
– Very likely.
– And largeness and smallness always do stand apart from each other.
– Indeed.
– Therefore there always is something between them.
– There is.
– Can you say that anything other than equality is between them?
– Nothing other but this.
– So, where there is largeness and smallness there is also equality between them.
– So it appears.
– It seems that equality, largeness and smallness would all belong to the one that is not.
– It seems so.
– Furthermore it must also somehow share in substance.
– How, exactly?
– It must be in such state as we argued, because if it is not then we would not be speaking the truth when saying that the one is not. But if we were speaking the truth then obviously we were speaking of things that are. Not so?
– Certainly so.
– And since we claim that we speak of true things we must say that we speak of things that are.
– We must.
– Therefore, it seems, the one that is non-being, is. For if it is not non-being, but discharges some of its being to non-being, it would at once be being.
– Most certainly.
– So, if it is to not to be, the being of that which is not must be tied to non-being, just as that which is, in order to be perfectly, must not have non-being. Above all, this is the way in which that which is, is, and that which is not, is not; that which is, is so by sharing of the substance of being a being and by not sharing of the substance of not being a non-being if it is to be perfectly; and that which is not, is not so by not sharing of the non-substance of not being a non-being and by sharing in the substance of being a non-being, if it is to not be perfectly.
– Perfectly true.
– Since, then, that which is shares in non-being and that which is not shares in being, then the one, because it is not, must share in non-being.
– It must.
– Moreover, substance is evident in the one if it is not.
– Evident.
– Non-substance also, if it is not.
– No doubt.
– Is it possible for that which is in a certain state to not be in that state without changing from it?
– It is not possible.
– So every thing that is such that both is and is not in a certain state signifies change.
– No doubt.
– And change is motion, shall we say?
– Motion.
– And wasn’t the one shown to be and not be?
– Yes.
– So it was shown to be and not be in a certain state.
– It seems so.
– So then the one that is not is shown to be moved because it changes from being to not being.
– Very likely.
– Moreover, if it is nowhere among things that are (as indeed it is not, due to its non-being) it is not transported from place to place.
– Of course not.
– Then it is not moved by means of transport.
– No, it is not.
– Nor does it rotate in the same place, because it is not in contact with the same place, because the same place is a being. And the one that is not cannot possibly be in any being.
– Yes, impossible.
– Therefore that which is not cannot rotate in that in which it is not.
– It cannot indeed.
– The one, either being or non-being, cannot be altered from itself, otherwise our discourse would no longer be of the one, if it is altered from itself, but of some other.
– Right.
– And if it is not altered, nor rotates in place or is transported, does it move in any way?
– Of course not.
– And in fact that which is motionless must be at rest and that which rests must stand still.
– It must.
– So the one that is not seems both to be still and to move.
– It seems.
– And if indeed it moves, it must really be altered. In whichever way it moves, to that same degree it is no longer in the same condition but in a different one.
– Agreed.
– It is precisely by moving that the one is altered.
– Yes.
– And by not moving at all it is not altered at all.
– Indeed not.
– Insofar as the non-being one moves it is altered, and insofar as it does not move it is not altered.
– Indeed not.
– So the one that is not both is and is not altered.
– So it appears.
– And must not that which is altered come to be other than it was before and perish with respect to its previous condition, and that which is not altered neither come to be nor perish?
– It must.
– Therefore the one that is not, insofar as it is altered, both comes to be and perishes, and insofar as it is not altered neither comes to be nor perishes. And so the one that is not comes to be and perishes and neither comes to be nor perishes.
– Certainly not.

Sixth Hypothesis: the one if it is not at all

– Let us go to back to the beginning to see if these matters will prove the same as just now or different.
– We need to.
– Shall we say then: if the one is not, what are the consequences with respect to it?
– Yes.
– When we say ‘is not’, we mean nothing else except that substance is absent from that thing which we say is not, don’t we?
– Nothing else.
– When we say that something is not, do we say that in a way it is and in a way it is not, or does saying ‘is not’ mean this: that the thing that is not, simply is not anywhere in any way, nor in any way shares in substance?
– Simply is not.
– Nor, therefore, could the non-being share in substance in any other way whatsoever.
– Indeed not.
– And coming to be and perishing is nothing else than sharing in substance and giving up substance?
– Nothing else.
– Whatever has no share in substance neither receives it nor gives it up.
– Of course not.
– The one then, which in no way is, can neither have nor receive nor give up substance in
any way at all.
– So it seems.
– So then the one that is not neither perishes nor comes to be, since it does not share in
substance at all.
– It appears not.
– Nor is it altered in any way, for it would be coming to be and perishing if it did.
– True.
– If it is not altered then it must not move.
– It must not.
– Nor can we say that whatever is nowhere is at rest, for what is at rest must be in some
place always the same.
– The same place, of course.
– Therefore we repeat that what is not is never either at rest or in motion.
– Never, indeed.
– Moreover, nothing that is belongs to it because if it shared in this thing it would be
sharing in substance.
– Clearly.
– Thus, neither largeness nor smallness nor equality belongs to it.
– Indeed not.
– Moreover, neither likeness nor otherness, either with respect to itself or to the others,
belongs to it.
– It appears not.
– What then? Is it possible for other things to belong to it if nothing must belong to it?
– It is not.
– Then the others are neither its like nor unlike, and neither the same as nor different from
it.
– Indeed not.
– What, then? With respect to that which is not, is there an ‘of that’ or ‘to that’ or ‘some’
or ‘this’ or ‘of this’ or ‘other’ or ‘to other’ or ‘before’ or ‘after’ or ‘now’ or knowledge or
opinion or sense or description or name or any other being?
– There will not be.
– Thus the one that is not has no status whatsoever.
– It seems that indeed it has none whatsoever.

Seventh Hypothesis: the others if the one is not something

– Let us further discuss what must happen to the others if the one is not.
– Let us.
– Somehow they must be other, for if they were not even other, there could be no
discussion about the others.
– It is so.
– But if the discussion is about the others, the others are diverse. Don’t you say that the
‘other’ and the ‘diverse’ are the same thing?
– I do.
– And of course we say that the diverse is diverse from a diverse thing and the other is
other than another?
– Yes.
– And to **the others**, if they are to be other, corresponds something to which they are other.
– Necessarily.
– And what could that be? Surely they are not other than **the one**, since **the one** is **not**.
– Indeed not.
– Then they are each other’s other. This is their only alternative or else they are other than nothing.
– Right.
– So they are each other’s other by multitudes, because they cannot be one by one since **the one** is **not**. But, it seems, each of their masses is unlimited in multitude, and if you take what seems the smallest, all of a sudden and as if in a sleeping dream, instead of one it seems to be many and instead of smallest it seems immense in comparison to its fragments.
– Absolutely right.
– **The others** are other than each other by means of such masses if they are to be other than **the one** that is **not**.
– Quite so.
– So there will be many masses, each seeming but not being one, because **the one** is **not**.
– Yes.
– And they would seem to have numbers, if they each seem to be one while they are many.
– Indeed.
– And some among them will seem even and others odd – but not truly so, if **the one** is **not**.
– Not truly indeed.
– Moreover we assert that there will seem to be a minimum in them; and this minimum appears to be many and great compared to each of the many that are small.
– No doubt.
– And each mass will seem to be equal to the many and small, for it would not transition from greater to lesser in appearance before it seemed to come between them, and this would be the appearance of equality.
– Plausibly.
– And although it has boundary with another mass, by itself it has neither beginning nor end nor middle?
– How so?
– Because whenever one conceives any of these as features of the masses, before a beginning another beginning appears, and after an end another end follows, and in the middle others more middle than the middle, ever smaller, because each of them cannot be grasped as one, since **the one** is **not**.
– Very true.
– So I think that every being that is grasped mentally must be broken into pieces, for mass somehow is always grasped without **the one**.
– Yes, of course.
– Seen from afar with fuzzy vision, must not such a thing appear one? But seen up close with sharp perception, must not each appear in unlimited multitude, as it is devoid of **the one** – given that **the one** is **not**?
– Absolutely it must.
Thus, if the one is not and the others of the one are, each of the others must appear unlimited and limited and one and many.

Indeed they must.

And would they appear to be like and unlike?

Like things in a shaded drawing, all of which to a distant observer appear as one, undergoing the same condition and being alike.

– Of course.

But when he approaches they appear many and different and by the apparition of difference diverse and unlike themselves.

– Yes.

And these masses must appear like and unlike themselves and each other.

– Yes, of course.

And also the same and other than each other, and in contact and apart from themselves, and moving in all motions and at rest in every way, and coming to be and perishing and neither of the two – and all such things that we could easily enumerate – if there are many while the one is not.

– Very true indeed.

Eighth Hypothesis: the others if the one is not at all

Returning to the beginning once more, let us say what must be the case if the one is not but the others are.

Let us say then.

To be sure, the others are not one.

– Of course not.

Nor are they many, because in being many they would be infused with the one, since if none of them is one then all of them are nothing and by being nothing they are not many.

– True.

And because the one is not infused in the others, the others are neither many nor one.

– Indeed not.

And they do not appear to be either one or many.

– Why exactly?

Because the others have no communion anywhere in any way with things that are not, and no part of things that are not are near the others, because there is no part in things that are not.

– True.

Nor is there a notion or image of that which is not relative to the others, nor is that which is not conceived in any way whatsoever over the others.

– Of course not.

If then the one is not, nothing of the others is conceived either as one or many, for without the one it is impossible to conceive many.

– Impossible indeed.

If then the one is not, the others neither are nor are conceived either as one or as many.

– It seems not.
— Neither like nor unlike, then.
— No.
— Nor indeed the same nor other, nor in contact nor apart, nor any of the other things that earlier we described them as appearing: the others neither are nor appear to be any of these if the one is not.
— True.
— So if we were to say that if the one is not then nothing is, would we be speaking rightly?
— Most certainly.
— Let us therefore say this in addition: that, as it seems, whether the one is or is not, both it and the others, both in relation to themselves and each other, all in every way both are and are not and appear and do not appear.
— Very true.