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ARTICLE

The *Nun* in the *Parmenides*: Not Another *Exaiphnês*

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Abstract

After some preliminary remarks about Plato's use of the adverb *nun*, I explain what the *nun* is by offering a close textual analysis of the key passage in which it is explicitly addressed (*Parm*. 151e3–153b7). Its *metaxu* nature, between duration and limit, requires one to consider another temporal notion of the second part of the *Parmenides* that is *metaxu*, namely the *exaiphnês*. I explain why the *nun* does not conceptually overlap with the *exaiphnês*, arguing moreover that there is no model where both notions fit, but rather a model accounting for a switch and another one accounting for continuous change.

Résumé

Après quelques remarques préliminaires sur l'emploi par Platon de l'adverbe *nun*, j'explore la nature du *nun* à travers une lecture approfondie du passage où la notion est spécifiquement examinée (*Parm*. 151e3–153b7). Sa nature *metaxu*, située entre la durée et la limite, conduit à examiner l'autre notion temporelle de la deuxième partie du *Parménide* qui est *metaxu*, c'est-à-dire l'*exaiphnês*. J'explique pourquoi le *nun* et l'*exaiphnês* doivent être distingués et pourquoi il n'existe pas de modèle où les deux notions s'inscrivent simultanément, mais plutôt un modèle rendant compte d'un saut et un modèle rendant compte d'un changement continu.

Keywords: *nun*; *exaiphnês*; change; time; *Parmenides*

1. Introduction: Plato's Time(s)

What Plato has to say about Time goes far beyond the "definition" Timaeus provides in the eponymous dialogue, and even beyond the *Timaeus* itself.[1] To find out what

[1] In the *Timaeus*, where Timaeus relates how the demiurge produced "an eternal image that proceeds according to number (κατ' ἀριθμὸν ἰοῦσαν αἰώνιον εἰκόνα) of eternity remaining in unity (μένοντος αἰῶνος ἐν ἑνὶ) — that which (τοῦτον) we have called time (χρόνον)" (*Tim*. 37d6–7). Much ink has been spilled on the exact meaning of the still-disputed definition of time (χρόνος) as an image of eternity (αἰών). I take *touton* to be masculine for attraction and thus — *pace* Plato (1997c, p. 1241), Thein (2020, p. 97 n. 9), and

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Plato has to say about Time, we need to consider (at least) another late dialogue, namely the *Parmenides*.[2]

When considering the *Parmenides*, the only temporal notion that usually comes to mind is the famous and famously obscure *exaiphnês*. Earlier in that dialogue, however, another temporal notion is introduced. It is *ho nun chronos*, which I will, for the most part, refer to simply as the *nun*.[3] The two temporal notions have not enjoyed the same attention: while the *exaiphnês* still attracts a lot of scholarly attention, the *nun* has often been disregarded by interpreters. Here, I shall do my best to reverse this tendency. My focus will be the Platonic *nun* as well as its interaction with the Platonic *exaiphnês*.

2. The Platonic *Nun*

In Section 2, I aim to answer the questions of what the *nun* is. To do so, after some preliminary remarks about the use of the adverb *nun* both in the corpus and in the *Parmenides* (Sections 2.1 and 2.2, respectively), I shall offer a close textual analysis of the key passage (i.e., *Parm.* 151e3–153b7), which offers what is as close to a definition of the *nun* as we find in the Platonic corpus in Section 2.3.[4] As I shall show in Section 2.4, the definition of the *nun* turns out to be problematic, since its two key features, namely duration and limit, seem to be doomed to conflict with one another.

2.1 Taking a Step Back: The Word Nun *in the* Corpus Platonicum

The adverb *nun*, which the Greek-English dictionary LSJ renders as the "now, both of the present moment and of the present time generally" is used in the *corpus Platonicum* in a more general way (a), as well as in a rather technical way (b), which is my focus here.

a) Like the emphatic forms *nundê* ("just now") and *nuni* ("just now"), *nun* is used to make the conversation *now* unfolding in the dialogues vivid.[5] Mostly, the *nun*

Wilberding (2016, p. 26) — to refer *not* to *arithmon* but to *eikôn*. In other words, "that which we have called time" is not the number, but rather the eternal image that proceeds according to the number (as confirmed by *Tim.* 38a7–8); see Sattler (2020, p. 254 n. 28) and Taylor (1928, p. 187). Already Plotinus (*Enn.* III. 7 [45] 1.16–24) and many others before him, as Brague (1982, pp. 13–24) shows, read this definition in that way. What Plato says about Time includes cluses about the way we do and should speak about it (*Tim.* 37e1–38b5). More on that passage in Pavani (Forthcoming).

[2] I take both the *Parmenides* and the *Timaeus* to be late dialogues, as most scholars do (cf. Thesleff, 2009, p. 331 ff.), because the critical *Auseinandersetzung* with the theory of Forms presupposes the "publication" of the so-called middle dialogues. I also take the *Timaeus* to be a late dialogue because of the internal arguments exposed by Robinson (1992, pp. 26–27). For a different view, see Owen (1953), whose famous and controversial interpretation has been, in my view, convincingly rebutted by Cherniss (1957) and Gill (1979).

[3] With few exceptions, like Sattler (2019), the *nun* has often been disregarded by interpreters, who still deal extensively with the *exaiphnês*, as witnessed by most recent publications such as those by Brisson (2023) and Khan (2023).

[4] Unless noted otherwise, all citations in this article refer to the *Parmenides*. If not stated otherwise, translations are by Gill and Ryan (Plato, 1997a).

[5] Consider the juxtaposition of the two statements "Theaetetus sits" and "(this) Theaetetus (here) with whom I am *just now* conversing, flies" (emphasis is mine) in the *Sophist* (*Sph.* 263a9). The second *logos* differs from the first one not only in its truth value (since the first logos is true, because it "says things that

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refers to something punctual. This is best illustrated by a passage of the *Phaedo*, where Cebes recalls Socrates' theory of recollection, according to which it is necessary to have learned (μεμαθηκέναι, perfect) in a certain previous time (ἐν προτέρῳ τινὶ χρόνῳ) the things that we *now* remember (ἃ νῦν ἀναμιμνῃσκόμεθα, present) (*Phd.* 72e5–7). The contrast being constructed is between a period of time in the past, in which learning as a process has taken place, and its result in the present (hence the perfect tense), when the punctual act of recalling happens. On many occasions, however, the *nun* conveys duration, rather than something punctual — I shall show at the end of Section 2.2 why this is problematic. A nun stretching for a while is best exemplified by expressions such as "all things which have been said just *now*." Whereas, in the *Parmenides*, it refers just a few lines back (e.g., *Parm.* 130d8), in the *Statesman* "all things which have been said *just now*" (*Pol.* 286a7) encompass considerations expressed also in the *Statesman*'s prequel, i.e., the *Sophist*.

b) *Nun* is also used in a more technical sense, often in the phrase *ho nun chronos*, as occurs in the *Philebus*. In order to show that the soul experiences pleasure without the body (*Phil.* 34c 6–9), Socrates takes hunger and thirst both to be species of desire, namely a state of emptiness. Socrates begins by considering someone who is emptied for the first time, and gets Protarchus to agree that there is no way a person "could be in touch with filling, either through sensation or memory, since he has no experience of it, either in the present (ἐν τῷ νῦν χρόνῳ) or ever in the past" (*Phil.* 35a7–9, translated by Dorothea Frede; see Plato, 1997b). Here, the phrase *ho nun chronos* seems to refer to the present time generally speaking. In order to find a conscious technical treatment, we need to take into account the *Parmenides*, to which I will *now* turn.

2.2 Ho Nun Chronos *in the* Parmenides

Even in the *Parmenides*, Plato uses *nun* in a non-technical, more quotidian sense before assigning it a more technical sense. In doing so, Plato confirms his tendency to juxtapose more technical uses of terms usually taken to be metaphysically loaded — such as *eidos* and *genos* — with their respective conventional usages.[6]

The first occurrence of the *nun* in the dialogue is to be found in the "narrative frame"[7]: Adeimantus tells Cephalos that Antiphon met many times with Pythodorus, who was present at the conversation between Socrates, Zeno, and Parmenides.

are as they are," and the second false) but also as far as the formulation is concerned. In the second *logos*, flying is predicated not of Theaetetus simpliciter but of (this) Theaetetus (here) with whom the *xenos* is *now* conversing (*Sph.* 263a9).

[6] For instance, the term *genos*, which will be so prominent in the core section of the *Sophist* (even before being addressed as the *megista genê* at *Sph.* 254d4, *genos* plays a key role already in the dialectic section starting at *Sph.* 253b9), is used in the first line of the dialogue to supply one of the few pieces of information we readers are given about the *dramatis persona* who is going to lead the discussion, namely the Visitor, who is from Elea as far as his *genos* is concerned (*Sph.* 216a2–3).

[7] On the "vertiginous effect of multiple nested narratives" in the *Parmenides*, see Morgan (2007, pp. 364–365).

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Adeimantus tells Cephalos that Antiphon used to consider these topics assiduously, while *now* "he devotes most of his time to horses" (126c6–8). This *nun* is evidently protracted (as, for example, the translation of "these days" by Mary Louise Gill and Paul Ryan shows; see Plato, 1997a). A protracted *nun* also occurs in the dialogue between old father Parmenides and a young Socrates. Discussing the thorny question of which Forms exist, Socrates openly addresses the difficulty he faces and explains to Parmenides the way he found to cope with it (130d5–9). Parmenides attributes Socrates' difficulty to his young age: after telling Socrates that "philosophy has not gripped you as it will in the future" (130e1–3), Parmenides adds that *now* Socrates still cares about what people think (130e3–4). Like the *nundê*, which Socrates has used a few lines before to refer to the things mentioned a moment ago (130d8), this *nun* (at 130e3) also extends over a period of time. As Parmenides will claim, a great deal of practice, which obviously requires much time, will be needed to overcome the actual state (135d2–6).

It is only in the second part of the *Parmenides* that the *nun* is also, although not exclusively, used in its technical sense. The technical sense is prominent in the first and second deductions. In the first deduction, the *nun* is characterized as the in-between member of the threefold ordered temporal series, *pote* — *nun* — *epeita* (i.e., at 141e3–7) which recurs later (i.e., at 155d1–3 and at 164a8–b1). The important point of the series is that, whatever direction we take, the order must stay the same; in other words, whatever direction we take, the *nun* will always be sandwiched between the *pote* and the *epeita*. A brief comment is necessary here on Plato's choice of vocabulary. We get *pote* (— *nun*) — *epeita*, whereas the pair *proteron* — *hysteron*, which will be so important for Aristotle's definition of time as the "number of change in respect of the before and the after" (ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον, *Phys*. IV 11, 219b1, Aristotle, 1983), occurs in our passage only in the coda, namely in relation to numbers (153b4–6), as well as in the *exaiphnês*-argument. The comparison with the pair *proteron* — *hysteron* is instructive. Even if *pote* and *epeita* are evidently related to one another, I do not take them to be relative terms in the way that *proteron* and *hysteron* are. Nevertheless, translating *pote* with "once" and *epeita* with "then" seems to me to miss the point conveyed by "heretofore" and "hereafter" (Turnbull, 1998, *ad locum*) whereas the adverbs "once" and "then" can stand alone, "before" and "after," *qua* prepositions, naturally demand completion (before/after *what*?), thus stressing their relation to the series comprised of *pote* — *nun* — *epeita*.[8] It is only in the second deduction, however, that *nun* is explicitly thematized and treated as a proper notion, as the nominalization witnesses.[9]

[8] As noticed by Sattler, *pote* and *epeita* "interestingly oscillate between what we would call the A-series and the B-series of time" (Sattler, 2019, p. 33 n. 32). If taken to build up a series or sequence, they seem to come close to the B-series, where we describe events as being before or after other events, instead of placing them in the "past," "present," or "future," as we do in the A-series. As we shall see at the end, the comparative as well, namely the "Becoming old*er*" consistently addressed in the passage, could be considered as a mark in favour of the so-called B series.

[9] On many occasions, we witness Plato's Parmenides taking an adverb and turning it into a proper, self-standing temporal notion by means of nominalization. At 152b5, the adverb *nun* is turned into a substantive by the definite article, as will also be the case with *to exaiphnês* (156d2–3), which would have to be literally

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2.3 *The Temporal Notion of the* Nun *in the* Parmenides

As I mentioned above, for a treatment of the notion of the *nun*, one must consider the passage 151e3–153b7. By way of introduction, a few words must be said about the argumentative context as well as about the structure and the premises of the argument.

The context. We are in the second deduction (i.e., 142b1–157b5) of the second part of the *Parmenides*, which is explicitly advertised as a dialectical exercise (135d7). Parmenides and his interlocutor Young Aristotle consider the consequences for the One in relation to the others if the One *is*, that is, if the One partakes of Being. I take this deduction, which is the longest of the entire exercise, to culminate in the so-called Appendix (155e4–157b5), for reasons I shall explain in Section 3.2.

The structure. The passage 151e3–153b7 can be divided into three main sections: the first section, i.e., 151e3–152b2, contains the premises; the second section, i.e., 152b2–152e10, presents the actual argument, and the third section, i.e., 153a1–153b7, can be regarded as a coda on difference, plurality, and things that have numbers. Since a shorter coda dealing with "being of the same age" can be also distinguished in the core argument (152b2–152e10), the true core of the argument, which I shall deal with extensively in what follows, is 152b2–d4. Before doing so, I shall briefly deal with its premises.

The premises. Parmenides begins abruptly with a quite condensed claim that works as an assumption for the argument, the logical steps of which can be identified by considering the interlocutor's lines. Parmenides asks,

> Does the one also partake of time? And, in partaking of time, is it and does it come to be both younger and older than, and neither younger nor older than, itself and others?[10]

As the ensuing question of clarification (Πῶς;) attests, Young Aristotle takes Parmenides' claim to be not entirely straightforward. Note that Young Aristotle voices a deep puzzlement precisely when the temporal aspect, which plays a pivotal role in the first two deductions, gets discussed (as his answers in the first deduction especially at 141d3 and 142a1 make manifest). Why? Here is my guess: because time is considered from a logical and not from the more familiar point of view, which is the empirical one. Even if change is the most incontrovertible phenomenon of our experience, the discussion of change is carried out on a purely logical level; in line with the (second part of the) *Parmenides*, the impulse throughout the passage is logical. To quote G. E. L. Owen, the problems are not "questions of empirical facts, but conceptual puzzles" (Owen, 1986, p. 242).

This is confirmed by the architecture of the premises to be found in the section 151e3–152b2, namely (i) the distinction of present, past, and future (151e7–152a2), (ii) the introduction of the flow of time, and (iii) the direction given to such flow,

rendered as "the suddenly," according to Rangos (2014, p. 541). Also *pote* and *epeita* are turned into and treated as substantive in the key passage 152b4–5.

[10] Ἆρ' οὖν καὶ χρόνου μετέχει τὸ ἕν, καὶ ἐστί τε καὶ γίγνεται νεώτερόν τε καὶ πρεσβύτερον αὐτό τε ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων, καὶ οὔτε νεώτερον οὔτε πρεσβύτερον οὔτε ἑαυτοῦ οὔτε τῶν ἄλλων, χρόνου μετέχον; (151e3–6).

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namely from the *pote* to the *epeita*. Only after the three dimensions have been singled out,[11] Parmenides adds the element of the flow of time. Notice that the argument gives the logical aspect absolute priority, since the element of the flow of time is specified only in a second moment and even then as a purely logical matter, namely without appeal to sense-experience. For only after inducing Aristotle to agree that the One partakes of Time, Parmenides adds "of the proceeding time" (πορευομένου τοῦ χρόνου) (152a3–4). What may sound like a trivial tenet, namely that time proceeds (προέρχομαι at 152b5) onward is far less trivial if we consider how the argument began. Whereas at 151e3 Parmenides' initial compressed premise encompassed becoming *both* older *and* younger than itself *and* the others, for the most part of the core argument, the interlocutors deal with going forward κατὰ χρόνον, namely according to time or in time. This means to constantly (ἀεὶ) become older than oneself, which is according to the first deduction (141a 6–7), what it is to be in time, namely to partake of Time.

The core argument. What I consider to be the core part of the argument (152b2–e3) starts with a question, in which Parmenides drops the *becoming* older addressed so far and turns to the *being* older that becomes crucial in the central part of the argument (152b2–5). The One is said to be — no longer to become — older when it is in the *nun chronos*; the *nun chronos* is said to become the *metaxu*, the "was" and the "will be." This is so (γάρ) because, moving forward from the *pote* to the *epeita*, the One will not overstep (ὑπερβήσεται) the *nun* (152b4–5).[12]

While the basic idea could be expressed by saying that the One stops becoming older and is already older when the *nun* enters the picture, Parmenides almost intentionally plays with slightly different formulations, each of which seems not only to stress a different aspect of the same tenet but even to twist it, so that the reader wonders which formulation is the most "representative." As is often the case in the passage at hand, the uncertainty arises because we cannot simply assume that a claim gets progressively refined. As we have seen before, it can happen that a quite compressed premise is then progressively explained, so that the most formally refined version comes at the beginning and not at the end of a line of reasoning. Here we are first told that it ceases to become older when it meets the *nun* and does not become, but already is, older (b6–c2); then that "if it is necessary that everything that becomes does not elude (παρελθεῖν) the *nun*, then whenever it is in it, it always ceases to become and already is that which it happens to become" (152c6–d2, my translation); and finally that the One, when in becoming older it has met (ἐντύχῃ) the *nun*, has ceased (aorist) becoming older and is already older (152d2–4). The second formulation (i.e., 152c6–d2) provides a third verb (παρέρχομαι) in addition to ὑπερβαίνω and ἐντυγχάνω. Notice that the verb ὑπερβαίνω is of extreme interest for the idea of the ordered series discussed above. In the sequel, we are told that the One meets (ἐντύχῃ) the *nun*, which is a formula that appears three times (152c1, 152d3,

[11] The threefold temporal distinction is drawn starting from the "tensed language." At 151e7–152a2, Parmenides starts from the three tenses of the verb *to be*, namely infinitive, imperfect, and future, to derive the three temporal dimensions, namely present, past, and future.

[12] ἐκ τοῦ ποτὲ εἰς τὸ ἔπειτα, 152b5. Notice that an *ek* — *eis* movement also occurs in the *exaiphnês* passage.

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and 152d8) and seems to make the *nun* a sort of "gate" in the fixed route the almost personalized One must follow. Furthermore, the second formulation adds "whenever it is in it" (ἐπειδὰν κατὰ τοῦτο ᾖ), i.e., in the *nun*. One is made to wonder whether the three verbs (i.e., elude, meet, and not overstep) are functionally equivalent or whether one of the three captures more properly the problem at stake (and, if so, then, which one), the formulation "whenever it is in the *nun*" seems to ascribe to the *nun* a duration, no matter how short. We shall see why "being in the *nun*" is a problematic tenet.

Despite the emphatic "and thus" (Ἆρ' οὖν at 152b6), it is difficult for the reader to understand how exactly Parmenides has drawn the inference that is precisely the tenet that, as we have seen, gets repeated with slight variations and additions throughout the passage: when the One encounters the *nun*, the One ceases to become older and does not become, but already *is*, older (156b6–c2). When the One meets the *nun*, there is no becoming older, but being already older — there is no process of change; change has already occurred; there is no process but instead a state, a result.

The process (of becoming) in which the One constantly is, needs to be stopped in a "snapshot" whenever the One "coincides with the present," to quote Francis MacDonald Cornford (Cornford, 1939, p. 187). In what resembles a spatial treatment of time, such a reconstruction appears to be treating the One as a train which, in going, for instance, from Cologne to Bochum, will not overstep Düsseldorf, which lies between Cologne and Bochum. For a less spatial image, we might draw an analogy from music: there is no way to play the beginning of the *Ode to Joy* without playing a second E after the first one and before the F, which comes third. The E that is sandwiched between the opening E and the F cannot be skipped. Both examples evidently assume a continuum: just like the melody, which is not a series of impulses, the movement of the train is not a step-like progression. The train does not jump from one station to the next; the stations are merely arbitrary points along a continuous journey. Such points are indeed arbitrary, for while Düsseldorf's main station is clearly in Düsseldorf, it is not obvious where Düsseldorf begins and where it ends. It is indeed a question of (setting) boundaries, as the central sentence shows:

> Doesn't it stop coming to be older when it encounters the now? It doesn't come to be, but is then already older, isn't it? For if it were going forward, it could never be grasped by the now. For a thing going forward is able to lay hold of both the now and the later — releasing the now and reaching for the later, while coming to be between the two, the later and the now. (152b6–c6, translation modified)[13]

To reconstruct Parmenides' complex and condensed argumentation, I shall consider (a) the structure, and (b) the key terms of the key sentence, i.e., 152c2–6.

[13] Ἆρ' οὖν οὐκ ἐπίσχει τότε τοῦ γίγνεσθαι πρεσβύτερον, ἐπειδὰν τῷ νῦν ἐντύχῃ, καὶ οὐ γίγνεται, ἀλλ' ἔστι τότ' ἤδη πρεσβύτερον; προϊὸν γὰρ οὐκ ἄν ποτε ληφθείη ὑπὸ τοῦ νῦν. τὸ γὰρ προϊὸν οὕτως ἔχει ὡς ἀμφοτέρων ἐφάπτεσθαι, τοῦ τε νῦν καὶ τοῦ ἔπειτα, τοῦ μὲν νῦν ἀφιέμενον, τοῦ δ' ἔπειτα ἐπιλαμβανόμενον, μεταξὺ ἀμφοτέρων γιγνόμενον, τοῦ τε ἔπειτα καὶ τοῦ νῦν.

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a) As for its structure, the key sentence consists of two *gar* sentences which purport to provide *together* the reasons for the claim made at the beginning of Parmenides' line, namely that when the One meets the *nun*, the One ceases to become (older) and is already older. The second sentence is also supposed to ground the first one: each *gar* is a step back into the assumption of the prior sentence (van Emde Boas et al., 2019, 59.14). We thus witness a regress towards underlying conditions. In the first γάρ-sentence, the reason that the One must stop becoming when it meets the *nun* is presented in a counterfactual way: if it were moving forward, that is, proceeding in time, the One would not be caught by the *nun* (152c2–3). Note that the perspective has been altered, since it is now the *nun* that has the active power previously ascribed to the One. We learned that the One meets the *nun* and now we are told that the One is caught by the *nun*. Meeting the *nun* implies that the One moves while the *nun* does not; by contrast, being seized by the *nun* seems to make the *nun*, which chases the One, a moving entity as well.[14] The second γάρ-sentence specifies that what moves forward is such as to be in touch with both the *nun* and the *epeita*; what proceeds in time is said to depart from the *nun*, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to reach the *epeita* while coming to be between *nun* and *epeita* (152c3–6). If my analysis of the argument's structure is correct, then this is the key sentence:

> For a thing going forward is able to lay hold of both the now and the later — releasing the now and reaching for the later, while coming to be between the two, the later and the now. (152c3–6, translation modified)

b) The key sentence is puzzling in many respects. Terminologically speaking, the sentence is puzzling as far as (i) its subject, (ii) the verb used, (iii) the adverb *metaxu*, and (iv) the two elements that the *metaxu* connects, are concerned. Before dealing deal with these difficulties one by one in what follows here is the take-home message: since we are no longer dealing with the One, but rather with anything that becomes, Parmenides seems to be claiming that change as such has to take place *between* two contiguous *nun*, namely the *nun*, where no change can occur, and the *epeita*, a sort of nun in the future, where no change can occur either.

(i) The first thing to notice is the shift of subject: we are no longer talking about the One, but rather about that which proceeds in time (τὸ προϊόν at 152c3), which will then be referred to by the phrase "anything that is becoming" (πᾶν τὸ γιγνόμενον at 152c7). Thus, the conclusion seems not to be confined to the status of the One of the second deduction, but rather to encompass "anything that is becoming" and thus change in general.[15]

[14] I wonder whether the distinction between the "travelling now" and the "stationary now" drawn by Strang confirms, instead of solving, what is indeed difficult to square in the text (Strang, 1974, p. 69).

[15] One could also wonder whether, by introducing "anything that is becoming," Parmenides goes so far as to postulate a substratum, namely something that exists throughout and is subject to the process of change.

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(ii) What moves forward temporally is said to be such as to be in touch (ἐφάπτεσθαι) with both the *nun* and the *epeita* (152c3–4). Within the same deduction, the entire section 148d5–149d7 has been devoted to showing that "the One has and has not contact (ἅπτεται) with the others and with itself" (149d5–6) and at least the following two connected aspects of this section are of interest for the present purpose: succession and neighbouring position. At 148e4–7, we learned that everything that is to touch something must lie next to that which it is to touch, occupying the position adjacent to that occupied by what it touches. In the aftermath, Parmenides added that that which is to touch must, while being separate, be next to what it is to touch, and there must be no third thing between them (149a4–6). Owen is right in pointing out that contact is defined in terms of succession (ἐφεξῆς) and that contact requires *immediate* (εὐθύς) succession in the contiguous terms, since they must occupy neighbouring positions (Owen, 1986, pp. 246–247). No third thing can lie between them (αὐτῶν ἐν μέσῳ μηδὲν εἶναι at 149a6). In our passage, however, what is in contact with both is also said to come to be between (μεταξύ) the two that are contiguous (152c5). This *metaxu* is key.

(iii) In our key passage, i.e., 151e3–153b7, *metaxu*, which will be key also in the *exaiphnês*-argument, recurs twice: what moves forward in time is said to become *metaxu* the *epeita* and the *nun* (152c5–6), whereas at the beginning the *nun* was said to become the *metaxu* between the "was" and the "will be" (152b4). As Spyridon Rangos convincingly argues, there are three entities that share the feature of being *metaxu*: the *exaiphnês*, which is *metaxu* movement (κίνησις) and rest (στάσις), as we shall see; the *nun*, which is *metaxu* "it was" and "it will be," as we have seen at the beginning of the core section; and the *proion*, which is now said to become *metaxu nun* and *epeita* (Rangos, 2014, p. 550). As Colin Strang points out, the latter two cases of betweenness must be sharply distinguished (Strang, 1974, p. 71): there is a becoming (γιγνόμενον) between the "was" and the "will be" (152b3ff.), and another becoming (γιγνόμενον) between the *epeita* and the *nun* (152c5–6). Whereas the *metaxu* of the *nun* explains its position in the temporal series, its being between the *pote* and the *epeita*, the *metaxu* of the *proion* explains when becoming takes place, namely *between* the *epeita* and the *nun*.

(iv) Note that what proceeds in time is said to be in touch (ἐφάπτεσθαι at 152c3) not with the *pote* and the *epeita*, as one could expect from 152b4–5, but rather with the *nun* and the *epeita*. At the beginning the core passage, *nun* and *epeita* were characterized as neighbours in the series, that is, as contiguous. If this is so, then no third thing can lie between them. However, that is precisely what the end of the core sentence (i.e., 152b6–c6) implies by "coming to be between the two" (μεταξὺ ἀμφοτέρων γιγνόμενον, τοῦ τε ἔπειτα καὶ τοῦ νῦν at 152c5–6). Directly after the *nun*, there can only be the *epeita*. As far as I can see, the only way to have a third thing between two adjacent things is to consider the limit at which the two things are in contact. Speaking of a "third thing" could be misleading, since that which moves forward is said not to *be* between the two, but rather to *become* between them. Is it then perhaps more appropriate to conceive the *nun* and the *epeita* as limits? Or is what moves

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forward becoming at the limit between *nun* and *epeita*? Proceeding in time is characterized as coming-to-be in between the *nun*, where no change can occur, and the *epeita*, which is a sort of *nun* in the future, that is, another moment/time/interval/limit (?), where change cannot occur but has already reached its *telos*, its completion. Along these lines, *nun* and *epeita* would be the beginning and the end of a duration, and thus its limit (πέρας) according to Parmenides' dictum in the first deduction (Καὶ μὴν τελευτή γε καὶ ἀρχὴ πέρας ἑκάστου at 137d6).

The textual analysis gives rise to far reaching problems as far as the ontology of the *nun* (and ontology only, since nothing is said in the passage about how we get to know the *nun*) is concerned. The claim that what becomes has to leave the *nun*, in which Becoming cannot take place, to reach the *epeita*, may invite one to take the *nun* as limit (*peras*): the *nun* and the *epeita* would limit, at the beginning and at the end, respectively, Becoming *qua* duration. As far as the *Parmenides* is concerned, taking the *nun* as limit is problematic for at least two reasons: (i) taking the *nun* as limit would lead to an internal inconsistency, since whereas a limit has no extension, a *chronos* understood as time interval does; (ii) taking the *nun* as limit would also make it *exaiphnês*-like, if we also take the latter as *peras*, thus questioning the *raison d'être* of two distinct temporal notions with the same function in the same dialogue. Furthermore, but that goes beyond the *Parmenides*; if taken as limit, the Platonic *nun* would come close to the Aristotelian homonym, which notably is an extensionless boundary between past and future.[16]

i. As we have seen, Parmenides begins with *ho nun chronos*.[17] Because of the term "*chronos*," one could wonder whether the *nun* should be conceived as having a certain duration. According to Strang (1974, p. 73), precisely the use of "the now time" strongly suggests that a now has a duration. Along these lines, the *nun* would have to be conceived as an interval of time. Turnbull compares it with a non-technical use of now, which I have been exploring in the first part of the article; this now is "'lasting' a little while" (Turnbull, 1998, p. 108). There are good arguments to challenge the view that the *nun* can or does in fact endure. According to Rangos, only an indivisible present conceived as (a) an atomic unit of time, or (b) an unextended boundary can satisfy the requirement of the argument according to which in the *nun* becoming is impossible. What lasts must have a duration, however short — something that a limit *qua* limit cannot have (see, e.g., Sattler, 2020, p. 235).
ii. Interpreting the *nun* as limit would also make it *exaiphnês*-like, if, of course, we interpret the Platonic *exaiphnês* as an extensionless instant. If both notions refer to durationless limits, one could feel invited to assimilate them into one single

[16] A *nun à la* Aristotle is *per se* not intrinsically problematic, but would require further specification — unfortunately, I cannot dig into this issue here, since doing it justice would require another article.

[17] Parmenides begins with the expression "*ho nun chronos*," but then confines himself to the neuter "*to nun*" that thus subsists autonomously. At 152b5, for instance, Parmenides does not mean *ho nun chronos*, for then *ton* would be required instead of *to*.

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notion. I shall provide some reasons for avoiding this interpretive move in the next part of the article.

3. The *Nun* and the *Exaiphnês*

In Section 3, I shall pursue the question of how the *nun* and the *exaiphnês* interact. I shall begin by offering my own understanding of the *exaiphnês*-argument having referred to an underrated passage of Aristotle's *Physics* by way of introduction. I shall first deal with the reading according to which the *nun* and the *exaiphnês* are so intimately connected that they are functionally equivalent. I shall then consider some objections to this claim, namely reasons to hold that they are meant to tackle two profoundly different problems. I shall then sketch two models of their possible interaction. Having shown the shortcomings of each model, I shall conclude by offering my own solution, which consists in a two-models model that accounts for two different *kinds* of change.

3.1 *The Imperceptible* Exaiphnês

Before turning to the *exaiphnês*-argument in order to clarify how it could interact with the notion of the *nun*, it will prove useful to consider an often neglected passage of Aristotle's *Physics* where both the *nun* and the *exaiphnês* are unexpectedly addressed. It is well known that Aristotle's *nun* plays a crucial role in his account of Time in the *Physics*, since "it is impossible for time either to exist or to be conceived without the now" (*Phys.* VIII 251b19–20).[18] The "treatise" on Time in Book IV of the *Physics* (IV. 10–14) contains a passage that almost always goes overlooked. In a small "dictionary" of temporal notions, Aristotle considers the *nun* together with τὸ ἐξαίφνης, τὸ ἤδη, τὸ ἄρτι, and πάλαι (with no article). The extremely condensed passage reads as follows:

> The *just* is that which is close to the present indivisible now, whether it is a part of future time ("when are you taking a walk" "I'm just taking it" — because the time in which he is going to go is near) or of past time, when it is not far from the now ("when are you taking a walk?" "I've just taken it"). But to say that Troy has just fallen — we do not say it, because that is too far from the now. The *recently* is the portion of the past which is close to the present now. ("When did you come?" "Recently," if the time is close to the actual now.). What is far away [from the now] is *long ago*. The *suddenly* is that which removes out of its previous state in a time which is so small as to be imperceptible. (*Phys.* IV.13, 222b7–15, Aristotle, 1983)[19]

[18] On Aristotle's now, see the still seminal Waterlow (1984).

[19] τὸ δ' ἤδη τὸ ἐγγύς ἐστι τοῦ παρόντος νῦν ἀτόμου μέρος τοῦ μέλλοντος χρόνου (πότε βαδίζεις; ἤδη, ὅτι ἐγγὺς ὁ χρόνος ἐν ᾧ μέλλει), καὶ τοῦ παρεληλυθότος χρόνου τὸ μὴ πόρρω τοῦ νῦν (πότε βαδίζεις; ἤδη βεβάδικα). τὸ δὲ Ἴλιον φάναι ἤδη ἑαλωκέναι οὐ λέγομεν, ὅτι λίαν πόρρω τοῦ νῦν. καὶ τὸ ἄρτι τὸ ἐγγὺς τοῦ παρόντος νῦν [τὸ] μόριον τοῦ παρελθόντος. πότε ἦλθες; ἄρτι, ἐὰν ᾖ ὁ χρόνος ἐγγὺς τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος νῦν. πάλαι δὲ τὸ πόρρω. τὸ δ' ἐξαίφνης τὸ ἐν ἀναισθήτῳ χρόνῳ διὰ μικρότητα ἐκστάν·.

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Aristotle connects the brief account of the notions of "the just" and "the recently" to our customary usage by means of a (fictive) dialogue.[20] Whereas Aristotle's interest in what could be labelled as everyday language is widely known, the dialogical framework with the structure of question and answer tends to receive less attention. Whether we are entitled to see a Platonic echo in this interrogational model is a question I shall leave open. Strictly speaking, the *exaiphnês* is detached from the conversational framework. However, the definition of the *exaiphnês* is given as though Aristotle were continuing what Plato's *Parmenides* started, yet doing so — as is often the case for Aristotle — in polemical terms. It is perhaps a kind of meta-dialogue. As we shall see, the definition of the *exaiphnês* is given in Platonic terms because the Platonic *exaiphnês* is individuated by its detachment from time (ἐκστάν is the word chosen by Aristotle). In his own treatment, however, Aristotle adds the aspect of the perception of time (as marked by ἀναίσθητος), which is precisely what Plato's Parmenides avoids. Yet, being imperceptible is precisely what allows Parmenides in the eponymous dialogue to give the *exaiphnês* the logical role required by the argument at hand. Let's see what I mean by that.

3.2 *The* Exaiphnês-*Argument in the* Parmenides

Before offering some arguments as to why it makes sense to keep both notions distinct, I shall reveal my cards as far my reading of the *exaiphnês*-argument, the so-called Appendix of the *Parmenides* (155e4–157b5), is concerned. I take both the *nun* passage and the *exaiphnês*-argument to belong to the same deduction, to which I limit myself in this article.[21] As in many other places in the corpus, also in the *Parmenides*, the adverb *exaiphnês* is used to underlie that something of importance happens suddenly — the first place that comes to mind is surely the sudden vision of Beauty in the *Symposium*, where the kind of understanding or vision which results from a

[20] For more on what translator and commentator Hussey considers to be a curious procedure, see Aristotle (1983, p. 172).

[21] What many commentators reduce to as an "Appendix" (Scolnicov, 2003, p. 134), or a "Corollary on Becoming in time" according to Cornford (1939, p. 194), or a "coda" according to Turnbull (1998, p. 112), begins with the highly-debated τὸ τρίτον (at *Parm.* 155e4), which the Neoplatonists took to mark a new deduction, namely the third one. Whereas the if-clause at *Parm.* 157b7 clearly marks the beginning of a new deduction (i.e., the third deduction which returns to the original positive hypothesis, this time investigating the consequences for the others), the if-clause with which the so-called Appendix begins specifies that the One under consideration is "such as we have recounted" (τὸ ἓν εἰ ἔστιν οἷον διεληλύθαμεν at *Parm.* 155e5), which I take, as Cornford (1939, p. 194), Décarie and Brisson (1987, pp. 252–253), and Scolnicov (2003, pp. 134–135) do, to refer to the One as discussed in the second deduction only, and not, as scholars like Rangos (2014, p. 559) and Gill (2012, p. 64) do, to the One as discussed both in the first *and* in the second deduction. It is precisely to overcome the difficulty that the interlocutors have just reached, i.e., that contradictory predicates turn out to belong to the "One that is," that the second deduction finally culminates in τὸ τρίτον (*Parm.* 155e4–157b5). This expression is often used to indicate the most important part of the line of reasoning under consideration, as Coxon (1999, p. 151) explains. According to Gonzalez, "'the third' is thus 'third' in encompassing both opposed deductions by identifying something 'between'," since "Plato explicitly provides us with a 'third' that can reconcile both deductions and thus enable us to affirm both" (Gonzalez, 2022, p. 387).

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step-by-step process is said to happen *exaiphnês* (*Symp*. 210e4).[22] As for the *Parmenides*, I take the kind of μεταβολή addressed in the passage 155e4–157b5 to be a "switch" or a "jump" or "leap" (Gr. ἄλμα) from one state to the other,[23] call it F and not-F, where F and not-F are "mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive opposites."[24] The focus of Plato's Parmenides in this passage is motion (κίνησις) and rest (στάσις), which are also considered *enantiotata* (most opposite) in the *Sophist* (*Sph*. 250a8–9).[25] I take the Law of Non-Contradiction and the Law of Excluded Middle to be not only assumed, but even stated within the argument.[26] Yet, the argument does seem to me to reintroduce the contradictory situation for whose avoidance time itself, that is, the temporal distinction, had been introduced by assuming that there is no time in which something is neither F nor not-F simultaneously (ἅμα at 156c6–7). Given that a shift from F to not-F or vice versa is needed, and given that "there is no time in which something can, simultaneously, be neither in motion nor at rest" (156c6–7), one could still have some reservations as to whether the *exaiphnês*-argument hits its declared target, which is to answer the question of when the change occurs.

3.3 *How the* Nun *and the* Exaiphnês *(Could) Interact*

In the *nun* passage, we learn that becoming does not occur at the *nun*. If change cannot take place in the *nun*, because in the *nun* what is becoming stops becoming and is already what up to that point it has been becoming, when does it become? Between the *nun* and the *epeita*, as we have been informed; *en tô exaiphnês* if we trust the conclusion of the *exaiphnês*-argument. Yet, if time were made up of *nun* only, then there would be no change — perhaps good for the historical Parmenides, yet less good

[22] In the *Symposium*, the "sudden" vision of Beauty itself (*Symp*. 210e4, which surely recalls the kind of experience described in the *Seventh Letter*, 341c5–d3) is opposed to the progression of the previous stages of the famous *scala amoris*, as Rangos (2014, p. 539) among others remarks. A similar juxtaposition is to be found in the *Laws*, where the Athenian *xenos* contrasts what happens suddenly with what happens little by little over a long stretch of time (*Nom*. 678b9–10). Such a reiterated juxtaposition might invite one to think that the adverb is used in a technical sense. However, the *Symposium* shows that the opposite is rather the case. After Socrates' speech, the adverb is used three further times to characterize various happenings at the symposium itself. Only one occasion, namely Alcibiades' sudden recognition of Socrates (at *Symp*. 212c6), could be said to be (ironically?) related to the sudden vision of Beauty reported by Socrates. On the occurrences of the adverb ἐξαίφνης in the dialogues, see Dixsaut (2003, pp. 261–262) and Rangos (2014, pp. 538–541). Even if it is hard to identify one single conception of the ἐξαίφνης running through the corpus, Cornford (is wrong to hold that "[t]he only link appears to be the use of the word [. . .]" (Cornford, 1939, p. 203).

[23] ἄλμα is the word Damascius chose (*In Parm*. 183.4–8).

[24] I adopt this language from Gill (2012, p. 64). See also Strang (1974, p. 72) and Zuckert (1998, p. 900). For a different view, see Rickless (2007, p. 195 n. 2), who holds that we are dealing with contraries. See also Cavini, who argues that "being in motion" and "being at rest" (Cavini, 2019, p. 410) are a pair of logical contraries, but not of contradictory opposites. In my view, only if F and not-F are contradictories (and not just contraries) can we acknowledge that both the principles that will afterward be known as the Law of Non-Contradiction and the Law of Excluded Middle are not only assumed, but even *stated* within the argument itself.

[25] However, notice that the last section (starting at 156e2) applies the main result to other, previously enumerated pairs of opposite states (156a1–b8).

[26] I therefore side with Strobach's Version C, where both laws (i.e., the Law of Non-Contradiction and the Law of Excluded Middle) are untouched. See Strobach (1998, p. 26).

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for Plato, who has never abandoned the view that physical objects are always changing.[27]

***Nun* and *exaiphnês* as functionally equivalents**. Even if I take the *nun* and the *exaiphnês* to be distinct, it proves useful to begin by considering the opposite claim, namely that the two notions are, or at least work as, functionally equivalent in two distinct albeit closely related arguments. Since the *nun* almost disappears after 153b and since the *exaiphnês* is entrusted with the role of explaining when change occurs, some scholars suggest subsuming the former notion under the latter one.[28]

> **Sed contra.** Considering the architecture of the dialogue, the main reason to jettison the overlap interpretation is the omission of the *nun*. Within the *exaiphnês*-argument, Parmenides never resorts to the *nun*, which he has introduced just a few Stephanus pages earlier — not too long ago for us to have forgotten it. Precisely the omission, which speaks in favour of keeping both notions apart, requires us as readers to figure out *how* the two notions are supposed to be distinguished. As Rangos rightly points out, how the *nun* and the *exaiphnês* are related to one another is not stated in the dialogue, and thus it is up to we readers to take up the challenge and continue, as far as we can, the dialectical *gymnasia* (Rangos, 2014, p. 547).

***Nun* and *exaiphnês* are different answers to different questions.** To explain how the two notions are to be distinguished, some scholars have argued that they are intended to answer totally different questions. For the two notions are too disparate to answer the same question. In support of this claim, first consider the different way in which the *nun* and the *exaiphnês* are introduced in the dialogue. Whereas the *exaiphnês* receives a proper, albeit condensed, introduction by means of the emphatic question "does this out-of-place thing then exist, in which the One would be when it changes?" (156d1), the *nun* is not properly introduced. Some interpreters explain such non-introduction by claiming that the *nun* is somehow ready at hand, an "old familiar," as Strang puts it (Strang, 1974, p. 73). By contrast, the *exaiphnês* is famously characterized as something *atopon*, literally out-of-place, "absurd" or "beyond our reach," namely something very much out of the ordinary becoming-in-time which we experience.

Same issues at stake, different notions. Even if different, I take the *nun* and the *exaiphnês* to be related to the same issue, namely making sense of Becoming. Here is why. The *nun* passage opens with Becoming (γίγνεται at 151e3–4) and by the end the initial One is replaced by "anything that is becoming" (πᾶν τὸ γιγνόμενον at 152c7). Becoming is explicitly singled out as the problem at stake within the *exaiphnês*-argument (γίγνεσθαι at 156a5), for there, motion and rest are chosen not to delimit, but to exemplify the underlying problem of everything that switches, namely the

[27] The Socrates of the *Phaedo* (*Phd*. 78c6–d9) famously claims that whereas Forms always are and do not undergo any sort of Becoming, sensibles vary from one moment in time to another and are *never* the same (τὰ δὲ ἄλλοτ' ἄλλως καὶ μηδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτά at *Phd*. 78c7–8).

[28] A similar movement is often advocated, see, e.g., Kretzmann (1971, p. 133), for the elusive notion of the *pephykos onoma* (*Crat*. 389d4–5), which is either set aside in favour of or merely subsumed under the more familiar *dynamis* of the name (*Crat*. 435d2) mentioned after it. More on that in Pavani (2022).

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question as to *when* (we can say that) what switches switches. In both passages, what is at stake is Becoming.

In the *nun* passage, we learn that becoming does not occur at the *nun*. Since becoming cannot take place in the *nun*, because in the *nun* what is becoming stops becoming and is already what up till then it has been becoming. "So when, and how (comes the insistent question) does the moving get done?" (Strang, 1974, p. 68). "The moving" gets done in the *exaiphnês* as well as between the *nun* and the *epeita*. Thus, if an equation can be established, then this equation would not encompass the *exaiphnês* (which has an in-between nature) and the *nun*, but the *exaiphnês* and what is in between the *nun* and the *epeita*. We shall see why even *this* equation should be rejected.

Combining switch and continuous change. To square the two tenets, namely (i) that shift from F to not-F occurs in the *exaiphnês*, and (ii) that everything that becomes, becomes between the *nun* and the *epeita*, I can see only two options, both of which face difficulties.

a) One could take the process of becoming as a duration, the beginning of which is marked by the *nun* and the end of which is marked by the *epeita*, which looks like the *nun* after or next to the actual *nun*. Since becoming is banished from both the starting *nun* and the ending *epeita*, we would need the *exaiphnês* to make the switch from the *nun*/*epeita* conceived as a static limit and the duration limited by the *nun* and the *epeita*.

   Sed contra. I detect more than one problem here, the most urgent of which is the infinite regress.

b) One could take each *nun* to be a sort of snapshot where everything has to stay at it is, and the flowing time to be a series where one *nun* comes after the previous one. The temporal sequence would then consist of units. Each unit would not allow to being further divided, since if it were divisible, one could run into the following problem: if we can divide the temporal units into subunits, there will always be a before and an after within the divisible unit so that the *nun* will disappear. Jerking from *nun* 1 to *nun* 2 (the latter of which one could also call *epeita*), that is, a first snapshot where I have only one wrinkle to a second snapshot where I have two wrinkles, would require the intervention of the *exaiphnês*. The *exaiphnês*, which would work as the glue to keep one *nun* connected to the next, would guarantee that something changes between the *nun* and the *epeita*.

   Sed contra. I see more than one problem here. First, we would have to assume that Plato, or at least Plato's Parmenides, endorses an atomic conception of time. Second, we would also have to assume that gradual change works in just the way that the switch from F to non-F is supposed to. I shall show in a moment why I take this to be a bad move.

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More basically, then, I take both models to be flawed because they aim to combine the *exaiphnês* and the *nun*. As a last step, I shall show why it is more fruitful to keep them apart.

Switching outside of time, Becoming within time. Both models discussed above aim to combine the *exaiphnês* and the *nun* within one model that integrates both of them. Having shown why both attempts to combine them fail, I shall now suggest a two-models model.

A two-models model could be conceived as follows. One could argue that the *exaiphnês* and the *nun* refer to different levels. Whereas "the now excludes becoming and by so doing it excludes any possibility of change" (Rangos, 2014, p. 546), the *exaiphnês* could be said to be the condition of possibility for change as such. One could also argue, as has been done, that each of the two notions refers to a different aspect of the same entity (Rangos, 2014, pp. 521–522) or that the two notions explain change from two different ontological perspectives, or as far as ontologically different realms are concerned. It has been argued, for instance, that whereas the *nun* explains change in the sensible world, the *exaiphnês* explains "change" as far as it "concerns" changeless Forms. The *exaiphnês* would explain participation in different Platonic forms, whereas the *nun* would describe the transition in the sensible world. For while participation changes instantaneously, sensible change is a process. In what follows, I shall develop an intuition along those lines, while leaving both Forms and the thorny issue of participation aside. By focusing on sensible entities only, I suggest a two-models model in which what differs is not the level or the ontological perspective, but the kind of change.

The kind of *metaballein* referred to in the *exaiphnês*-argument is not a process, like aging, but a switch.[29] By contrast, the becoming-older addressed in the *nun* passage develops gradually. In the former, we have change seen as the jump from one state to the other. The *exaiphnês* is introduced to avoid a contradiction in switching from F to not-F, as the paradigmatic case of rest and movement shows. Yet, not all change is of this type. There is also a change understood as progressive becoming. There is no jump in becoming older and older and older. The key is the comparative to which Parmenides sticks in our passage.

The *nun* does look like a relative in the sense that it requires another *nun* to which to refer in the comparative: I am old*er* now than I was a moment ago. The *nun* is this present is in relation to the past. Even if it stops becoming, the *nun* is in time. It is a part of time. Whereas the *exaiphnês* lies outside of time, the *nun* is part of the time series *pote* — *nun* — *epeita*. The two notions have a different relation to time: the *nun* is in time, always in process, but as a snapshot; that is, as a part of time we can at least conceptually abstract from the passing of time (in order to, for instance, formulate sentences about this very *nun*). The *nun* is the time in change whereas the *exaiphnês* accounts for the kind of switch, which must occur outside of time. By contrast, an *exaiphnês* in time would generate precisely the contradiction it is supposed to avoid.

[29] In my view, "switching," proposed by Strang (1974, p. 71) among others, does a better job than "changing," chosen by Gill and Ryan (Plato, 1997a), and "passing from any one state to another," chosen by Cornford (1939, p. 200 n. 2), in conveying the sort of "jump" from one state to another — "le saut d'un état à un autre état" to say it with Dixsaut (2003, p. 260) — μεταβάλλειν implies.

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Only with a switch out of time (and out of space) can we avoid the contradiction. To the very specific question Parmenides asks, namely when the switch occurs, we can answer: outside of time. By contrast, to account for a continuous and progressive change such as aging, the question would be simply inadequate. We do not ask when the switch occurs because there is no switch. We simply *compare* different states. I can thus observe (and state) that I am now *older* than I was before. Between what was before and what will be, there will always be a *nun* I can conceptually abstract in which it will hold true that I am now older than I was before.

4. Concluding Remarks

In this article, I have pursued two aims. In Section 2, I explored Plato's *nun*, which, although omnipresent in the corpus, is properly addressed as a temporal notion only in the second part of the *Parmenides*. By means of a close textual analysis of *Parm.* 151e3–153b7, I showed that the *nun* is characterized by its being *metaxu*. Yet, in the second deduction, there is another prominent notion that is *metaxu*, namely the famous and famously obscure *exaiphnês*. Although I take both notions to be related to the same issue, namely change in the world around us, I showed in Section 3.3 *that* and *why* it makes sense to keep both notions apart. Instead of offering a single model in which both the *exaiphnês* and the *nun* have to fit, I suggested a pair of models, which keep switching and continuous change apart. The kind of Becoming addressed in the *nun* passage is the continuous one — one in which we do not need to assume any jumps, but rather to stress (as implied by the comparative) that one is becoming older than it was before. Between what was before and what will be, there will always be a *nun* in which it will hold true that I *am* now older than I was before without *becoming* older in this very *nun*, which I can therefore conceptually abstract.

Even if it is always present in all that changes, the *nun* turns out to be no less odd than the admittedly odd *exaiphnês*. As the unexpected *deus ex machina*, the *exaiphnês* provokes us. By contrast, the *nun* forces us to question even the most incontrovertible feature of our lives, namely change. It thus makes we readers continue the dialectical exercise, dwelling especially on concepts such as duration and limit. Against this backdrop, Plato's treatment of the *nun* can be rightly seen as an important predecessor of Aristotle's *Physics*. Whether Owen was right in arguing that "it is the *Parmenides* which supplies Aristotle in the *Physics* not only with many and perhaps most of his central problems, but with the terminology and methods of analysis he uses to resolve them" (Owen, 1986, p. 242) is a question that I cannot pursue *now*.[30]

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[30] Sattler (2019, p. 18 n. 2) considers Plato's *Parmenides* as an important predecessor for Aristotle's *Physics*. Sattler stresses the positive outcome of the second part of the dialogue for our understanding of time (and space); precisely this positive outcome prepares for important points of Aristotle's own treatment.

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