

JOURNEY TO MONISM



INTRODUCTION

Classical Antiquity played host to a great intellectual struggle. Philosophers, possessed by the desire to know, engaged in free enquiry and developed an astounding array of positions. They formed schools and engaged each other in pure philosophical conversation. That same spirit grips our generation; we gather online to develop our beliefs and to clash like rams. Antiquity is born again, beautiful and new.

This particular text is part of that online struggle. It is the culmination of a project previously known by the titles Pseudo-Agesilaus and The Codex, which stemmed from discussions on the RPG Codex. That forum and gamer heritage is reflected in the author's effort to make the text clear and enjoyable. Those who appreciate CRPGs should be able to understand this work regardless of their philosophical background, and they should feel at home exploring the world and meeting the non-player characters.

The text introduces readers to the Eleatic Mystery School. The name comes from two crucial sources of inspiration - the Eleatic and the Xuan Xue (aka Mystery School) philosophers. The text is primarily focused on metaphysics and morality. The author seeks to establish broad principles that provide context for any issue one might consider, and to secure an objective basis for a system of ethics.

The story begins with your arrival at the Eleatic Temple and ends with you retiring to the Guesthouse. For Version 9, the text is available as both a website and a PDF. Every section of the text has been revised from Version 8, which lacked a PDF edition. After focusing on other projects, I plan to further expand and revise this text, before releasing

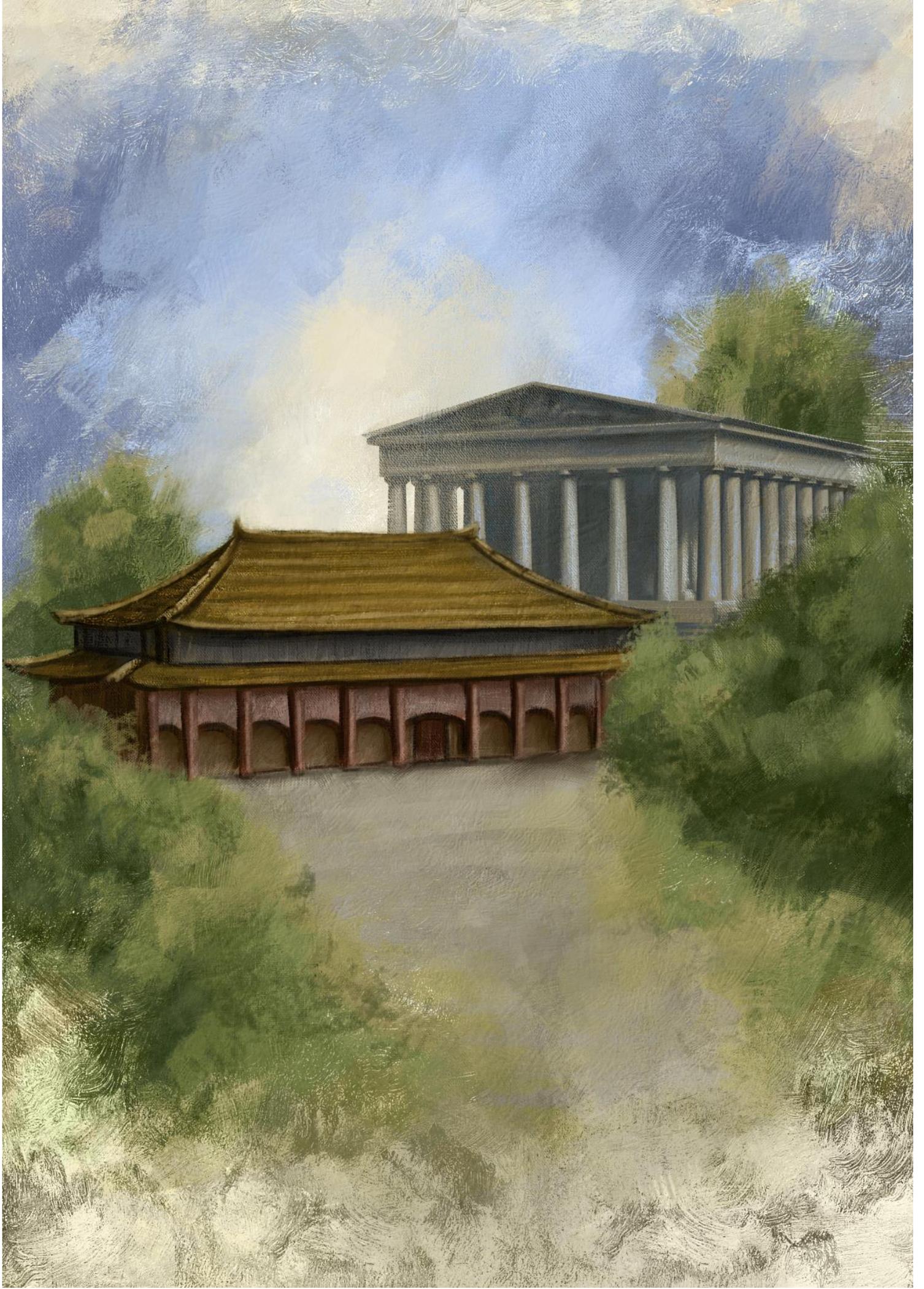
Version 10 in print. This immediate work ends after your first day at the temple; what happens next will be left to a sequel.

Man will never attain an absolute understanding of all existence, but there is a great distance to cover between total ignorance and knowledge. May this text bring us closer to knowledge, and in doing so expose the inferior teachings that clutter our online communities.

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ARRIVAL AT THE ELEATIC TEMPLE

You hike along a forested path, occasionally catching sight of your destination through the towering trees and deep green foliage. It was an easy decision to make this journey. After listening to one too many theological debates, you desired something more certain than the talk of gods and their intentions for man. You set out after encountering a forum post that revealed a greater context. One that subsumes all.

Refreshed by the walk and full of hope, you stand before the Eleatic Temple. The entrance is marked by large double-doors made of wood, set in a red wall topped by ceramic tiles. A short distance away stands a plain, wooden table with a stack of pamphlets. Two individuals sit behind the table, eyeing you; they are dressed in comfortable robes and sandals, sipping from mugs of tea.

As you move closer, the two people stand and greet you.

Welcome to our temple. This site is dedicated to our philosophical project, the Eleatic Mystery School. We seek the broadest possible understanding of "what is" and explore the constitution of all things. We have printed a welcome guide for you to review; it briefly introduces core concepts and will assist you in avoiding confusion. Please take a copy and read over it before you enter.

The temple consists of several buildings and extensive grounds. This entrance leads directly to the Grand Hall, which in turn connects to a number of exhibits and our public canteen. Today we are serving lamb soup, we highly recommend stopping by for a bowl. The

price of the meal is conversation. A room will also be prepared for you at our guesthouse; most of our visitors like to stay for a while and participate.

At any rate, the back of the welcome guide features a map of the area. Whenever possible, let others know your thoughts. Those who maintain this temple are happy to talk with you; conversation has its own benefits distinct from impersonal words written for a broad audience. Perhaps you might even develop your own contributions to our school of thought.

As with anything in the human realm, there are some rules. Please dress in a conservative manner and be sure to cover any exposed tattoos and remove excessive piercings. Refrain from drinking alcohol or consuming other intoxicants, except for when you are visiting the canteen or the grove. If you happen to feel unwell, please go visit our medical clinic.

We would also prefer that you drink tea instead of bean water. Please try to speak only Chinese or English, and please avoid spelling words like an American. When referencing historical examples, please try to focus on Hellenic and Chinese antiquity. Finally, please understand that we reject the confused standards of the current, dissolute era.

After listening to the speech, you reach out and take a copy of the welcome guide.

Choices:

- [Enquire about the rules...](#) (Pg. 9)
- [Enquire about the welcome guide...](#) (Pg. 11)
- [Thank them and proceed to the temple...](#) (Pg. 13)

INITIAL ENQUIRIES I

After patiently listening, you ask about the need for such rules. What is wrong with wandering around naked, your body covered in tattoos and pierced full of holes? Why should you drink tea instead of coffee, and only reference Hellenic and Chinese antiquity?

The two men smile and attempt to answer your concerns.

Like any other institution or society, we have rules that prohibit dangerous and disruptive behaviour. We would also like to create a sense of mutual identity and familiarity. We feel this is conducive to the harmony and success of our society. Hence we have created a few rules that one might consider a matter of taste.

We could formulate some explanation for why tea is the superior beverage, or cite some injunction against the consumption of beans, but that's not the point. We were raised to prefer tea and would like to encourage its consumption, and we hope that people will be brought together by their shared appreciation for it. The world will reflect our will, and our members will share common ground. Not to mention the health benefits inherent to tea consumption.

Most of the rules also uphold classical standards and give people an opportunity to display their membership in our society. In antiquity, what sort of man willingly scarred his body with tattoos and excessive piercings? Within the traditions we appreciate, that sort of thing was only fit for barbarians, slaves, and criminals. I have also heard it said that, "Our bodies - to every hair and bit of skin - are received by us from our parents, and we must not presume to injure or wound them. This is the beginning of filial piety."

If you absolutely insist on drinking coffee and engaging in other unwise behaviour, I suppose you can still go in. There's no shortage of philosophers who want to buck the trend, and most of us can appreciate that outsiders have different ideas. Some of our own members like to gather in the grove and push social boundaries. Perhaps they'll give you a favourable reception if you catch them at the right time.

You thank the men for the explanation and continue on to the Temple.

Continue:

[You approach the temple doors...](#) (Pg. 13)

INITIAL ENQUIRIES II

Unfolding the pamphlet, you frown and ask the greeters whether an introductory text is really necessary or appropriate. Surely the exhibits and tour guides within the temple will do a better job of explaining it all. Chances are you will simply disagree with whatever the short pamphlet asserts. You did not come here to read an inferior and abridged presentation of the Eleatic Mystery School.

The two men nod sagely and give you the following response:

Think of it more like a way to set the mood. Diving head-first into an unfamiliar philosophical movement is brave, but perhaps it is wiser to first review the general context and terminology. We could have lured you in with mysterious phrases like "nothing is everything", but we wish to avoid unnecessary confusion and frustration.

The welcome guide explains the breadth of our metaphysical account, provides a little bit of context, and helps newcomers avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. Every guest has their own philosophical background, and what they find in this temple may seem wildly exotic and difficult to follow. It may be the case that the way you use a word, and the way we use a word, is very different.

To demonstrate an issue, consider this: would you say that unicorns and manticores exist? Some say they do not exist, yet we say they do. Are we really in disagreement, or have we assigned different definitions to the term "exist"? Perhaps we have adopted different models of reality, and those differences have quietly caused a conflict that must be addressed.

For our part, we focus on the fact that the terms "unicorn" and "manticore" have distinct meanings; they involve information that we may identify, distinguish, and compare. Those who use "exist" in the broadest sense will say that literally everything exists, because it all has some affirmative ontological presence or weight, some distinct meaning or significance. I would hate for those with a more narrow understanding of the term to become frustrated and dismiss our account out of hand.

You thank the men for the explanation and continue on to the Temple.

Continue:

[You approach the temple doors...](#) (Pg. 13)

APPROACHING THE TEMPLE DOORS

As you proceed past the table, you flip over the welcome guide and review the map. Each location has a short description accompanying it. Before you reach the doorway you are able to skim a few of them...

Grand Hall

One of the largest and oldest rooms at the temple. When the hall is not being used for formal gatherings or events, adherents of Eleatic philosophy like to come here and practice their oratory...

Main Exhibitions

An early expansion to the Grand Hall, this area features a number of curated exhibits that explain our philosophical project. Adherents are always present to guide visitors and discuss our teachings...

Canteen

Adherents and visitors alike are welcome to dine at our new canteen. Many of the ingredients are produced on-site and the meals are offered free of charge. Conversation is encouraged...

Grove

A popular spot to visit after dining at the canteen. Frequently used to host outdoor gatherings and debates. The rules are more relaxed here, feel free to share a drink or two with other temple guests and colleagues...

Heroa

A place to gather and pay respects to the heroes of philosophy, as well as our ancestors more generally. The surrounding gardens and interior galleries feature many statues, portraits, and other works of visual art.

You stop skimming the pamphlet and look up, having reached the doorway. The Grand Hall should be on the other side.

Continue:

[Take a moment to further review the welcome guide...](#) (Pg. 20)

[Enter the Eleatic Temple...](#) (Pg. 89)

OLD NOTES

As you walk away, you unfold the notes the lady gave you and begin to read the sections that catch your eye...

...how best to show that it's not just "all in our head", as they say? Think about this: we make some observations, pointing out that we learn new things and forget old ones; the ramification being that our consciousness is limited and there extends something beyond it. For if our consciousness represented the complete expanse of reality, where would things go when we forget them, and from whence would they arrive...

...maybe the extent of reality can be summed up by all the conscious actors put together. An amalgamation of all consciousness at all times, constituting a single, whole super-consciousness that is reality. If we cast our net in such a fashion, I suppose we would exhaust everything that could be perceived or referenced. Yet, people have pointed out several challenges to that approach...

...the perception or referencing of a thing is distinct from the thing itself. I can see this box of things here, yet I understand the box has some independence from my awareness. If this stuff was wholly subsumed by my awareness, presumably I could organise this exhibit just by force of will; I could picture the items out of the box and in their proper place. I could also assume that method doesn't work, given that this place is still a mess...

...how useless too, the attempts at drawing a line in the sand between the actual moment or state of affairs, and all the potential ways things may be. When I privilege a moment or state of affairs, I eliminate the possibility of other ones taking their place. For

the privilege is significant, and the others lack it. If I make them privileged, I am not talking about them, for they are something that is not privileged. I will have added significance to one place, removed it from another place; this involves ontological creation and destruction; such incoherence! For each thing is what it is, and cannot be what it is not...

...an amalgamation of consciousnesses would not constitute anything we would describe as a particular consciousness, so we need to be careful about calling it a "divine mind" or some unique, distinct, and special thing. For there would be no dominant point of awareness or self, no particular perspective or experience. At least when we had the individual, we could identify his perspective and theoretically carve out his experiences or awareness. Surely particularity and other such limitations are inherent to mind...

...with the amalgamation, we will go beyond particularity. If we wish to subsume everything within a pan-consciousness, it won't have a sense of distinct self-hood; I suppose we should just revert to calling it Being at that point, which in turn would entail giving up all the surrounding claims that led me here. Consideration involves distinction, a part viewing a part, such as myself regarding the box. If I remove the ability to consider, to be directed at anything "other", then why even bother using the word "consciousness" or "mind"...

...even if I just define it as awareness per se, with no subject but rather just a pure sensation of being aware, it's not clear what I will have achieved. For what does awareness signify when there is an absence of particular identity, absence of particular sensation, perspective, focus, or subject? It is no consciousness at all. It would be an indistinguishable hum; perhaps that is what the metaphysicians here have in mind when they discuss the breadth of what-is, a monotone hum of all meaning and significance, with no privileged

aspect. So, again, I come to Being and I forget what I sought to achieve by dragging mind into things.

Folding the notes back up, you decide to...

Choices:

[Turn back and head to the general exhibit on change...](#) (Pg. 95)

[Continue to the Guesthouse...](#) (Pg. 102)

HUMAN METAPHYSICAL CONDITION

You follow the man into the next room. It has a small fireplace and the walls are decorated with pictures of people you do not immediately recognise. The room itself contains little models depicting people in familiar situations, each accompanied by a little chart and explanatory text.

As you can see, this room is a little different than the ones you've visited so far. There is something special about humanity, so I do my best to express that here. The team responsible for these exhibits is actually still in their meeting; I am just a fan of their work and like to assist with the project whenever possible. Hence I'm here with you, otherwise you might still be in that other room looking at a blank screen!

You no doubt heard that we humans are located within the great system of Being. It follows from this that we are subject to a multitude of conditions. Some of these conditions seem like they may be affected by our efforts, and some are clearly inherent to the greater metaphysical framework. The inherent conditions are necessarily inescapable, given that they arise from that which encompasses and constitutes our world. These inescapable conditions also present us with a reason to rejoice, for they guarantee us eternal life, second chances, an ever-present path towards goodness, and the certainty of fulfillment.

Yet, our unquestionable existence does not answer practical questions about life and death. Our world is within the domain of Change - there are times when a human body is full of life, and times when it has breathed its last and is put to rest. To many, it is not

immediately obvious that we will be reconstituted post-death or experience anything familiar ever again.

Regardless of what moment in our life we care to examine, all the other moments also exist inviolate for the reason given above. Our existence consists of us experiencing our story, with all its chronological detail. There will never be some situation where we cease to experience it. Further, let us say that we are where we are, and we are not where we are not. Death is not the state of us being where we are not, or otherwise cut off from our story. The most death can do is feature as an event in our greater story, whether a new world for us to encounter for some limited period, a rewinding of the tape and discovering potentials we did not follow, or some other new angle or mode of our experience.

Decisions present us with an opportunity to cleave to the Way and achieve happiness. We want to act in a way that best honours our directions and brings us to the high point in our story, and the story of our universe. The inexorable drive of the divinities compels us along, and we will make ourselves more like them and achieve accord with what ought to be. Part of this urge is the study and consideration of ethics. For this is necessary if we are to play our role well and ensure that we view the most positive parts of our story. To assist, a great deal of our work here is performed in the hopes that we may bring forth a more consistent and detailed presentation of the truth.

Continue:

[Continue listening patiently...](#) (Pg. 92)

WELCOME GUIDE

Pausing for a moment, you open the short pamphlet and begin to read...

WELCOME TO THE ELEATIC TEMPLE

The Eleatic Temple nurtures a philosophy of unrivaled breadth. Adherents consider the broadest metaphysical principles and ensure that they are honoured as the scope of enquiry narrows. Our beliefs are secured by necessary inferences; philosophy is rooted in necessity.

To prepare for your initiation into the Eleatic Mysteries, you should familiarise yourself with two metaphysical principles: Being and Distinction.

Being refers to the omnipresent "is" that subsumes all meaning or significance. It is the Whole; ontological presence writ large. Whatever particular thing we may reference, it "is", for it necessarily has some ontological presence or significance. To assist newcomers with recognising this omnipresent use of the term, we may call it "Eleatic Being". Depending on the speaker and their immediate emphasis, it might also be termed the Whole, the One, the Mystery, the Flood, or even Nothing. At any rate, Being in its broadest sense is omnipresent and constitutes the greatest context we might consider.

Distinction is the second broadest metaphysical principle. This principle is necessary for one to plead with particularity. It is difference, that which is referenced when we say one thing is "other than" another, and it provides the only coherent understanding of negation. Absent distinctions, the philosophical project would be impossible. Note that all distinctions interrelate, for they are all unified within the broader context of Being.

The omnipresence of Being results in significant consequences. Almost all popular accounts of reality are overthrown. Being subsumes Distinction, yet Distinction is still so broad that it encompasses any particular thing we may perceive. This temple and the people who maintain it are wholly subsumed by Being and Distinction, and so are you.

The exhibits in our temple focus on the metaphysical context and its ramifications. During your visit, it will become evident that the term "is" does not admit of gradation, that Being is whole and inviolate, and that talk of "ontological creation and destruction" is incomprehensible gibberish. Being is an omnipresent permanence that, per our experiences within its breadth, admits of relative Distinction.

This knowledge is a great gift. When you know that you are anchored in place, you will exalt in your existence. An ode reads, "In fear and trembling, As if approaching a deep abyss, As if walking on thin ice." We both respect and go beyond such concerns. It is also said, "If there were many, they ought to be of just the same sort as the One is." To know the One is to know the context that binds all things.

*After reading the pamphlet carefully, you fold it up and place it in your pocket.
Perhaps it will come in handy during the visit.*

Continue:

[Open the temple door and enter...](#)

(Pg. 89)

TRUTH AND SOPHISTRY

You hurry over as quickly as you can without spilling anything. After finding an open seat, you begin to listen. The man is clearly a little tipsy and annoyed by some lecture he heard about a certain philosophical dialogue.

: ...We have to disagree with this nonsense; people want to reject what is true about the dialogue, and then champion the nonsense that remains. It's ridiculous; the Eleatic philosopher is doing things well until our fan fiction author corrupts him. Admittedly the author has his good aspects, but he is notorious for using his brand of theatre to deceive. Hellenic philosophy was born in the colonies, and I reckon it's fair to say that it was tortured and maimed shortly after it arrived in Athens.

As the title suggests, the dialogue defines the term "sophist", but I think the title is also an accidental warning about the author's intentions. The main speaker is a philosopher from Elea, and in giving an account of the term "sophist" he demonstrates a particular method of divvying-up what-is. He uses this method to identify the sophist within the Whole. I appreciate this part; the dialogue provides us with a valuable 4th century account of how Eleatic philosophers went about identifying particular details of Being.

It seems obvious to me, based on this dialogue and other works, that Eleatic philosophers were quite active in the Hellenic world throughout the 4th century. Whether they all knew each other and considered themselves colleagues, or whether there were multiple, independent groups spread across the Hellenic world, I won't venture to say. Even if all these thinkers associated with each other and formed a single group, there may have

been rival internal schools, or at least it might have appeared that way to outsiders willing to misrepresent them. We can argue about whether to harmonise or distinguish Parmenideans and Melisseans, but for today I'll just point out that Eleatics were clearly active and famous, and personally I think we can add people like Diodorus Cronus to their ranks.

But to get back to the dialogue, I appreciate the way the Eleatic philosopher approaches the challenge, and I have a similar style myself. Yet what did we hear in that ridiculous lecture today? A complaint that the Eleatic philosopher's method is arbitrary and silly. What an indefensibly stupid thing to say!

The method is not arbitrary or silly – the philosopher is revealing the sophist by highlighting its particular location in the Whole. The philosopher has perceived something – the sophist. Now, he has to help the listener see it. So he identifies the distinctions that make the sophist special, he uses those distinctions to capture the meaning he wants to convey. It's okay to talk about hunting, and then hunting of man, then hunting of man as prey, and for money, and so on. He is taking the broad region of Being where the sophist dwells, and then slowly narrowing it down in particular ways, until our own eyes are drawn to it.

I found it particularly interesting that the philosopher talks about the words being used as a net to capture the meaning, which of course immediately reminds one of ZhuangZi. For the Eleatic philosopher and for ZhuangZi, the words are trapping the meaning, but the meaning itself is distinct from the words. The goal was always to illuminate some aspect of what-is, to help you perceive it against its surroundings.

So that's my immediate reaction to what those commentators said about this aspect of the dialogue. They call the method arbitrary or silly, but I think it appropriate. For everything is, and in that context there is distinction, and we can use these distinctions to lead others to what we have found.

The next and final thing I want to speak about is the ontological section of the dialogue. Specifically, how to handle negation. For Being is omnipresent, so how can it be negated or otherwise escaped? The simple answer is that any attempt to do so will fail. As mentioned, if you reference something by saying "it is nothing", you are actually affirming that it is singular, or if you say "they are nothing", then you are affirming they are plural. My point is, no matter how you speak of things you are necessarily making affirmations.

So how do we say that something "is not"? For in a dialogue about the sophists, we obviously want to say that something "is not true", or "is false". Yet obviously it cannot be a "nothing", for we are speaking about a claim, it is singular or plural, it has some internal meaning, and so on. So we come to the general solution, which is brought about by distinction – we interpret "is not" as "other than". So if we say an apple is not an orange, we are saying that one is "other than" the other – we affirm the apple, the orange, and their distinctions. If the sophist is not providing an accurate account of something, we will say it is other than a true account. No matter the example, all of its content is given some status or presence.

So then what constitutes the truth, and how do we classify falsehood? It is here that our author works his deception – he has the Eleatic philosopher declare that we must refute Parmenides and go down some incoherent path of Athenian nonsense. Which is where my

second objection to the lecture crops up – it was claimed that the author has somehow achieved something masterful here, when really he has done nothing more than assign his own foolishness to a philosophical school that could have saved him from error!

For yes, Being is truth, where “truth” is defined as “what is”. So all is true, without exception. Yet we also have a second definition for “truth” that is opposed by “falsehood”. It is this second definition we are using to describe the sophist’s incorrect account of things. It is false because the two things do not accord; the sophist is presenting an account, which is something, but it is inaccurate because it differs in certain ways from that which it is describing. For it to be accurate, there would need to be a certain matching relationship; it’s like two halves of a tally, but the sophist's half doesn't fit the subject.

Of course, in the dialogue the Eleatic philosopher discards his beliefs and tries to reject omnipresent Being. This is where he is no longer the Eleatic philosopher, but rather a puppet that is forced to parrot the author's own misteachings.

The Eleatic philosopher is made to complain that we “agree unwillingly that that which is not in a way is”. Actually, we should absolutely agree with that, wholeheartedly, for that is the path of truth. Everything is. The difficulty is in understanding and accurately expressing all of its details. For what-is goes beyond just a list of things, it also includes the multitude of relations and the overall context and structure of reality. It is whole, complete, and perfect, and everything is included, even the sophist’s mistakes.

But instead, the author discusses opposites and tries to reduce Being to a third thing that is separate and somehow above the first two. Ultimately, he goes so far astray that he

posits a Being and a Non-Being, and he assigns the truth to Being and the multitude of lies to the non-Being, and makes a dog's breakfast of the whole thing. He does his best to blind us all to the Whole; it is a sad example of what happens when one tries to follow the path of seeming.

I could harp on about all the other failings of the dialogue and the lecture we heard today, but what of it? We here know that affirmation is the name of the game, that even in negation there is affirmation! For to paraphrase our true friend Melissus, if there are many then they ought to be the same way as the one is. All must conform with the Whole.

Now let us put aside the chaotic gibberish of our Athenian friend and his supporters, and drink to this fine meal and free ale!

The man raises his cup, whereupon all his friends raise their own glasses and cheer, before clinking them together and drinking deeply. They then resume their conversation, seemingly unaware of your presence. For your part, you have finished your soup and feel the need to move on.

Choices:

[Tidy up after yourself, before going to visit the nearby grove...](#)

(Pg. 52)

[Backtrack to the entrance hall and enter the exhibits...](#)

(Pg. 64)



DATED PAMPHLET

You step back and quietly begin to read through the old pamphlet...

Practical Organisation

Every human story has a cast of characters and a social context. People descend from other people; they begin life as weak creatures incapable of independence. No man is an island; human nature and practical reality ensures that social organisation is necessary for our welfare. Society has an impact on everything from material conditions to education and emotional wellbeing.

There are many ways to structure human relationships; history provides countless examples and scenarios for study. The social or political science reaches its conclusions by carefully considering the ethical and material realities of a given scenario. It is not acceptable to apply one model in a procrustean fashion. Further, the greater model generally contains many minor social units. The conclusions reached by a law-giver who is organising a nation on Earth will be different from those reached by one who is designing a new colony on Mars.

Some have claimed that the greater organisations arose from the lesser - the family unit ultimately giving rise to society as a whole. At any rate, it is clear that all social organisations serve an ethical function. We know this because we have all experienced the benefits of society, and society provides us with an avenue to do good ourselves. At the very least, we were fed as children and kept safe. We were also educated by our parents and other adults, and in turn we will create and promote the next generation.

The political science also calls on one to design institutions that can survive the transition from generation to generation. Education and culture can inure a society against danger and grant some capacity to adapt to new circumstances. Yet, ultimately the law-giver must consider how things may be abandoned or dissolved. Everything with a beginning has an end – a given society or institution is no exception to this rule.

There will come a time when the circumstances that gave rise to the organisation have passed. Generations differ in quality, technology changes, and fate can end lives early and cause tremendous disruption. What was once designed to further the common welfare may become corrupted; a select few may hoard the benefits for themselves absent any great ethical justification. Law-givers look beyond the instant generation, acknowledging the imperfect nature of their subjects.

Principles of Political Organisation

People constitute political society; they are the principle resource and concern of all related institutions and practices. Therefore, performance in this field may be judged by considering the human impact of the institutions. Traditionally, there are three human-focused principles that define institutions and practices - Monarchy, Oligarchy, and Democracy.

As the name suggests, monarchy refers to the rule of one. It represents institutions and practices that concentrate power and focus upon one individual. The idea of an emperor enjoying independent, absolute, and inherent authority may be the ultimate expression of this ideal today. Similarly, the family unit might fully empower the pater

familias. However, all principles may be partially applied and combined – perhaps the criminal prosecution function of government might be entirely bestowed upon a single individual, but he may be selected by lot and only serve for a set time. There are a multitude of different possibilities.

Oligarchy expands the focus to select groups of people. They may be chosen by property class, professional license, or any other exclusive mark that allows them to be distinguished as a special class. They might simply be well-connected and influential, and by that influence be granted admission to an exclusive institution. The formation of the class and the practices that characterise it admit of great complexity. For example, direct election is a common oligarchic method of filling offices today (based as it is on prominence or influence). However, it may be tempered by a democratic spirit when the institution allows a broad franchise to cast the votes that elect the regional oligarch.

Democracy is the final expansion of focus; it renders all members of the society equal. On a national level, it might be characterised by a grand assembly that welcomes every citizen to participate equally. It may fill offices or other positions by the democratic method of sortition - any citizen may be entered into the draw, and any participant has equal chance of selection irrespective of prominence, wealth, or other advantages. There are also particularly democratic methods of cutting the tall poppies, such as ostracism.

In practice, these idealised principles are rarely seen alone. We have separated the three substances and presented them as pure, but in crafting a model the law giver combines them all in various ways. The law giver does so by considering a particular scenario and citizen body, coupled with his ethical understanding.

As an example, consider a government that has a king as its nominal leader. The king controls the national church and holds absolute authority to dissolve a legislative assembly of elected officials. That oligarchic body may have its members approved via a ritual of submission by the general populace, such as by having them cast a vote for their preferred regional lord. The oligarchs may be responsible for a broad range of matters, such as proposing and approving new legislation. The system may also have a democratic aspect; the public might serve as jurors and have authority to decide guilt, although their decision might also be subject to review by an oligarchic judiciary.

There is a tremendous number of possible combinations and methods. The good law giver will fit the pieces together and create a harmonious model that brings stability and elevates the citizenry. This is a highly complex field, and there is much left to be discussed elsewhere.

The rest of the pamphlet has been torn off. Putting it away, you decide to...

Choices:

[Step outside and get some fresh air; the Grove is not too far from here...](#) (Pg. 52)
[Continue to the Guesthouse...](#) (Pg. 102)

SCOPE OF MIND

You make your way down some winding corridors before coming to the door of a small office. After you knock on the door, a soft voice invites you in.

Hello, are you looking for information on consciousness? Or maybe some entertaining observations from Zeno? Of course you are. I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is that there is an exhibit on these matters, and it is very impressive! The bad news is that it's located in the future, so you'll have to wait until it's ready for you.

The lady laughs at her own cleverness, before continuing...

Most of my team is in a meeting; we are all busy preparing for tomorrow's festivities. I would recommend chatting with one of our newest members; he joined us recently and is setting up a related exhibit on Diodorus Cronus. He focuses on motion, change, and potentiality, and apparently he has no shortage of puzzles and arguments to consider. He actually gave us a lot of ideas on how to describe our personal awareness of change and our sense of decision making. My goal is to place our limited experience as living, changing things into an ontological system that is complete and does not favour one moment over any other.

I'm not sure what I can tell you today, but I can at least share a few words. I can also offer you a copy of some notes I was working on. Perhaps you can read over them at the Guesthouse if you're planning to stay here a while. Hopefully you can come see me again during the festivities tomorrow. Usually we prepare interactive exhibits that allow guests

to explore all Zeno's extant paradoxes and other observations. During events, we also like to give a prize to whoever comes up with the best paradox, too.

If you want to chat right now, we could try defining awareness or experience. Perhaps we should start with the claim that it is the sensation of being a thing. However, recently I've been ruminating over the question of determinacy. I've decided to talk to you, but surely I could just as easily shut my mouth and ignore you. Perhaps you could even decide to just turn around and walk back out that door, regardless of whether I talk or remain silent. All these scenarios seem coherent and plausible, so why is one favoured over the others? Is it really favoured, are we really experiencing a favoured string of events and excluding or destroying the others? Or are we diffuse and experience all those possibilities; that is to say, are our choices relative, will we inevitably experience each path and all of the emotions or desires proper to them?

There are a few other things we should tackle; in a way we are drawing this picture from two angles. We live it, so there is something inherent and pure to put on the canvas. Yet to put something on a canvas, we need a canvas and suitable materials; we need a context. If you've been through the general exhibits, you understand that this subject is subsumed by a broader metaphysics. I recommend spending some time at the grove or guesthouse contemplating what this entails. We must also appreciate the insight of Zeno and Diodorus, who revealed the challenges involved in divisibility, infinity, time, motion, and so on. Only when we are confident about the context can we paint a coherent picture of life. Thankfully, by virtue of being alive we have secure footing to carry out this enquiry.

We must also decide where we are. We cannot make this particular moment our home, can we? By the time I finish this sentence, we will have walked away from it. We can look ahead to a point where we have the answers, but that assumes our perspective back here, wallowing in ignorance. They say there's a distinction between the observer and the observed, yet we are both. We are together at the temple, we walk down this road of enquiry, we know the answers. The Diodorus fellow probably talked your ear off about how motion is diffuse, indeed change in general is diffuse. Well, life is diffuse. The narrow is soaked in the broad; life bears the indelible mark of change. My team has been updating the main exhibits in the temple; it's an ongoing process, but they reflect this thinking.

I wanted to talk more about determinacy, though. Put aside the fact that some points seem closer or further away, that is easy enough to answer in light of the Whole. Today I am more curious about my choices, why I feel like I can push towards some moments and away from others. You and I can even compete and push against each other. I suppose it must all be understood as relative in light of the Whole, but there are many questions to explore. The ontology also adds an interesting flavour to our ethical judgments.

Biographies are worth considering. The author tells the story of a life and reviews their choices and potential. They focus on a living thread and present it complete. We should take that approach; we don't need to wage war against the metaphysics of our situation, that's futile, our story is complete no matter where we stand. Our story has many branching paths, but I suspect it will also be a shorter story than some suspect. Not to imply the story terminates in a dead-end, for we are necessarily immortal given the ontology.

On that point about the length of life, people tell me that all sorts of things are physically possible. However, when drawing up a life the biographer must consider the nature and direction of the subject's will. I could throw a book at you right now, but my general disposition is such that I would never do so without extreme provocation. Similarly, I suspect you would never offer that provocation in this context. Therefore, although it is possible for a human to throw a book at another human, it doesn't follow that it is possible for us to be in that situation. When writing a biography, we want to depict a particular person, not some generic entity that embraces all conceivable actions, decisions, and the like.

But maybe I left the thread of reason long ago. Perhaps the exhibit on Change would be a better place for you to visit. Or you could try dreaming about it at the Guesthouse, maybe a goddess will reveal the truth to you! I'll even provide some of my old notes on metaphysics for you to review, maybe they will help put you to sleep.

The lady winks at you and smiles, before thanking you for your visit.

Choices:

[Thank the person and head to the general exhibit on change...](#) (Pg. 95)

[Review the copy of her old notes while retiring to the Guesthouse...](#) (Pg. 15)

[Invite her out to the grove to discuss these questions further...](#) (Pg. 53)

ON THE SECURITY OF KNOWLEDGE

As you step into the room, you find yourself in a small crowd of people. They are all paying close attention to two speakers butting heads up front. You decide to watch the tense debate.

: "There's only two options here: either reality was intentionally created, or it's all one big accident. You say you know things, but only one of those options allows for the possibility of knowledge. We need a source for our knowledge. Only a Creator can possess and provide us with knowledge. The only way we know anything is because of our creator, god. He is the secure foundation of knowledge.

: "You get ahead of yourself. You assume that your "Creator" could bring about, and therefore know, literally everything. The truth is much different.

Reality is uncreated NOT because it is an accident, but because metaphysical creation is impossible. You forget that there only "is"; this is an absolute and inescapable ontological fact. Your favourite creator is just a limited thing, located within that metaphysical context. You and I are also there, along with the all the other supposed creators and gods, subsumed within an inviolate metaphysical context.

Your creator, to the extent you can coherently posit such a thing, might know more than us, but he is still limited. We're all in the same boat -- your god needs a source of knowledge just as much as we do. We all rely on the absolute security and certainty of Being.

: "What's the justification for that? What's your a priori justification for saying "it all is" - it might seem that way to you, but people have always thought that way about their a priori models. Whether it be a system of geometry, physics, maths, or whatever you please.

You're being arbitrary; some day a thing will come along that breaks your a priori model, and you'll switch to a new one. You cannot justify your certainty by invoking Being."

: "You fail to see the difference between limited models updating as new information is provided, and the grand metaphysical principle I have revealed to you. When I say that there "is", I am talking about ontological presence. That encompasses all meaning, anything that might ever be perceived or otherwise affirmed in any way. I am not trying to trick you when I say this is omnipresent - wherever this conversation goes, there it is.

When you say a thing might come along and break this model, you only reveal your own confusion. For you affirm the presence of a "thing", you refer to it in the singular, and you say we can perceive it. By definition it is subsumed by what-is. You have not posited anything outside that omnipresent principle of Being, and in no way will you ever do so.

You necessarily affirm Being and refute your own position. Whatever you grasp at to refute me, it is here in reality with us. Maybe you could present some facts that would overthrow a limited model of geometry or maths. As for justification, justification itself is a limited thing that should be put in its place. For this principle is beyond justification, necessity is more powerful than reason or explanation. Ontology swallows everything whole."

: "Let's have it your way then, and I will show how you lead yourself to absurdity. Let's say we're here by accident, or at least not created by an almighty god who reveals truth to us. You need to tell us the source of your knowledge, how do you know such things? Who's it going to be, yourself? You will either make up some a priori rules and use them to define reality, but that's just being arbitrary because ultimately there are multiple theories out there, and you just picked one.

Or you can rely on your immediate sense perception and experiences, but what does that amount to? It's not an outside world, it's just in your head, and even the idea of your head is probably nonsense in the end. It's hopeless.

: "It's not hopeless. The ontology I just taught you absolutely vindicates our claims of knowledge! Whatever you are aware of, it "is", without exception. That is truth per se. That is what the metaphysical enquiry reveals to us, and from there great and certain realisations will follow.

Existence is absolutely secure, which means there is to be no talk of whether something exists. Rather, we know that literally everything exists, and now our task is to accurately describe it all. So we have to ask if a description makes sense - have our words captured meaning, or did we just make incoherent sounds or chicken scratch on a page?"

The men continue their back and forth, before another man steps in and announces that it will soon be time for audience questions. You are tempted to stay and participate, but the long day has sapped your strength.

Choices:

[Retire to your room and get some rest...](#)

(Pg. 103)



LAMB SOUP INN

You excuse yourself and proceed down the corridor towards the canteen. As you get nearer, you hear the chaotic sounds of people eating and chatting. You also detect the faint scent of food, causing your belly to rumble and your feet to pick up the pace.

The canteen is still partially under construction; it currently consists of a serving area and several tables and benches. A long sliding panel opens out to a grove. Several groups of people are gathered outside and appear to be enjoying the fresh air.

You queue up and grab a bowl of lamb soup, pour yourself a cup of tea, and find a seat. A nearby diner noisily slurps down the last of his meal before introducing himself to you.

You look hungry! Eat up, this stuff will hit the spot; the ingredients are all fresh from this morning. Constructing and expanding this temple takes up much of our time, but at least we get to enjoy some decent food, right?

I assume the guy in the entrance hall tired you out? He has a way of doing that to people, droning on about how literally everything exists. Then when you decide to push back, his brother comes in and rolls his eyes at you.

Honestly, if the "all is one" bloke wants to express the "omnipresence of existence", he should just stop talking. Omnipresence overflows all boundaries and distinctions. If he keeps trying to describe existence in particular terms he will invariably stray from the truth. For in describing it one way, he cuts some other way out of the picture.

If we wish to talk about everything, we ought to be silent. Don't you agree?

The man tops up your cup of tea from a nearby teapot. Before you can respond, you are interrupted by the drunken ramblings of a man several rows over. He is loudly giving an impromptu lecture to some of his friends.

Choices:

- [Smile politely and excuse yourself, before going to visit the grove...](#) (Pg. 52)
- [Agree with the man and ask how we ought to talk about a particulars...](#) (Pg. 46)
- [Thank the man for topping up your cup, but leave to listen to the lecture...](#) (Pg. 22)

REMONSTRATION ON BEING

Before accompanying the second individual, you decide to raise an objection to the monologue. You argue that it makes no sense to say that literally everything "exists" - do unicorns exist, do pink elephants? To exist is to be actually present in this moment as a particular object. If it isn't here in front of us, then a thing is just empty potential or ideas with no real substance. Such things are beyond Being, they simply don't exist.

The man frowns. When you are finished speaking, he offers a response:

When someone claims that a thing is "beyond Being", or claims that something "does not exist", you may be confident that they are deeply confused. It is much the same with those who claim certain things are "more or less real", for everything is equally real in the sense that it "is" and may therefore be referenced. Whatever information or meaning you are aware of, it "is", without exception.

Your language betrays a certain metaphysical poverty or confusion. To understand what has been said up to this point, you need to appreciate the particular definitions given to the terminology. Being was described as encompassing all that might be referenced or perceived; it is about affirmation, about ontological presence. By labelling certain things as "existing" and other things as "not existing", you are merely positing two narrow categories within a broader context. Yet when my brother was speaking, it was the broader context that interested him.

You must recognise that you have quietly changed the scope of the discussion, and you have assigned a new definition to the term "exists". One might say that certain things

"exist", and certain other things "do not exist", but note that both categories consist of meaning and are therefore unified by a common context. It is that context, that common nature, that must be considered. Those who do their best to hide from such a realisation suffer from a self-imposed metaphysical poverty or blindness.

I'll be blunt- yes, unicorns and pink elephants exist. If unicorns and pink elephants literally "did not exist" (as if that were a coherent claim), then how would you distinguish between the "unicorn" and the "pink elephant"? To do so, you must affirm points of distinction. The truth of what I am saying should be apparent.

If you live a blinkered existence, refusing to consider the breadth of metaphysics, then you will never say anything of lasting value. We can only discuss what exists. Every little thing, no matter how insignificant or absurd, must be afforded ontological status and placed within the context of Being.

Now then, would you like to accompany me and review the exhibits that I have prepared?

The man waits patiently for your answer. As you open your mouth to respond, you look back at the corridor leading to the public canteen.

Choices:

[Accompany the man...](#)

(Pg. 64)

[Excuse yourself and go in search of food...](#)

(Pg. 40)

ON THEOLOGY

You sit patiently as the next video begins to play.

Theology focuses on the divine, which is inseparable from morality. It deals with the source and definition of the phrase "ought to be", which is an aspect of Change. Some say it is defined by anthropomorphic gods and their commandments, while others describe it as something more abstract. There's no real shortage of theological claims and views.

What our account has so far revealed is that Change is a limited and subordinate matter. The topics discussed prior to Change had no need for morality; until we posited Change, there was simply no meaningful role for the "moral dimension". Saying something along the lines of "Being is good, Distinction is evil" would lack any basis in reason and be essentially meaningless.

Morality involves a particular set of chronological relationships and dispositions. By examining the directions of Change and how things are orientated to certain goals, we can come to understand "what ought to be". Thanks to our personal experience within Change and sense of will, we are innately aware of a certain principle. We may term it the Way, or the Dao, or some other such term; it represents that Change is full of directions, that they may be fulfilled or frustrated, and that the highest expression of morality is harmony.

The Way accounts for both the pure and relentless flow of natural laws or shape, and the deliberative, branching paths of an organism driven by its nature and excellences. The Way provides an objective foundation for all moral language; we can speak about good and evil by reference to directions.

Every temporal thing is subject to the nature of chronology. Our awareness is pushed and pulled in set ways. We are animals, so we deliberate and participate in that struggle. As animals, we have a more limited Way of our own. We don't just deliberate in light of our surroundings, but in light of our internal directions, our nature or excellence. Speaking specifically of humans, we are complex creatures possessed of everything from nutritive urges to intellectual yearnings.

The divine consists of these directions – universal and particular - and uses them to identify what “ought to be”. It therefore must focus on the engines of Change and the possible pathways. This video organises Theology into two general sections, the Greater Morality and the Lesser Morality. The Greater Morality is perceived as determinate laws that weigh down on everything within their region of temporal reality. Within its domain, an agent of the Greater Morality has a hand in all matters, and its will is certain and cannot be frustrated. As members of the Lesser Morality, we must deliberate about our relative position in their world and amongst one another. We hope to do our best to cleave to what is good, promoting a situation where all animals can harmoniously follow their nature.

The best possible world is one where harmony reigns.

Once again, the video is changed.

Continue:

[Next Screening...](#)

(Pg. 99)

TALKING ABOUT SOMETHING

Happy to escape the talk of "everything", you decide to ask the man how we can best talk about specific things. You continue eating as he eagerly starts up again...

Describing something is a bit like whittling wood, I think. You distinguish your meaning from all that surrounds it; you carve away at the substance until all that remains is the image you wish to present. By carving along the distinctions, we have escaped talking about the whole of existence. Although, the thing that we are left with also constitutes a unity, so maybe we haven't fully escaped the original topic.

Actually, the idea of representation is a tad ridiculous, isn't it? The representation will never be the genuine article. The image in wood is not the thing that is depicted. Same goes for a representation presented in words, numbers, or some other symbols. Regardless of how we design these representative models, the description is distinct from the described.

At some point the words and models must be discarded, for we never intended to pass jumbles of letters between us. They all point to something. When we have that thing firm in our grasp, the representations may retire, their purpose served. Which means there is another party in the dialogue - you, me, the jumble of articulated sounds and symbols, and the thing itself. The latter is the star of the show; we are straining to see it on the stage.

This "star of the show" feeds back into our original topic in another way, I suppose. Prior to perceiving some particular thing, we don't know about it. Yet it must still have some ontological presence, if our friends in the temple are to be believed. So it was outside our

mind, waiting for us to sit here and discover it together. Or else our mind must be regarded more broadly than some relative thing in a particular "here and now".

Maybe we are all like that, things existing in their own right and available for others to discover. Maybe a bird will look down and spot us for the first time. Perhaps there is even some creature right next to us, positioned at an angle we cannot readily perceive; it might poke its fingers through into our region at any moment!

You sit there quietly with the man for a few moments, but the extra-dimensional entities do not reveal themselves to you. You both chuckle nervously and the man resumes his musings as you finish up your meal.

...Or perhaps there are no other angles, no other creatures, except in our imagination. For they must be somewhere if we are talking about them, right? For my part, I believe that anything coherent is real, that the things I imagine would maintain their coherence even outside my imagination, and therefore they really are out there and will make their presence known in the fullness of time.

I was planning to have a drink outside. Would you care to join me and some of the other workers in the grove?

Choices:

[Smile and thank the man for his conversation, but visit the grove alone...](#) (Pg. 52)

[Head outside to enjoy some fresh air and conversation with the workers...](#) (Pg. 60)

CHRONOLOGY AS A WHOLE

The man nods slowly and then begins to speak...

Yes, motion and change seem to be popular topics around here. Our friend Diodorus correctly noted that any such discussion involves a model that we have reached by reason. We may perceive a thing over here, then perceive it over there, but how we describe and relate those moments and their content is more complicated. Even that overview hides complexity! For example, at the later perceptive moment we are relying on our memory of the earlier moments. Although, perhaps I am misleading you there, for it is also wrong to speak of the later moment as though we formulate the model while in it, as a sort of uniquely privileged point. Similarly, we must ask if it is proper to consider time as a series of discrete "moments". At any rate, it's not that I deny there's something to be discussed, so much as I want to warn outsiders against careless assumptions.

As an aside, Diodorus put forward an alternative to the typical ways we define a term. Philosophers have argued about whether a term has an inherent meaning, or whether a term is defined by common agreement. Diodorus inserted a third challenger - the term is defined by the intent of the speaker. There is so much to say about this great soul, yet we have little to remember him by beyond extensive testimonia from later authors. It is said, "With this character's death, the thread of prophecy is severed." Given the apparent loss of his works, it sometimes feels like we are in a benighted era.

Anyway, don't let me get distracted; we were discussing his views on motion. If we go over the source material, you'll see that he was a very Zeno-like figure. He came up with

many tricky scenarios, thereby revealing that his opponents' models of change were incoherent. Depending on the assumptions we accept, we may reach a remarkable or incoherent conclusion. For example, we all know the story of the arrow. If we look at the whole story of a person lining up and shooting a target, then we know there is motion. Yet, if we take a picture of that arrow in flight, in that picture it is of course perfectly still. So it might be said that a thing is in motion, but is not moving. Yet, we are Eleatics, so even if we assume that time can be divvied up into discrete, timeless moments, we will still posit the full story. Whereupon, the arrow will always have some relationship or status within its overall path, and measuring that path we will be able to assign the arrow a relative velocity and other such details.

Let's step away from Zeno and play a new game: take a ball and throw it on a roof. When does the "touching" occur between the ball and the roof? If the ball is in the air, they are separate. If the ball is on the roof, they are already in contact. There is no particular moment that exhibits a third relationship, one distinct from contact or separation. Similarly, consider a wall that falls down. There is no point where it collapses - it is either standing or rubble. I sense your soul rebels, but tread carefully. In examining change this way, we find that it has no place absent the whole. It is the perfection of Being that makes this information coherent; we describe "change" as a sort of diffuse fact that is spread across a complete chronological dimension.

Here's another one from Diodorus: you will die, yes? But if so, you will die either when you are living or when you are dead. Surely it doesn't happen when you are alive, for then you are alive and not dead! Yet, surely it does not happen when you are dead, for at

that point to die would bring about a second death. Each particular moment you identify will fail to contain the change you are seeking. Therefore, we must broaden our scope and consider this as a diffuse process. That isn't to say we can't measure changes throughout the process, but rather that we can only hope to make sense of it all if we take it in context.

There is so much left unsaid here; I have high hopes for this exhibit. Consider that Helen has three husbands. Tell me how a thing can come to be and then perish. On this last point, it cannot come to be, for at the point prior to its existence it is not and therefore is not coming from there. And should you have it perish, yet it remains in that moment where we originally found it. It will not even budge an inch! It is ridiculous to say a thing is where it is not, and is not where it is.

The man scoffs and sighs to himself, then smiles at you.

Sorry, now I am being belligerent. At any rate, Zeno took a particular approach and Diodorus expanded on that theme in significant ways. I have only scratched the surface with what I have said today. All would do well to further explore the issues raised by Zeno and Diodorus. They are eristics, striking down those who rebel against the sages, Parmenides and Melissus. By their grace we do not succumb to incoherence and we need not fear those who would obstruct our path to the truth.

With that, the man appears lost in thought. He nods his head and then suggests that you either head to the general exhibit on change, or retire to the guesthouse. You decide to...

Choices:

[Thank the man for his time and move on to the general exhibits...](#)

(Pg. 95)

[Bid farewell to the man and head off to the guesthouse...](#)

(Pg. 102)

GROVE

You step outside onto the patio. You see a large grove before you, with various groups of people gathering and conversing with each other. There are some quiet spots for those who desire privacy, too.

Choices:

- [Join one of the groups as they listen to speakers debate some issue...](#) (Pg. 57)
- [Find a quiet spot in the shade and digest your meal in peace...](#) (Pg. 54)
- [Re-enter the temple and join the guide in the second room...](#) (Pg. 64)

A STUDY MATE

The lady smiles and shares a laugh with you. She tucks her hair behind her ears and looks at you before speaking.

That is a tempting idea, but I have to get this place ready for tomorrow. Plus, I still have a lot of work to do before I can present my latest ideas to the rest of the team. When that presentation is ready, maybe I will be the one who wants to take up some of your time; I'd love to hear what you make of it all.

Actually, if you decide to stay the night at the guesthouse, I hope you'll participate in tomorrow's festivities. Like I said, we have a prize for whoever comes up with the best paradox. If you happen to come up with a good one, I hope you'll agree to discuss it over lunch with me. Take a copy of my old notes too, you can let me know if you find anything interesting in there.

You tell the lady you look forward to the festivities. She points to a pile of notes on a chair; you pick them up on your way out.

Continue:

[Head to the general exhibit on change...](#)

(Pg. 95)

[Review the old notes while retiring to the Guesthouse...](#)

(Pg. 15)

A PLEASANT REST

As you find a quiet spot to rest, a gentle breeze passes over you. There are some smaller groups nearby, they are enjoying light conversation under the shade of the trees. You make yourself comfortable and close your eyes for a little while.

Every so often, you are able to make out the conversations of people as they pass by. One particularly irritated voice catches your ear...

Well, whatever we're talking about, it has a certain logic and structure to it, right? And within that context, particular things are all related to each other in various ways. So the whole is inherently ordered, and if you cast your net across all the particulars you end up with a meaningful super-structure.

So what if I haven't got a cool name for it? If I start naming it, I'll distinguish it from other names, and it will seem like those other names are independent of the whole. I want to go beyond particularity and any sense of external limitation. The whole is indiscriminate in its presence or possession, there is no privileged status for subsumed things. In the context of the greatest whole, every particular is trapped to an equal and inescapable extent.

A second voice speaks up to needle him some more...

What about nothingness and negations? How can they be part of some indiscriminate, unfocused super-structure that subsumes all things? I'll even give you an example: a cup makes no sense without there being nothing within. For where else would I pour my drink?

As for negations, riddle me this: you say that one thing is not another thing. For example, a bird is not a bee. Yet then you want to turn around and tell me that the bird and the bee are entirely subsumed by the same thing - existence. So if they're both the same, how can you pretend they're different?

The first man sighs deeply and begins his response. You can only catch part of it as they wander deeper into the grove, away from your position...

Nothingness? Negation? The only reason you have trouble with such terms is that you have no clear definition for them. I will tell you this - the only appropriate way to interpret a negation or nothingness of any sort is to give it some affirmative meaning.

When you say that the bird is not the bee, you are saying the bird is something other than the bee. The "is" flows over both sides; you posit the bird, you posit the bee, and only then do you relate them. Therefore, it is wrong to say that we rely on a "nothing" beyond the reach of Being, or some other clear contradiction. Instead, you seem to forget the omnipresence of the whole and the...

As the voices fade, you drift off... you are no longer aware of the grove, the speakers, or anything related to this experience. The memories of the grove are inaccessible. Instead, you are wholly focused on your presence in the alternate world of the dream, and the concerns you have within that context...

...You wake up and become reacquainted with your presence in the grove. The memories and concerns you had in the dream world soon leave you, your awareness flowing

from one place to another as easily as water. The two speakers have long since walked away, leaving you to your thoughts.

Perhaps the dream was all in your head. Then again, perhaps the people over in the dream world would have provided a similar tale if you had asked them, claiming that your dream-body generates the present context. On this side, perhaps you assume the primacy of this "waking" world because of the memories you currently have at hand.

At the very least, it is startling how quickly your awareness can be radically shifted.

Choices:

Go back to sleep. (Please close the PDF and go to sleep outside on the ground. You may return tomorrow)

[Make your way to the Guesthouse and retire for the night...](#) (Pg. 102)

[Return to the patio...](#) (Pg. 52)

ON GREATNESS

You approach the crowd and take a seat on a nearby rock. Nobody notices your approach, or if they do they don't give any indication of it. Everyone is watching the two speakers, who seem to be arguing about some ethical issue.

: ...and if they can get you to fear something, you will obey them. Those who instill the sense of fear will also explain how you ought to avoid it. It is a variation on the good-cop bad-cop routine.

So like I said, fear is the chief factor that stops a man from achieving his greatness. Writ large, a fearful society values safety and avoids risk and conflict. Without a willingness to roll the dice, without the confidence to assert their will, how can anyone, or any nation, hope to be great?

That is your answer.

The other man struts forward and gives his response...

: A nice speech, but fear is only part of the puzzle; you fail to see the forest for the trees. You might convince me that man has an inherent sense of fear that can be preyed on, but how does a nation have a sense of fear? In your example the nation has leaders, who presumably inspired the fear in the commons. The leaders would not feel constrained by whatever threat they promoted; if anything they would feel emboldened by the increased control over their flock. So fear is only a partial explanation at best.

Listen to my speech if you want to know the truth of the matter:

Greatness is defined by its context. If a man's world consists of his immediate family and iron rice bowl, then how would he define greatness as anything other than preserving the peace in his home and consistently performing a minor professional function? If the nation regards itself as only concerned with maintaining the status quo, what ambition would it have beyond maintaining friendly diplomatic relations and avoiding internal change or strife?

If you want something more significant, you must broaden the context. The individual must add new dimensions to his world view - a sense of morality and culture that he can use to develop himself beyond his immediate practical functions. He will be inspired to make the world conform to his vision of the ideal order. His new perspective will impact his decision making. It will impact what it is he fears and how he responds to any such fear.

For the nation it is much the same. Externally, the nation will seek to bring about an international order that will promote its culture and values. It will seek to create an ideal citizenry that can embody the national values and give rise to a state of lasting eunomia.

To flourish, one's considerations must go beyond reproduction and a manual trade. Only when one is seriously concerned with honouring the philosophical, cultural, and multi-generational, can one achieve any significant measure of greatness. Without that, one is a natural born helot and whether he is afraid will be irrelevant - the spiritual helot will always work the field and give the true citizenry their cut.

To flourish, the nation's considerations must go beyond maintaining the status quo. Its culture and values will define its greatness. It will elevate its citizenry so the people

resemble that which they love. It will be a hegemon, it will ensure that the international environment is one that naturally accommodates its national vision.

So there you have it. The thing that stops us from achieving true greatness is the breadth of our thought.

There are other speakers lined up, but it seems they have decided to take a brief recess before continuing. You take the opportunity to stretch your legs.

Continue:

[Return to the patio...](#)

(Pg. 52)

INTOXICATED TIME TRAVEL

You accompany the man as he joins his fellow workers in the grove. They're relaxing on the grass, drinking beer and chatting. As you sit down, one of the men passes you a bottle. You thank him and try to catch up on the conversation, but you can tell that the speakers have had a fair bit to drink...

: ...you can definitely travel in time. What's wrong with that?? When we dream, we are transported to all sorts of bizarre worlds. When I think about Pluto, I am immediately grasping something a million miles away. Our minds are not trapped.

: Yeah, but in both those examples our bodies are still right here! A dream is just some confused images in your head. When you think about Pluto it is even less impressive, because you are simultaneously aware that you are not actually on Pluto. I can just kick you and tear your attention right back to the here and now.

: Okay forget the examples. What do you even mean by "here and now"? By the time you formulate some awareness of "now", you are just referring to some memory from a few moments prior. All your logic is behind you; you can never grasp the present. Who even knows if the memories are legitimate.

Also, what difference does it make if my body is here now? Now is a relative term, my body is no more here than it is anywhere else that it inhabits; we are smeared across time. In an absolute sense I am five minutes ago, and I am five minutes from now - no point is privileged and you can never grasp a moment.

: Who gives a toss, how is any of that going to magically transport you back to ancient antiquity, or some future colony on Mars?

: Well, who am I for purposes of this question, other than my awareness? And look how easy it is to launch my awareness to some distant place, both spatially and chronologically.

But fine, time travel is necessarily impossible if you expect it to involve placing my current self into a context where my current self "is not". We're not going to change anything in some absolute sense like that, obviously; the parts of the chronology where I am not present will remain pristine. However, to the extent that I am present in places near those points, I will be aware of it in the fullness of time.

: Next you'll tell me that you when you die your awareness will be reincarnated in some ancient or future body. It's all nonsense, you can't time travel, you are never going to visit the real-deal antiquity in person.

: If you want to push it, you don't know that, strictly speaking. You don't know if I was in ancient antiquity; maybe I will time travel and achieve great things, maybe there is a road that leads to that world. When I get there, I will adopt a pseudonym and be recorded in history under that name.

: If you walk down that road tomorrow, it's a future act, so how is the road supposed to lead to antiquity, and in turn allow you to impact whatever I'm reading in a history book today?

: Well, our awareness seems to travel along a particular chronological path, in a particular direction. However, do we know this to be the only possibility, or is that just something we learnt via induction during our brief lives here?

Maybe I discover a different path, or a way of travelling in a different direction, and so I will slip through at some unseen angle and wander into my past. I won't change anything, for I will always have been there, necessarily. Just like I am at all other points I have visited. But I don't need to accept your attempts at ordering and limiting my experiences.

Actually, you might be a big fan of my work as an ancient philosopher. Maybe we should go through your bookshelf. Maybe we'll find a book that reads like something I would have written.

: You are so full of shit.

: Probably, but it sounds good so I believe it. Maybe I'll take you with me when I figure it all out.

The men laugh and finish their drinks. Judging by the number of bottles next to them, it has been a long conversation and they are unlikely to remember all the details tomorrow. Your friend also finishes his drink, before making some recommendations:

If you're inclined to go back to the temple before it closes for the day, I'd recommend checking in on our newest member. He's working on something special, or so I hear. At the very least it will be a lot more informative than drunken debates in the grove. On the other hand, at least you can enjoy a few drinks out here, and it does make the thoughts flow.

You could also go back to that guy in the entrance hall giving the monologue, or at least check out his brother's exhibit on Distinction. Or just retire to the Guesthouse. For my part, I need to get some rest and prepare for tomorrow. This place isn't going to build itself.

Choices:

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| Return to the entrance hall and visit the exhibit on Distinction... | (Pg. 64) |
| Visit the newest member of the temple... | (Pg. 87) |
| Return to the patio... | (Pg. 52) |
| Retire to the Guesthouse... | (Pg. 102) |

THE GRAND MODEL

Your eyes adjust to the light as you enter the exhibit room. It is lined with numerous display cabinets, each accompanied by descriptive text. In the centre is a very large, glass case; it contains what appears to be a complex, sphere-like model of reality. Your host approaches and begins to speak.

As you may have read in our welcome guide, the broadest metaphysical principles are Being and Distinction. We have used that context to set the boundaries for our account of reality. If every particular is subsumed by the Whole, then every particular must comply with the nature of the Whole. That is to say, as we narrow our enquiry we must always honour the broader principles, on pain of incoherence.

Here we have Eleatic Being depicted as a sphere; it is a single, continuous, and complete chart of existence. The various details of Being are illuminated by Distinction. Our task as philosophers is to flesh out that diagram; we wish to describe the broad shape of reality and the information contained therein. The details must all be explored and described, so we may present a worthy model of this grand, coherent Whole.

I again stress the importance of remembering that all things are subsumed by the Whole. For Being is not divisible in an ontological sense - there is no process whereby what-is can be cut in pieces that have independence. The distinctions are the details of the Whole, they do not enjoy some sort of self-contained, unique and unrelatable presence. Given that we reference these things, indeed categorising them in common as "pieces" or some other

term, they are all subsumed by a broader context. But I suspect you heard enough of that in the main hall.

In carrying out our project, we could start from the principle of Being and gradually work our way in. Perhaps describing the general shape of reality, designing a system that can accommodate all aspects of our awareness. Then we might eventually focus on the narrow entities within that system, such as teapots and other basic requirements for human life. As we narrow our focus, whatever we describe will be increasingly limited. If we do not honour those limitations, we will fall into contradiction; we mustn't posit that a thing is wholly contained in a context, yet possesses something beyond that context.

We might also explore outwards from our position, following the trail of necessary inferences and revelations. If you are aware of a mug of tea, you can infer by necessity all that is required for that entity and your awareness of it. You may also consider a basic model which reveals more complex truths. For example, consider a simple form of geometry that only expressly accounts for lines. If we played within that model and drew lines a certain way, we would perceive shapes like the triangle. We would also perceive other information such as the distinction between the internal area and the external area of such a shape. Yet those details go beyond the definitions and rules laid out by the simple model. We perceived additional information, therefore we have grounds to expand the model to account for this.

Before we visit the display cabinets, let's look at some of the fine details depicted in the grand model. Where does one object stop and another begin? I think the question hides some complexity; the details are all unified as Being, therefore we should be careful about

how we tease them apart. They are like the details of a painting, inseparable from it. Reality is one thing, complete and perfect, containing all conceivable distinctions. As we broaden or narrow our scope, the scale changes and different distinctions come into focus.

For example, let's find a herd of horses within the diagramme. Pick a horse out; it is a unit, and it is full of internal distinctions. This tracks beautifully with our metaphysical principles. We can explore this description of the horse further if you like; it can be refreshing to examine that which is specific and familiar.

For example, if we narrow our focus to some aspect of the horse, information will be excluded. If we examine a horse's leg absent the broader context, we can't acknowledge its status as a leg, for we have excluded its relationship to the rest of the animal. If we expand that focus and consider the entire horse, more information is captured and we can appreciate the leg's position. We should be able to see how the degree of information has adjusted between the scenarios.

We must also accept our position in this inescapable model. Although I talk of adjusting the scope and focus of our enquiry, we're not really observing Being from some independent position. The position of our mind defines its nature, limitations, and how it relates to everything else. This accounts for why our understanding will always come with baggage. However, I am certainly not saying that we cannot grasp the truth. To the extent our words cohere we identify truth per se.

Anyway, I apologise, I have talked your ear off and we have not even moved to the display cabinets. Perhaps I should have just said, this central exhibit illustrates that all

things are related and held in common, and whatever answers we give will come from our area of Being.

The man gestures with his hand to a series of display cabinets along the far wall.

Choices:

[Continue on to the display cabinets...](#)

(Pg. 84)

[Ask how things can be different, yet the same as unified by Being...](#)

(Pg. 73)

[Ask the man to tell you more about horses...](#)

(Pg. 81)

MASTER ARGUMENT

The man smiles and offers you a meandering lecture on the matter...

Ah yes, Diodorus was actually famous for more than just the Master Argument, you know. He came up with arguments like the "Veiled One" and the "Horned One". His works were so often rehearsed and debated that even the birds learnt them by heart and sang them from the rooftops. People would chalk on the walls, "Diodorus Cronus is wise", hah!

But that was not your question; let me try to focus. You want to know about the Master Argument, which was also known by the title "On the Possible". It is comprised of three assertions, but only two of them can be true. For if taken together, they will result in a contradiction. Let me list them for you:

One, that every past truth is necessary.

Two, that an impossibility does not follow a possibility.

Three, that a thing is possible which neither is nor will be true.

Having recognised the truth of the first two, Diodorus rejected the third. He makes these choices because he wishes to ensure that potentiality complies with ontological necessity. If something can happen, it necessarily does so. The idea of indeterminate possibilities and the idea that things can switch from true to false, that's all nonsense. I'll go

through the Master Argument line by line, I hope you'll see the beauty of the puzzle our friend presents to us.

I take point one to signify that past events and facts are set in stone. For example, you walked into this room, that event cannot be eliminated. For point two, I understand a possibility to be an event that will occur in the chronology. An impossibility is an event that does not occur in the chronology. For example, I will not jump up and hit my head on the ceiling in the next sixty seconds. That event won't occur in the chronology, so it's an impossibility.

The third point should be immediately suspect to anyone who has thought at length about metaphysics. Point three introduces events that don't occur, whether indeterminate or otherwise. If indeterminate, then it is possible for there to be an event which is neither true nor false until its time comes. Only when the time frame completes may we say it is true or false, thereby categorising it as a possibility or an impossibility.

Let's skip forward a minute and review the situation; we should find that we are unable to accept all three points. Per point one, everything in the past is necessarily true. Therefore, it is true that in the past there is an event where I jump up and hit my head on the ceiling within sixty seconds. That event won't occur, so it's an impossibility. This accords with point three, which accepts the existence of events that don't come true. Remember, though! Point one doesn't let you change the past, so if it was true there was this potential event, then it is still true; the impossibility maintains its presence.

Yet, that would be an impossibility following from a possibility! The impossibility is sitting there, right after a possibility, which violates point two. Let me make it as clear as possible: you entering this room is the initial possibility. What follows after it? If we throw out point three, we will only posit other possibilities, defined as events that do occur. Yet if we include point three, we will posit another thing - an impossibility, probably with some initial, indeterminate status. The contradiction should be clear when we examine the timeline: we can run our finger from the possibility of you entering this room to the possibility of me jumping up and hitting my head. The latter doesn't occur, so it is an impossibility. We cannot erase it from the picture, because if it was ever present then point one fastens it in place. So the attempt to hold all three collapses.

If we wish to maintain point three, we must either break with point one, which secures the details, or point two, that an impossibility doesn't follow a possibility. We might try to eliminate these points by adopting certain errors such as presentism. In fact, we know that there are some famous people in antiquity that did maintain a different combination of the points. Yet, as I hinted earlier, there are insurmountable metaphysical objections to doing so.

Sadly, we have not received the Master Argument directly from Diodorus. His works are largely lost. We have some detailed testimonia and some very brief quotes; the list of points that I used was actually drawn from a much later Stoic author.

Anyway, forgive me if I stop our discussion there. I would highly recommend you check out the general exhibits on Change, or perhaps retire to our guesthouse. For my part, I hope to have this room set up in a day or two.

The man smiles broadly at the idea of having his exhibits ready for public viewing.

You decide to...

Choices:

[Thank the man for his time and move on to the general exhibits...](#)

(Pg. 95)

[Bid farewell to the man and head off to the guesthouse...](#)

(Pg. 102)



DISTINCTION SUBSUMED BY BEING

As you raise the question of how reality can be one yet many, the man patiently listens. Once you are done, he nods sympathetically and smiles, then shares his thoughts with you.

It's concerning, isn't it? We regard "Being" as a unity because it wholly subsumes anything we might mention. Our awareness requires some meaning or significance, therefore we cast the net accordingly and term everything within "existence". For if there was a "thing" that lacked any meaning, we wouldn't be aware of it and we could not suggest that it was outside the net. What would our awareness grasp? How could it fall outside the net, which encompasses everything we can reference? We'd be spouting gibberish.

Your issue, as I understand it, is that if we say that everything is "Being", then how can the myriad details be distinct? For a horse is not a car, but I am claiming that both the horse and the car are Being. How can the horse not be the car, and the car not be the horse, when ultimately they're the same thing?

The quickest way to resolve the issue is just to ask whether you admitted both "Being" and "Distinction" when you made that objection. For you are identifying things, so you accept they all exist in a broad sense. You also claim that you are identifying two things, so you necessarily admit of distinction or difference within that broad context. So you accept that both are true, which at least gives us the undeniable conclusion, albeit in a brutish manner.

That's not intellectually satisfying, though. So let's discuss what else might be said about the issue. The key, I believe, lies in our use of the term "is not". We must explore negation. Horse is not a car; car is not a horse. What do we mean by "is not"? It must have some significance in the sentence. Given that there is no alternative to Being, no "existential negation" so to speak, there appears to be only one option:

"Is not" shall be interpreted as "is other than".

When we are careful and ensure that "is not" is given meaning, the issue fades away. The horse IS other than the car, the car IS other than the horse. Both sides are subsumed by oneness, that principle of omnipresent existence. That topic is my brother's specialty, of course; maybe I should tell him to include something about "is not" in his monologue, if he hasn't already considered it. At any rate, for now you can see how the myriad of things are one, held in common by an absolute, omnipresent "is" that overflows all perceivable boundaries. It all just describes aspects of the Whole.

Also, I think we should remember that we occupy a certain location or position within the Whole. Our conversation doesn't take place outside that context; everything we do is constrained by metaphysical necessity. How could you stare at one of the metaphysical axioms, pure and alone? You can't, that would be impossible for a human. We can be aware of such things, but we cannot tease them out and give a pristine and contextless account.

I think we will soon revisit terms like "contradiction". As we continue the tour, you will hear of Order. There we have the context that gives "contradiction" a clearer meaning;

for without some logical system or shape to reality, what would contradiction signify? Being and Distinction are broader than Order, and therefore their relationship is beyond-contradiction; it is what it is, free from narrow constraints and expectations.

Of course, you can just spend your days trying to focus on Being in its most universal sense, and avoid talking about Distinction. That's what my brother does, he stands around in that first room trying to perfect his monologue, using many words to consider one. This seems inappropriate for a human, for we are also products of Distinction. We cannot escape our position alongside the multitude of details.

If it's all a bit too much right now, you could always grab a bite to eat at the canteen. You might want to explore the grove, too, where a lot of our guests and adherents like to gather. I'll let you decide how to proceed.

Choices:

[Thank the man and make your way to the canteen...](#) (Pg. 40)

[Continue the tour...](#) (Pg. 84)

LESSER MORALITY

Being a patient soul, you continue to watch.

The topic of the Lesser Morality brings us closer to that of practical human ethics. The divinities were previously put forward to account for the consistent and universal aspects of Change. Our own contributions to Change must also be included in this model. Every living thing has its own set of directions. They therefore have their own perspective on how things ought to play out.

The most obvious distinction between the divinities and these lesser moral agents is one of scope. As previously described, a person is smeared across the dimension of Change. Their particular location grants them a perspective. That perspective, combined with the personal directions, provide a creature with a basis for deliberation and action. They know where they are relative to other things, they have an urge towards activities and goals, and so they push forward in accordance with their will and hopefully some process of wise deliberation.

That experience is what it feels like to be us, smeared as we are across Change. The whole continuum of our existence is present, it involves chronological relationships, and so to be us is to experience them all and their order. We can consider a model of time and try to highlight or privilege one moment and then another, but to do so is artificial. There is no succession of moments that we watch from outside, rather our awareness is subsumed by Change. Therefore we necessarily live our destinies completely and eternally; we are the stories.

Let's refocus and talk about deliberative change. Unlike the divinities, we consider various possibilities in light of our interests, and we try to glean the paths towards them. The experience seems characterised by a sense of limitation and chance. At any rate, if we are to live our destinies "completely and eternally", do our choices matter? For the chronology exists as a complete whole and we will experience all of the possibilities. The answer is no. The concept of "mattering" does not make sense if you try applying it to the chronology as a whole. It's like asking for an explanation or justification for Being; it's a non-sensical question because Being extends beyond that context. At that metaphysical scope, there simply "is", without alternative.

When we said we live our destiny, we understood that our destiny involves details. We experience those details, and in their immediate context the decisions are significant. We feel them, we recognise good and evil, we feel gain and loss, all of it is entirely real and impactful. Whether you like it or not, you are it. When you watch a movie you can see the actors experiencing their role, and they will carry you along with them as they act out the particular scenes. Yet the movie exists as a complete recording, and you know this. The actor does not break the fourth wall, and neither will you; we fully experience our lives and decisions, without exception, and that is true regardless of how we may characterise the broader context.

In fact, our lives are richer than the metaphysical context. We can say that given sufficient change, all that is possible is necessary. Given that everything ultimately happens, free will is not relevant in the big picture, for you will inevitably make every possible decision. People who fail to appreciate the nature of Being might assume their life is just a

linear set of events, where one possible "next moment" is selected and the others are destroyed. At every turn they lose something of themselves; possible paths fall away and they will never know their full story.

For us, we understand that life is far more secure and rich in content. The chronology is complete, so whatever is possible will come to pass. Therefore, we will know our full story. Whatever is lost will return in the fullness of time; no failure or success is final. We have been blessed with absolute security and justified hope, we will know all there is to know about ourselves and the world around us, and in recognising this we can enjoy the experience in a pure and untroubled manner.

Regarding the branching chronology, some might claim that we are incorrectly identifying mock-moments as genuine, alternative paths forward. These mock-moments would be wholly contained as objects within a linear chronology, and our deliberation is really just the experience of perceiving a group of these objects. The objects do not represent a branching path in the chronology. Yet, how curious that these mock-moments all look the same prior to the occurrence of one of them. We can assign a probability to some of them, we can yearn for one, but at best we have a set of potentials that all seem viable. In a linear model, one would not expect us to consider such objects as possibilities at all, because such an interpretation presupposes possibilities. That is meaning that cannot be contained in the context of linearity, so how are we considering it? We know from the earlier metaphysical discussion that it "is", therefore its presence must be honoured.

Forgive me, though, for going on such a long digression about experience and possibility. I want to talk a little about the frustration of our will. Organisms often fail to

align themselves correctly with the greater morality, resulting in failure. Organisms are also numerous and experience competing directions. This discord can be the source of great evil. The result of inharmonious behaviour is the frustration of our personal directions and a general failure to achieve the desired state of happiness or excellence.

This provides a general framework for all ethical judgments. It defines what each organism ought to do, and when considered in light of the Greater Morality it completes the general picture of how events ought to progress. We can therefore say that it is good for events to progress in such a fashion whereby things are in harmony and can successfully behave in accordance with their nature, and it is evil for their efforts to clash and be frustrated. However, this simple explanation hides a great deal of complexity. People must carefully determine the nature of an organism, and then consider what would constitute excellence relative to its current state and context. The beginning and end of the organism's life must also be accommodated. Other fields will frequently be drawn upon to examine and answer practical challenges.

There will come a time when one must decide whether to favour one organism over another. It is easy to claim that one will always support excellence and avoid frustration, but that standard will not provide an answer for every practical scenario. For example, in times of scarcity a person may need to decide who will eat and who will starve. The decision will invariably result in both excellence and frustration. Only by considering issues such as sustainability can one successfully follow the most promising path.

You once again hear the video being extracted, but nothing takes its place. The room lights up, and a new tour guide appears.

I hope you enjoyed the presentation! It is an old video, but people still find it interesting. Please help yourself to a cup of tea and follow me into the next exhibit room. I would like to tell you about some other metaphysical concerns that we have considered.

Continue:

[Follow the man...](#)

(Pg. 18)

BEING THROUGH DISTINCTION

The man is pleased with your request; he immediately returns to the discussion of horses. As he does so, he walks you over to one of the display cases. Inside is a diagramme of the metaphysical kingdom of horses. It is a colourful array that highlights and distinguishes all the particular details contained within. Everything is clearly related to everything else, and together they form a coherent Whole.

Wonderful, let's discuss the topic of "horse" in its most general sense. Does "horse" refer to all of the horses? Yes, but it's also broader and more complex than one might expect. If you round up horses you will have a herd, but even that is more limited than the meaning I wish to express.

The term "horse" can also reference the horses in your mind's eye. It can go beyond that and capture the relationships between all of these. It can even be used to capture their external relationships with the rest of reality. The metaphysical kingdom of horses may constitute a unity of impressive scale and complexity. If we plot it out, we will see their complete domain and existential network.

But given that we might use different definitions or scales for "horse", what is the objective meaning of the word? I fear that question may result in a semantic game; we are using the term in the context of this conversation, so we need only consider whether I am using it in a way that coheres or otherwise picks out meaning. For today, let the speaker be the measure of what is said, avoiding the discussion of whether a string of letters has a definition superior to the immediate, intended meaning.

Anyway, put aside that distraction. Think back to what we said about broadening and narrowing our scope. There was a reason we distinguished between the scope that covers a whole horse, and the scope that only considers the leg. We can say that a particular horse is real because it possesses something beyond each individual detail or constituent. There is meaning in its very arrangement. Because we perceive this meaning, we must acknowledge that it "is", and absent some alternative it "is" in an absolute and inviolate sense. The unity is no more or less real than the constituents.

Some might ask whether the fact of unity itself, described as an arrangement or set of relationships, is not a constituent part of the horse. If that is the case, a horse really might boil down to a collection of parts with no loss of meaning; you could separate each leg and each relationship and consider all these things independently. Problems immediately arise. For example: even if we wanted to adopt this model of parts, consisting of limbs and "relationships", we cannot handle all the parts the same way. I mean, the "relationships" inherently involve the existence of the things being related. By handling the "relationship" part, we would necessarily admit the whole. In terms of the leg, people might at least argue that it is a unit that could stand alone, although that too is false for a number of reasons.

I have to say, in such a model there would be no end to the division. We might subject the leg to the same treatment as the horse, leaving us with the flesh and bone. We may then subject the flesh and the bone to the same treatment, and so on. By failing to be steadfast in our conviction that meaning is omnipresent, we will be unable to find any secure foothold for meaning. Now imagine if we play a game and ask if the parts have magnitude; if there is

no limit to division, and each division has magnitude, then maybe we will all be crushed under the weight of an infinitely massive horse.

Obviously I am joking, sorry. I will spare you the talk of famous paradoxes and other fun puzzles. There are people here who are fond of them, perhaps you will visit them later; they also take a special interest in questions of change and motion. I sympathise with them, to some degree; they highlight the absurdities involved in the common accounts of such things, inspiring outsiders to adjust or otherwise clarify their position. Those outsiders usually wind up shifting closer to our own views, for Eleatic philosophy is not prey to such absurdities.

Yet, I want us to speak in our own right; we must put forward an affirmative case. To be blunt, this talk of parts is rife with errors. "Things" and "relationships", "matter" and "form", whatever other system people may come up with, it's all very troublesome. There is Being, which in its perfection subsumes all coherence. The horse is a detail. The leg is a detail. The flesh and bone are details. Don't treat parts as ontologically independent entities, don't divvy them up and lose focus of the whole continuum, and don't dilute existence and posit ephemeral layers of being. I could go on, but you'll do well so long as you remember that reality is omnipresent and uncompromising. We're describing its details. We are its details.

The man nods, satisfied with his speech. He appears to have worked himself up a bit at the end there.

Continue:

[Proceed with the tour...](#)

(Pg. 84)

CONTOURS OF REALITY

You follow the man to the far side of the room, where he continues the tour. Looking over the exhibits, you see countless charts and diagrammes detailing the complex array of information. It is apparently an attempt to chart out reality as a series of dimensions with a near-endless multitude of discernible entities smeared throughout them.

As I was saying, the total list of things that we can perceive, and therefore must include, is immense. Insofar as we distinguish things, we necessarily employ a great range of descriptive terms. These terms have distinct meanings, and the way we string them all together appears to involve a ruleset of comprehensibility or logic. Per my previous remarks, all of these context-granting or framework-granting rules must be given their place in Being.

From our perspective, these dimensions may be thought of as constituting the contour of reality. The shape of reality defines what is possible; it imposes a sort of comprehension and order, which the myriad of particulars must obey. Whether the shape is the same throughout, or whether the curvature of Being may be different at different locations, is yet to be seen. Let each particular dimension or aspect of the overall shape be called a "plane of existence", "field of existence", "band of existence", or any other term that may best accord with the natural sciences and our way of thinking.

Order is the concept that encompasses all these dimensions of "what-is", the set of limitations or codes that provide for all that is possible. Necessity is present throughout,

smoothing away the rough edges of incoherence by ensuring there are no violations. As you have heard, Necessity is the guiding hand of our philosophy.

From our perspective, the most immediate plane of Order is that which is required for our awareness. Besides being subsumed by Being and Distinction, this dimension must also provide the rules that define our self-awareness and conscious activities. It must allow us to reach out and grasp every other aspect of reality in our minds eye; there is no tyranny of distance in this dimension. A great code must be provided for, detailing everything from non-contradiction to mathematical relationships.

This structure of Order is not enough to define our nature as humans, though. We still need spatial dimensions to define the shape of our bodies, provide a ruleset to define how we move, and all the other details required to define a human being. When we only had Being and Distinction, there was no clear and organised account of these things. Order provides the detailed framework for meaning, bringing us closer to the particulars and our ability to predict certain details about them; it is a permanent bulwark against a chaos that would otherwise consume all.

You may wish to hear more details about the structure of Being, and we are indeed always putting together new exhibits and forum threads. We've had some recent good news, too; a seemingly knowledgeable visitor has joined us and has agreed to set up an exhibit about Diodorus Cronus. Apparently that figure was famous in antiquity for his tricky arguments about possibility and motion, so we're excited to see what he comes up with. He is working closely with a team of ours that divides its time between exploring

consciousness and the better known Eleatic paradoxes. You could go see what they've achieved so far.

You might also be wondering why I have not said anything about morality. Many people come here to discuss the difference between "good" and "evil". To do that, you must examine the dimension of Change, which is typically the next exhibit of the tour. The exhibit is run by another team of ours; I helped them craft the exhibit and taught them not to rely too heavily on claims about "infinity", but any genius is their own. However, they're all in a private meeting today, preparing for tomorrow's contests. I believe they have an introductory video playing for guests, though.

The man gestures towards the other rooms, but otherwise remains motionless. It appears you will take the next steps alone.

Choices:

[Proceed to the exhibits on Change...](#)

(Pg. 95)

[Visit the team working on consciousness and popular paradoxes...](#)

(Pg. 32)

[See if you can't find the resident Diodorus enthusiast...](#)

(Pg. 87)

FOR THE HONORARY ELEATIC

You make your way through the temple, eventually reaching an office that you decide is your destination. Inside, an old man is busy sorting through a box of things. The room is fairly large and cluttered; clearly, whatever the man is working on is not quite ready for public viewing. All the same, you walk around in the hopes of discovering something interesting.

After a short while, the man notices you and walks over to introduce himself..

Hello and welcome to the most insightful and relevant exhibit in this temple! At least, I hope it will be once it is completed. My boasting is just an attempt at humour, you'll have to forgive me. Although, perhaps by aiming for greatness I can ensure that something notable is achieved.

Anyway, as you can see the place is a bit of a mess. I was invited to help the temple set up an exhibit on necessity and motion, mostly because of my interest in Diodorus Cronus. He knew the truth of such matters and was himself an Eleatic philosopher. Sadly, he has been largely forgotten and robbed of his proper standing. I will rectify that situation.

Soon there will be displays detailing his life and works. Over there we will have a piece dedicated to the Master Argument and Diodorus' understanding that whatever is possible is necessary. On the other side, there will be an exhibit detailing his thoughts on motion and change, in particular his adoption of Zeno's approach to the subject. Finally, there will be a small shrine in honour of his life, detailing who he was and how his ideas may

be weaved into the whole of Eleatic philosophy. Diodorus is crucial to our understanding of life and determinacy.

Of course, it's not yet ready for public viewing. I have also prepared something special for tomorrow's events, but that will have to remain a surprise. However, seeing as you are here, I am happy to speak with you further about these topics. I can also direct you to the team that studies consciousness and plays around with Zeno's works, or give you directions back to the general exhibit on Change.

You consider what the man has said, before...

Choices:

- | | |
|--|----------|
| Ask about motion and change... | (Pg. 48) |
| Ask about the Master Argument and necessity... | (Pg. 68) |
| Visit a nearby office where another member of the team is working... | (Pg. 32) |
| Thank the professor for his time and move on to the general exhibit... | (Pg. 95) |

BOUNDARIES OF COHERENCE

The doorway opens to reveal a short, red corridor. On the other side, a rough-hewn stone path guides you through a small garden to another set of doors. Opening them, you step over the sill and find yourself in a large room with a vaulted ceiling. Other than the light that flows in behind you, the room seems almost completely dark. You are just able to make out a solitary figure standing in the centre.

The man does not acknowledge your arrival; he appears to be rehearsing a monologue. You lean against a wall and listen quietly.

I am talking about something, for what is the alternative? I cannot reference anything that "is not", for it would invariably bear some significance and therefore constitute something that "is". If the thing I point to has no significance, how can I be said to have pointed at it? How can I even say "it", for that affirms it as present, singular, and perceived. My awareness is characterised by "is", the flood of existence swallows me whole.

"What is" is omnipresent and inescapable, everything I know invariably falls within the breadth of Being. I cannot claim otherwise, for by definition I cannot identify any alternative to Being. The claim that something is independent from Being or beyond Being... such words are just incoherent strings, they do not point away from Being. This omnipresent ontology necessarily consumes all facets of my experience; I cannot tear myself away from the complete, inescapable, and all-subsuming Whole!

I have heard it said that if one stands on a different planet, they may use a lever to shift this one. Yet there is no location beyond Being where I may retreat, no externality I

might leverage to influence or alter "what is". The dominance of Being is so complete that the slightest hint of independence is reduced to incoherent gibberish. There is no alternative to Being, no way out of this all-subsuming context of existence.

I must therefore reject the suggestion that things might be more or less real. For there is no alternative substance that might be intermixed or otherwise introduced to dilute the purity of "what is". Wherever you point, there it is, pure and untainted. Being is perfectly poured, constituting all information in an absolute sense. An omnipresent and perfect Whole; whatever is possible is rendered necessary.

Where did Being come from, where will it go? Such questions are absurd! Every conceivable location, every conceivable arrangement, it is all within its breadth. What was it, and what will it become? These questions similarly devolve into incoherence. Ontologically, if I say that what-is will become "something else", I am referencing the "something else" as though it is separate from what-is. Yet there is no alternative to existence, no external "something else" that might be sought beyond the "is". Further, what will become of what was? For the initial arrangement had significance, and that significance is necessarily preserved by the ontological flood that swallows even the notion of alternative.

Any chronology must exist in a complete state, the continuum is secure in the context of Being. Every particular arrangement of things has significance, and therefore all such information exists. The ball at the top of a hill and the ball at the bottom of a hill are two distinct arrangements, yet to create or destroy arrangements is no less incoherent than to create or destroy any other modicum of significance. The permanent ball is smeared

across the entire surface of the permanent hill. I must confess that change is a limited and relative phenomenon, fastened in place by chains of necessity.

I am subsumed by Being, am I not? So my existence is permanent and secure. I will live forever, I cannot be destroyed. There is no alternative, I am invincible, no force can shift me from my place. Strike me down! I am still there, I remain where you saw me! You, my aggressor, you are still by my side! Stop struggling, even the gods cannot fight against necessity!

You are distracted from the monologue by the sound of a door creaking open. Light begins to flood into the room from the far end, and you can make out a figure standing there. This new person signals for you to approach. He then begins to speak...

Come, let me show you something more specific. As interesting as you might find my brother, he has a one-track mind. He didn't notice your arrival and he won't notice your departure. He sees what-is, but he has hardly begun to delineate its complex constitution. He is more than human and less than human.

As you ponder his words, you notice another corridor leading out of the room. A barely illuminated sign reads "Canteen". Thoughts of lamb soup force their way into your mind.

Choices:

[Accompany the man...](#)

(Pg. 64)

[Object to the man's words; there are plenty of things that don't exist...](#)

(Pg. 42)

[Scurry away in search of food...](#)

(Pg. 40)

PRACTICING HUMAN ETHICS

The man clears his throat and resumes the lecture. As he does so, he takes out some notes from his pocket, glancing at them every so often to refresh his memory.

Humans may be more complex than other creatures on the planet, but as with any organism they have their own Dao or Way. Therefore, those who wish to engage in ethics must keep the moral and metaphysical framework in mind, study the way of each particular organism, and consider how to develop a harmonious society that accords with the full spectrum of morality.

Ethicists must consider every direction that characterises a person, from the nutritive to the deliberative. This can be done by considering one's own personal experiences and sensations, and by observing the practical actions and reports of others. The personal nature of ethics makes it both easier and more difficult than other fields; we know it as part of our human nature, but that fact brings with it a measure of bias.

When observing others it can be easier to remain neutral, for we can watch strangers from a distance and do our best to keep ourselves out of the equation. We can see how they grow and what they need to thrive, and we can record what actions they take and the external expressions of their mood.

A less neutral example of combining personal experience and observation is that of parents raising their children. They personally experience a sense of responsibility and the desire to assist their children, which is itself ethical. While this introduces some bias, it also helps the parent focus on the child. They carefully watch as the child struggles to grow and

pursue its directions, and they care deeply about the results. As the process continues, the child exhibits increasingly complex behaviour and takes up various social roles. At every point the parent watches, judges, and considers the best way to influence the process.

The parent feels the joy of success and the weight of failure. Exercises in leadership, such as parenthood, grant us a real-life demonstration of how different decisions and scenarios can impact an organism. This is crucial for those who would discuss ethics, because ethical judgments and decisions are complex and involve serious consequences.

Ethicists might also look to their parents or grandparents, so they may see what happens as a human approaches the end of its life. They can learn what palliative care and social structure best supports humans as they fade. It is inevitable that every body that can be brought together can also be dissipated, and in the fullness of time it is inevitable regardless of what medicine and other technologies might achieve.

It is not possible to experience one moment indefinitely and to the exclusion of all others. The Ethicist must accept and consider both birth and death, a sort of relative beginning and end of an organism. It is not enough to ask how to create and raise the next generation, but also how and when that generation should pass away.

The guide leads you to a little display rack, before handing you one of the pamphlets.

Please, feel free to take a copy, although the material is quite dated. I am sure you have questions, but I would not do them much justice. Far better you come back tomorrow and ask the team, and perhaps you will even have your own contributions to make here. For

my part I have run through all my notes. You seem to be the last visitor today, so I will close this section up, but I can also tell you the way to the Guesthouse if you'd like.

You accept the pamphlet before deciding to...

Continue:

[Thank the man and step outside to read the pamphlet...](#)

(Pg. 28)

[Make your way to the Guesthouse...](#)

(Pg. 102)

ON CHANGE

You make your way to the exhibit on Change. The lights are off and nobody appears to be present. You do, however, see a note. Upon reading it, you learn that the team responsible for this section of the temple is busy preparing for festivities that are planned for tomorrow. The note instructs you to flick a nearby switch and take a seat. Apparently they have prepared a video for their guests.

You decide to make the most of it. After you flick the switch, a nearby screen lights up.

We know from experience that there is Change. This term refers to a unique dimension within Order, one that is characterised by a sort of dynamism or life. This aspect of reality gives us the ability to talk about how things may “become different”. Without Change, it would be impossible for this discussion to progress! We shall see, however, that the way people speak of Change is generally wrong and muddle-headed. For at every point Change is necessarily constrained by inescapable Being. The continuum of our experience must remain complete and inviolate.

That Change is subsumed by Eleatic Being is shown by the fact that we are referencing some aspect of "what-is". Distinction is also necessary, for we must provide Change with a context that accommodates multiple things. The things have multiple arrangements, and their own internal properties or characteristics may be different at different points in the chronology. Change must therefore take its place as one aspect within the broader shape and context of Order.

Beware those who pretend that Change is the chief metaphysical axiom. In their ignorance, they try to present it as an absolute and unrestrained force. Such a model of Change would lead to chaos; change would alter literally everything about reality, eliminating any sense of consistency until it consumes and changes itself into a changeless state. Although we needn't go down such a ridiculous road of reasoning, given the initial incoherence of trying to posit something that is beyond, or somehow exempt from the requirements of, Being.

As I was saying, Change always occurs within a context, and always involves at least two referents or distinctions. Eleatic Being cannot be subordinated to Change, for there is no second referent beyond it that it could "become". The partisans of absolute change, or any model of presentism, can be dismissed the moment one realises that Change is held fast by broader Being.

Many different mechanical accounts of Change have been suggested. Regardless of which practical model we find most convincing, it is clear that the entire flow of time is ontologically present as a complete whole. It is only at the personal level, where we can identify how the details interrelate, that Change becomes recognisable and the relative time-distance may be appreciated. Therefore, what "was", "is", and "will be" all necessarily exist in a permanent sense. Change is relative.

Temporal things should be thought of as being spread across the temporal plane or dimension. It is easy to picture an object with three spatial dimensions: the object is "smeared" across its length, width, and height. Time may be described as a dimension, and a temporal object may be depicted as smeared across its section of the chronology.

Take care, though; just like there are problems with divvying up spatial extensions, problems regarding change arise when you carelessly divvy up time. At each particular moment, each identifiable thing is where it is; velocity will only make sense with a broader scope. Similarly, we may find that our division of the continuum lacks a clear unit of metric, resulting in unlimited durations for limited progress. Depending on your reading of the moving rows, it might be unlimited durations on top of unlimited durations. Anyway, we hope you will find the time to visit the team that deals with such puzzles, they love to reveal the issues that arise when one fails to take chronology as a complete whole.

For many, the beauty of Change is that it affords us a context to consider branching "possibilities". Given the ramifications of Eleatic Being, it is not enough to posit a linear progression of time. We want to posit all the potentials we can perceive, constituting a great web of possibility. This array of chronological relationships is beyond our ability to plot out in its entirety, but every particular possibility is necessary in the context of the Whole.

To explain this point further: if one envisions a road that forks left and right, and one assumes that it is possible for a person to travel down either path, then both stories exist. There is an episode where the person takes the left path. There is an episode where the person takes the right path. The person truly stretches down both roads and is present throughout. Any prominence of one episode over another is only significant insofar as we talk of relative parts and the experience of our existence. To explain and understand it all from our relative position is an important topic that is being worked on by the separate

team we mentioned earlier, but we also try to incorporate their thought into our own work in this exhibit.

We should appreciate that this discussion of Change represents an important milestone. Our philosophical project is now exploring the framework of a dynamic world. Further, we are mindful of our earlier discoveries, and will not posit ontological creation and destruction. The inclusion of Change breathes life into our model, it brings us closer to a vision of morality, and it will help reveal the answers to many of our greatest concerns as humans. To achieve that and be accepted, it must plausibly accommodate our dynamic experiences of life and choice.

*You hear an audible *clunk* as one VHS is swapped out for another.*

Continue:

[View the Next Screening...](#)

(Pg. 44)

[Go visit the team dealing with puzzles and consciousness...](#)

(Pg. 32)

GREATER MORALITY

You continue to watch the video presentation.

The Greater Morality accounts for the natural laws or general directions of the chronology - the irresistible and seemingly consistent flow that carries all temporal things along with it. These directions are particularly "divine" because they are inherently harmonious - they cannot know frustration, and those who would struggle against them will always fail. Whatever explanation is given of these divine forces, they must constitute something greater and less fickle than a mind or some other, familiar life-form. They do not exhibit any signs of deliberation or doubt; together they are more like the threads that run through all of time, the paths that lead us through all possibilities.

It is easy enough to simply declare that there are inexorable, universal, and consistent types of change. After all, we experience the flow of time regardless of our will, and that flow involves predictable directions. For example, gravity seem to apply to everything with mass in our region of reality, and in a consistent fashion. Even if we assume that there is a degree of chance or "swerve" in every little change, or posit that different eras are subject to different flows of time and direction, still the degree of chance itself seems measurable and consistent.

We may take these apparent details from experience and use them to quickly sketch out an entertaining account of the divinities. If each law, such as attraction or repulsion, is a universal principle, then it lacks any special relationship with particular things. Although, it of course has a relationship with a broad class, such as spatial things. As noted, it does not

deliberate or otherwise exhibit any doubt or potential like the sort that characterises humans and other contemplative creatures.

Further, these divinities are universal, they are not attached to particular spatial things. Even if they are limited to only certain regions of reality, they seem stitched into the very fabric of it, being more akin to a natural force that is full of certainty. For it isn't "more here" or "less there" at any moment; its influence or presence is found equally throughout its region and amongst the class of things it presses upon.

The breadth and certainty is what chiefly distinguishes the members of the Greater Morality from the Lesser Morality. For when we talk of the Lesser Morality, we might say something like "the man wants to kick a ball". The entities referenced are more limited and have a clearly distinct sort of constitution. Greater forces like Love and Strife are written into the very structure that such limited entities inhabit, and indeed are present throughout our bodies. Their inescapable and indomitable nature ensures that those of the Lesser Morality should seek to be in willful harmony with the divine.

Thanks to our understanding that all things are connected, we can accept that any sort of thing may influence any other sort of thing. The mere ontological presence of something, despite not having a spatial body or mass that we can identify, would be able to disturb or influence everything else. For the connection or relationship "is" something that we can use as a conduit of change regardless of how we wind up describing the divine.

As was noted, divinities like Love and Strife do not pay heed to the partial, relative directions of the Lesser Morality. So while their directions represent the most consistent,

pure, and eternal good, they are a sort of good that will grind us to dust just as surely as it will reconstitute us.

In regards to the number of these divinities, that remains subject to dispute. There may well be as many divinities as there are consistent laws that go into directing Change. Further, certain laws seem more evident in certain scenarios or arrangements, which speaks to some sort of hierarchy. Maybe there is even a place for a Middle Morality, with agents of the laws. Taking chronology as a whole, Love and Strife might be said to take their turns: we can envision a world where all temporal things are bound together as tightly as possible by Love, whereupon inexorable change makes the only move it can, allowing Strife to triumph and direct everything outwards, until collapsing in again. How do we respond to the forces that literally and inevitably bring together and pull apart entire worlds.

Physicists and engineers have an important role in the discussion of the divinities, for they dedicate great effort to understanding the phenomena of the natural laws and what mechanical processes they involve. Other individuals may also offer valuable contributions, such as programmers. It is sufficient at this point to have introduced you to the divinities and their role in morality.

You detect the now-familiar sound of the video cassette being changed.

Continue:

[Next Screening...](#)

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GUEST HOUSE

Tired, you make your way down a narrow, outdoor trail towards the Guesthouse. Once you arrive, you step inside the main building and approach the front desk. The clerk stands up and greets you.

Welcome to the Guesthouse, we were expecting you! We have your room ready, number 42. Here's the key, just head down the corridor to the right and follow the signs. It is always good to see another participant for tomorrow's events!

We've put you in the unaffiliated suites, they're somewhat spartan but they will certainly keep you warm and dry. If you let us know your philosophical beliefs and interests, we can try matching you with some of our other guests tomorrow.

Typically, we get groups of people who give us these details ahead of time. That way we can improve their experience. You could try tagging along with one of the groups if you like; although tomorrow things might be a tad hectic.

Don't feel that you need to get up early, though! Breakfast is served all the way into the early afternoon. Eggs with all the trimmings. Perfect way to start the day!

You take the key and thank the man, before heading off to find your room. As you go, you notice that a lively debate is being held in one of the conference rooms.

Choices:

[Go watch the debate...](#)

(Pg. 36)

[Continue to your room...](#)

(Pg. 103)

RESTFUL SLUMBER

After finally reaching your room, you collapse on the bed and drift off to sleep. You suspect you will need a good rest before tomorrow's festivities. Dreams seek you out but escape your ability to record them...

TO BE CONTINUED

